

**Russia's Geopolitical Orientation Towards
the Former Soviet States
Was Russia Able to Discard its Imperial Legacy?**

An examination into the nature of Russia's economic, military and diplomatic policies towards the former Soviet states during Boris Yeltsin's first term as President of an independent Russia. (December 1991 to July 1996).

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submitted to the degree of
Doctor in Philosophy

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This thesis is dedicated to

My mother,
My brother and sister in law,
My nephew and my niece, and to
Raffaele, who endured many years of
long hours of work. Without his support
this work would have never
been possible.

Domitilla Sagramoso

Title

Russia's Geopolitical Orientation Towards the Former Soviet States.
Was Russia Able to Discard its Imperial Legacy?

Abstract

This thesis analyses Russia's military, economic and diplomatic policies towards the newly independent states, particularly towards the members of the CIS, during Boris Yeltsin's first term as President of an independent Russia (December 1991 to July 1996). The objective is to determine whether after the collapse of the Soviet Union the new Russian state tried to restore a sphere of influence or informal empire over the former Soviet republics - as the French did in sub-Saharan Africa after decolonisation - or whether instead Russia's policies reflected a genuine desire to establish normal state-to-state relations with the new states.

Chapter one analyses the underlying principles of Russia's foreign policy towards the former Soviet states and examines the debate on Russian foreign policy priorities which took place during the first years of Russia's independence. This section also overviews Russia's policies towards the Russian minorities that inhabit the Baltic states, in order to determine whether Russia attempted to use this diplomatic tool to further its own interests in the area. Chapter two analyses the peculiar structure of the Commonwealth of Independent States and the extent to which Russia used this political framework to achieve hegemony over the former Soviet republics. Chapter three looks at Russia's participation in the wars in Transdniestria, Abkhazia, Nagorno-Karabagh, and Tajikistan, and Chapter four analyses Russia's energy trade with Ukraine, Belarus, and the Caspian states.

The thesis reaches the conclusion that during 1992- mid 1996 Russia's policies only partially reflected an attempt to reassert the country's influence over the republics of the former Soviet Union and create an informal empire in the post-Soviet space. Russia's behaviour was particularly assertive in the military field as well as in its attempts to build a Russian-dominated CIS military infrastructure. However, Russia's policies were less aggressive in the economic sphere, except probably as far as energy policy is concerned, and regarding the fate of Russians living beyond the new borders. More often than not, though, Russia's policies followed an ambivalent and incoherent pattern, a result of the weak and fragmented character of the Russian state.

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Abbreviations

ASSR	Autonomous Soviet Socialist Republic
BBC SWB	British Broadcasting Company Summary of World Broadcasts
CBR	Central Bank of Russia
CCC	Committee of Chiefs of Staff
CDPSP	Current Digest of the Post-Soviet Press
CE	Council of Europe
CFE	Conventional Forces in Europe
CIOC	Caspian International Operating Company
CIS	Commonwealth of Independent States
CMEA	Community of Mutual Economic Assistance
CPC	Caspian Pipeline Consortium
CPD	Congress of People's Deputies
CPRF	Communist Party of the Russian Federation
CSCE/OSCE	Conference on (subsequently Organisation for) Security and Co-operation in Europe
CST	Collective Security Treaty
EFTA	European Free Trade Association
EIU	Economist Intelligence Unit
FIS	Foreign Intelligence Service
FSS	Former Soviet Space
FBIS	Foreign Broadcasts Information Service
HCNM	High Commissioner for National Minorities
IBRD	International Bank for Reconstruction and Development
IEC	Inter-state Economic Committee
IMF	International Monetary Fund
IEA	International Energy Agency
JAF	Joint Armed Forces
KGB	Committee for State Security
LDPR	Liberal Democratic Party
MFA	Ministry of Foreign Affairs
MFE	Ministry of Fuel and Energy
MGIMO	Moscow State Institute for International Relations
MID	Motorised Infantry Division
MNB	Military News Bulletin
MOD	Ministry of Defence
MVD	Ministry of Internal Affairs
NAFTA	North American Free Trade Association
NATO	North Atlantic Treaty Organisation
RET	Russian Economic Trends
RSFSR	Russian Soviet Federal Socialist Republic
SCMC	Staff for the Co-ordination of Military Co-operation
SOCAR	Azerbaijani state oil company
SSR	Soviet Socialist Republic
TCMD	Transcaucasian Military District
UN	United Nations
UNGA	United Nations General Assembly
UNOMIG	United Nations Mission in Georgia
UNOSOM	United Nations United Nations Operation in Somalia
UNPROFOR	United Nations Protection Force in Yugoslavia
UNSC	United Nations Security Council

USSR	Union of Soviet Socialist Republics
WEU	Western European Union

Note on Transliteration

The current thesis has used the Library of Congress transliteration system. However the letter я has been translated by 'ya' instead of 'ia'. In the text, the usual forms Boris Yeltsin, Evgeny Primakov, Vladimir Zhirinovsky, Gennady Zyuganov, Arkady Volsky, Evgeny Shaposhnikov, Vladimir Semyonov, Yegor Gaidar and Boris Fyodorov have been used, instead of Boris El'tsin, Evgenii Primakov, Vladimir Zhirinovskii, Gennadii Ziuganov, Arkadii Volskii, Evgenii Shaposhnikov, Vladimir Semenov, Egor Gaidar and Boris Fedorov. In the footnotes and bibliography, names of Russian authors, whose works are in English or French, have been left as originally transliterated by the publishers.

Introduction

The break up of the Soviet Union in 1991 entailed a profound transformation of the geopolitical landscape in the Eurasian land mass. A truncated Russian state, surrounded by a series of politically and economically fragile newly independent states, emerged in the territory of the former USSR. This created a fundamental problem, namely whether Russia, having lost vast amounts of land and over 25 million ethnic nationals would be able to discard its imperial legacy and consider the new states as independent and entirely sovereign entities of international law, or whether instead, its leaders would attempt to restore Russia's hegemony over the post-Soviet space. The current thesis analyses in detail Russia's military, economic and diplomatic policies towards the newly independent states, particularly towards the members of the CIS, during Boris Yeltsin's first term as President of an independent Russia (December 1991 to July 1996). The objective is to determine whether after the collapse of the Soviet Union the new Russian state tried to restore a sphere of influence or informal empire over the former Soviet republics - as the French did in sub-Saharan Africa after decolonisation - or whether instead Russia's policies reflected a genuine desire to establish normal state-to-state relations with the new states. In other words, whether bilateral and multilateral co-operation between Russia and the former Soviet states (FSS) tended to approach the model of 'symmetric' relations, which Hendrik Spruyt defined as a situation in which privileged ties are established with the former Soviet states, but the new states are not penalised for choosing policies that do not correspond entirely to Russia's interests, and relations are based on voluntary contracting.¹ The weak and fragmented character of the new Russian state, however, also allowed for some incoherent and ambivalent policy, not really following a clear pattern of behaviour. In order to assess properly Russia's policies towards the FSS, the thesis will determine whether Russia's pro-active policies in the area responded to legitimate state interests or whether instead they were motivated by an 'imperial design' and a desire to restore an 'informal empire' or 'neo-empire' over the former Soviet states.² The work will focus particularly on the CIS states, given that Russia's policies towards those states were particularly assertive, especially after 1992. During 1992-1996, the Baltic states remained of great significance to Russia, primarily

¹ Hendrik Spruyt, 'The Prospects for Neo-Imperial and Non-Imperial Outcomes in the Former Soviet Space', in *The End of Empire? The Transformation of the USSR in Comparative Perspective*, (hereafter, *The End of Empire?*), eds. Karen Dawisha and Bruce Parrott, London and New York, 1997, pp.316-317).

² Throughout this work, the concept of informal empire and neo-empire will be used interchangeably.

because of the presence of a large Russian-speaking community, and the existence of important military installations, such as the Skrunda early-warning radar station. Moreover, the Baltic states hosted port facilities and transit routes which allowed Russia to access the Russian enclave of Kaliningrad, and Western markets. However, there seemed to be an acknowledgement, broadly shared among members of the Russian elite, that Russia 'had lost' this traditionally significant region, as indicated by the readiness to withdraw all Russian troops, and the lack of pressure exercised over these countries so that they join the CIS and its military, political and economic institutions.³ Russia's policies towards the Baltic states will therefore be addressed in a less extensive manner.

Legitimate state interests will be defined as those interests pursued by a country's leadership for the sake of preserving the state's territory and protecting its own people, such as preventing conflict and instability along the country's external borders, preserving regional stability, preventing the spread of crime, weapons, drugs and illegal immigrants into the country, maintaining and developing economic links with major trading partners, preserving open trade routes, protecting citizens or co-ethnics living beyond the borders. In order for these interests to be legitimate, their pursuit must not contradict the agreed principles of international law governing inter-state relations. The Helsinki Final Act, to which all former Soviet states abided when signing the CSCE Paris Charter for a New Europe, defines the following ten principles of inter-state relations: respect for sovereignty and sovereign equality, non-resort to the threat or use of force, inviolability of frontiers, territorial integrity, peaceful settlement of disputes, non-intervention in internal affairs, respect for human rights and fundamental freedoms, equal rights and self-determination of peoples, co-operation among states, and fulfilment of international obligations.⁴ However, it might well be possible that state interests are pursued not in accordance with international law, but they are still not aimed at establishing a neo-empire.

As far as the concept of *informal empire* or *neo-empire* is concerned, Miles Kahler defines it as a 'looser and more geographically circumscribed system of influence [than the previous empire] over militarily weak and economically dependent societies.'⁵ Bruce

³ Vasilii Lipitskii, 'Kogda zhe budet pereotsenka tsennostei', *Rossiiskaya Gazeta*, 26 June 1992.

⁴ Conference on Security and Co-operation in Europe (CSCE), *Final Act*, Helsinki, 1975, US Department of State, Publication 8826; *Charter of Paris for a New Europe*, CSCE, Paris, 19-21 November, 1990, (www.osceprag.cz). These principles are in agreement with, and complement, those upheld by UN member states in the UN Charter (art.2 and art. 51).

⁵ Miles Kahler, 'Empires, Neo-empires, and Political Change: The French and British Experience' (hereafter, 'Empires, Neo-empires, and Political Change'), in *The End of Empire?*, p.289.

Parrott, in turn, argues that an informal empire entails the domination by the metropolitan state of the external and internal affairs of other nominally independent states.⁶ Hendrik Spruyt adds another important element. He notes that hegemonic relations develop when the symmetry of benefits diminishes, and the contracting process becomes less voluntary.⁷ *Informal empire* will therefore be defined as an area, usually composed of former colonies, over which the dominant power - or former mother country - has a substantial capacity to influence the external and internal developments, and over which other countries are denied a hegemonic presence. This capacity to influence events is usually obtained as a result of an important military, economic and diplomatic presence, and/or the development of close military, political and economic ties. It does not however, involve an effort to wrest formal sovereignty from the other countries, which is a trait specific of imperialist policies.⁸ Informal empire, however, does entail the partial surrender of sovereignty by the former colonies to the former metropolis - for example, by ceding control over external borders, over the economy or the currency, or over foreign policy. This crucial aspect of informal empire is highlighted by David A. Lake, who argues that informal empires differ from their more formal counterparts 'only in the breadth of residual rights of control transferred from the subordinate state.'⁹ Whereas in formal empires, the metropolis' control over the rights belonging to the subordinate partner is nearly total, in informal empires, the control is substantial but less than complete. Finally, a clear motivation to create systemic dependency must be present, for policies to be classified as neo-imperialist.¹⁰ *Informal-empire building* will therefore be defined as the process whereby the former metropolis establishes an informal empire over its former colonies.

1. The Imperialist Argument

So far we have assumed that the Soviet Union was an empire. However, if we are to discuss whether Russia is able to discard its '*imperial legacy*', and if we are to compare its post-Soviet behaviour with the French experiences in post-colonial Africa, we must

⁶ Bruce Parrott, 'Analysing the Transformation of the Soviet Union in Comparative Perspective', *The End of Empire?*, p.14.

⁷ Hendrik Spruyt, 'The Prospects of Neo-Imperial and Non-Imperial Outcomes in the Former Soviet Space', p.317.

⁸ Karen Dawisha, 'Conclusion', in *The Making of Foreign Policy in Russia and the New States of Eurasia*, eds. Adeed and Karen Dawisha, The International Politics of Eurasia, 4, New York and London, 1995, p.341.

⁹ David A. Lake 'The Rise and Fall of the Russian Empire: A Theoretical Interpretation', in *The End of Empire?*, p.22.

¹⁰ Karen Dawisha, 'Conclusion', p.341.

explain first why we consider the Soviet Union to be an empire. Michael W. Doyle defines *empire* as a 'relationship, formal or informal, in which one state controls the effective political sovereignty of another political society.'¹¹ Miles Kahler, in turn, refers to two fundamental dimensions which distinguish imperial rule from other forms of international relations: *hierarchy* of power, as opposed to devolution of decision-making; and *monopoly* of external ties, as opposed to diversification of external relations.¹² Hierarchy means that one society - the metropolis or centre - assumes supreme decision-making authority over internal and external polices.¹³ On the basis of these definitions, we may conclude that an *empire* entails tight centralised control over the external and internal relations of distinct political communities. In the Soviet Union, Moscow exercised a monopoly of control through the Communist Party, the military and the security structures over the external and internal polices of very distinct political societies, such as the developed and westernised Baltic regions, the more primitive Muslim societies of Central Asia, the various ethnic groups inhabiting the Caucasian mountains and Transcaucasian regions, and the Slav republics of Belorussia and Ukraine. These distinctions were deepened by the creation of ethnically defined territorial-administrative units - the union republics, autonomous republics and autonomous *oblasts* - which were usually based on historical ethnic homelands, and helped to sustain or deepen distinct national identities among the principal ethnic minorities. These considerations therefore argue in favour of classifying the USSR as an empire.

Ghita Ionescu, in turn, refers to three basic elements, which characterise empires, all of which were present in the Soviet Union: first, a strong political centre, animated by a historical mission of expansion; second, religious or ideological coercion; and third, a 'sense of final purpose' in its elite.¹⁴ Marxist-Leninist ideology, embedded with a sense of mission, provided a powerful instrument of external expansion and a very effective instrument of coercion. According to Dominic Lieven, *empire* implies possession of wide-spread territories inhabited by peoples varying widely in their history, ethnicity, religion and culture, as well as a considerable degree of direct administrative supervision. An empire, in his view, must be a great power, play a major role in shaping not just the international relations but also the values and culture of an historical epoch.¹⁵ In this, sense, then, the Soviet Union can also be considered an empire. Mark R. Beissinger adds

¹¹ Michael W. Doyle, *Empires*, Ithaca and London, 1986, p. 45.

¹² Miles Kahler, 'Empires, Neo-empires and Political Change', p.287.

¹³ *ibid.*

¹⁴ Ghita Ionescu, *The Break-up of the Soviet Empire in Eastern Europe*, Baltimore, MD, 1965, p.7

a very valuable element to the various definitions of empire listed above - the 'subjective' dimension.¹⁶ Beissinger emphasises that the most important aspect of any imperial situation is perception; in other words, whether politics and policies are accepted as 'ours' or rejected as 'theirs.' The latter case implies both a well-developed sense of separate group identity and a recognition of the illegitimacy of the existing polity's authority.' In his view, empire should be understood not as a thing, but as a set of practices that give rise to perceptions and claims that the polity represents a fundamentally alien rule, an 'other.'¹⁷ Although it is correct to assume that in many areas of the Soviet Union the perception of being ruled by an 'alien', illegitimate authority was very weak, as for example in Central Asia or Belarus, in other areas of the Soviet Union, in particular the Baltic States, Georgia, and to a certain extent in Moldova and Azerbaijan, the sense of belonging to a different political and ethnic polity, and of being ruled by 'alien' Russians was very strong. In this sense, therefore, we can also argue that the Soviet Union was, to all intents and purposes, an empire - although a very peculiar one, given the physical proximity of its 'colonies' and the efforts of its leaders to develop a high sense of equality among all ethnic groups, by fostering the emergence of a Homo Sovieticus, which tended to blur the imperial character of the political entity.

Was the Soviet Union a *Russian* Empire? Russian dissident Aleksandr Solzhenitsyn rejected the idea that it was, arguing instead that the Soviet Union was a Communist empire.¹⁸ John Dunlop and Alan Besançon also refused to consider the USSR a Russian empire.¹⁹ Besançon argued that the Russian people did not enjoy any special privileges, as the French and the British had in their own empires. The 'advantages' enjoyed by Russians, according to Besançon, derived from their support of communism and not from their being Russian. In other words, although Russians were seen as the surest allies of communism, they enjoyed a privileged position mainly because of their loyalty to the regime. A similar position was adopted by Paul Kolstoe, who argued that 'the most important dividing line in Soviet society, namely that between the haves and the have-

¹⁵ Dominic Lieven, 'The Russian Empire and the Soviet Union as Imperial Polities', *Journal of Contemporary History*, 30, 1995, pp.608-609.

¹⁶ Mark R. Beissinger, 'The Persisting Ambiguity of Empire', *Post-Soviet Affairs*, 11, 1995, 2, pp.149-184.

¹⁷ *ibid.*, p.155.

¹⁸ Aleksander Solzhenitsyn, 'Misconceptions about Russia are a Threat to America', *Foreign Affairs*, 58, Spring 1980, 4, pp. 797-834.

¹⁹ John Dunlop, 'Russia: Confronting the Loss of Empire', in *Nations and Politics in the Soviet Successor States*, eds. Ian Bremmer and Ray Taras, Cambridge, 1993, pp.45-46; Alain Besançon, 'Nationalism and Bolshevism in the USSR', in *The Last Empire: Nationality and the Soviet Future*, ed. Robert Conquest, Stanford, 1986, pp.10-11.

nots, was not related to ethnic criteria but determined by membership or non-membership of the ruling elite.²⁰ In other words, the privileged came from distinct ethnic origins and belonged to the nomenklatura. It can well be argued that in some respects there was total equality among ethnic groups, given that Soviet citizenship was extended to Russians and non-Russians alike, and Russians, like other nationalities, very much suffered at the hands of communist leaders, especially, although not only, when they displayed too overt a support for Russian nationalism. Moreover, individual Russians did not enjoy any special privileges when living in the non-Russian republics, and the Russian Soviet Federal Socialist Republic (RSFSR) was deprived of such essential symbols of official Soviet recognition as a separate Russian Communist Party, Academy of Sciences and Central Committee. However, as Bruce Parrott correctly pointed out, many other considerations do argue in favour of classifying the USSR as a Russian empire. Moscow's policies towards mass education and senior political appointments were based on the assumption that the Russian culture and language were superior to those of other nationalities.²¹ The official status of the Russian language, the dominant position of Russians in republican and national governing structures, as well as in the army and the police, secured the dominant status of the Russian people and ensured the absence of threats to their own ethnicity.²² On the basis of these assumptions, therefore, it can well be argued that the Soviet Union was, to a great extent, a Russian empire. However, it should be recalled that the status of Russians fluctuated significantly over time. Under Stalin, for example, the Russians were clearly more favoured than they had been both before and after. But during the post-Stalinist period, the Russian diasporas were still culturally and linguistically privileged in relation to other non-titular ethnic groups.²³

The 'imperial character' of the Soviet Union allows us to make some interesting comparisons with the French experience, given that France devised and successfully implemented a system of influence over its former colonies in sub-Saharan Africa. Although France *had* an overseas empire, as opposed to the Soviet Union which was a contiguous empire, the French still considered the empire to be part of France - they named it 'France d'outre-mer' - and consequently, experienced a major national identity crisis during the stages of decolonisation, similar, although probably not as acute, as the

²⁰ Paul Kolstoe, *Russians in the Former Soviet Republics*, London, 1995, p.103.

²¹ Bruce Parrott, 'Analysing the Transformation of the Soviet Union in Comparative Perspective', pp.11-12.

²² Michael Rywkin, 'The Russia-Wide Soviet Federated Socialist Republic (RSFSR): Privileged or Underprivileged?', in *Ethnic Russia in the USSR: The Dilemma of Dominance*, ed. Edward Allworth, New York and Oxford, 1980, pp.180-187.

²³ Paul Kolstoe, *Russians in the Former Soviet Republics*, p.103.

crisis experienced by Russia after the disintegration of the Soviet Union. Moreover, as was the case with Russia when the Soviet Union collapsed, France had to deal with the legacies of empire in its colonies - i.e. a vast number of military garrisons, important economic interests, substantial cultural penetration, as well as the presence of a significant number of French immigrants who had settled in the African continent. This makes the comparison between the disintegration of the Soviet Union and French decolonisation all the more valuable, and certainly more appropriate than, for example, a comparison with American policies in Central America or Soviet policies in Finland. In the latter examples, we are not dealing with the setting up of spheres of influence over territories that belonged to the great power, but with contiguous areas that fall under the influence of a major neighbouring power.

The French state managed to establish a 'neo empire' in sub-Saharan Africa. A network of bases and a system of bilateral defence agreements allowed France to keep an important military presence in the area - about four thousand troops were stationed in Djibouti, and smaller numbers in Senegal, Gabon, Chad, and the Central African Republic. Almost two thousand African officers were trained in France each year, and France sent one thousand military advisers to twenty-three African states.²⁴ In the economic field, France established control over the currencies, central banks, fiscal policies, and treasuries of all but two of its former colonies through the Franc Zone, thus tying the colonies' economies very closely to the former mother country.²⁵ France also negotiated preferential trade agreements with its former colonies and paid higher than world prices for African raw materials. French investment and targeted financial aid flowed, as well as large resources devoted to the propagation of French language and culture - key elements in retaining elite loyalties to France.²⁶ Intelligence co-operation became the norm between France and its former colonies in Africa, and on several occasions French troops intervened to preserve friendly governments against internal threats, such as in the Central African Republic, the Congo, Gabon, Niger, Mauritania, and most recently in Chad. In the diplomatic sphere, France succeeded in establishing co-

²⁴ John Chipman, *French Power in Africa*, Oxford, 1989, pp.109-111.

²⁵ Gerard Destanne de Bernis, 'Some Aspects of the Economic Relationship between France and its Ex-colonies', in *Decolonisation and After: the British and French Experience*, eds. W. H. Morris-Jones and Dennis Austin, London, 1980, pp.107-127. The common currency, the CFA franc, was pegged to the French franc at a rate of 50:1. Members of the franc zone enjoyed a number of advantages, such as a freely convertible currency guaranteed by France, access to pooled reserves to deal with external shocks, and low inflation rates, since monetary policy was effectively removed from national control.

²⁶ Hendrik Spruyt, 'The Prospects for Neo-Imperial and Non-imperial Outcomes in the Former Soviet Space', p.301.

operation with its former African colonies at the United Nations and regular Franco-African summits reinforced the ties between France and the leaders of francophone Africa.²⁷ This system of tight military, economic and diplomatic co-operation allowed France to maintain a 'neo-imperial' system in its former African colonies for over thirty years.

2. The Imperialist Argument and the Current Literature

Most of the early literature examining Russia's relations with the former Soviet states argued that Russia was conducting an assertive neo-imperialist policy aimed at restoring an empire of a new kind in the former Soviet space, and disregarded the element of restraint which was also present in Russian behaviour. This thesis will disagree, to a great extent, with these 'imperialist' views, which are to be found, for example, in the work of Fiona Hill and Pamela Jewett.²⁸ By examining Russia's involvement in the conflicts that erupted in the former Soviet states, as well as the general lines of Russia's policy towards the former Soviet republics, Hill and Jewett concluded that after the collapse of the Soviet Union, Russia tried to recreate the former economic and military union it once dominated. Following a similar line of interpretation, Thomas Goltz argued that Russian leaders conducted a conscious policy of stirring up conflicts in the Transcaucasus in order to preserve Russia's influence in the area.²⁹ After analysing the wars in Nagorno-Karabagh and Abkhazia, and the fall of the Azerbaijani President Abulfaz Elchibey in the Spring of 1993, Goltz reached the conclusion that 'Russian policy appears to be based on the tacit threat of dismemberment of those states that wish to leave Moscow's orbit.'³⁰

Likewise, the various essays in the book edited by Uri Ra'an and Kate Martin, *Russia: A Return to Imperialism?*, argued that Russia's doctrines and operations reflected imperialist behaviour.³¹ Sergei Grigoriev, for example, claimed that 'the war in Tajikistan

²⁷ *ibid.*

²⁸ Fiona Hill and Pamela Jewett, *'Back to the USSR': Russia's Intervention in the Internal Affairs of the Former Soviet Republics and the Implications for the United States Policy towards Russia*, Ethnic Conflict Project, John F. Kennedy School of Government, Harvard University, Cambridge Ma., January 1994. Other short articles that refer to Russia's neo-imperialist behaviour: Richard Pipes, 'Imperial Russian Foreign Policy', *Times Literary Supplement*, May 20, 1994, pp. 3-5; Peter Reddaway, 'The Role of Popular Discontent', *The National Interest*, 31, Spring 1993.

²⁹ Thomas Goltz, 'Letter from Eurasia: The Hidden Russian Hand', *Foreign Policy*, 92, Autumn 1993, pp.92-116.

³⁰ *ibid.*, p.92.

³¹ *Russia: A Return to Imperialism*, eds. Uri Ra'an and Kate Martin, Institute for the Study of Conflict, Ideology and Policy, Boston University, Basingstoke and London, 1995.

reached such a large scale because Russia decided to support the most reactionary communist-Islamic fundamentalist regime [in the country, thus] obstructing the growth of democracy.’³² He also argued that in November 1993, the Russian government pushed Central Asia away from the ruble zone, thus placing the reformist regimes in Kyrgyzstan and Kazakhstan on the verge of bankruptcy.³³ Uri Ra’anan in turn, expressed the view that Russia’s assertion of dominance over the former Soviet states, which was being conducted with the use or threat of force, was a manifestation of post-Soviet Imperialism. He also argued that the war in Chechnya [had demonstrated], that ‘after largely successful efforts to extend Russia’s de facto borders by reabsorbing [the] former Soviet republics’, Moscow recognised ‘no limits on the means that [it could] use to consolidate its empire, whether within the Russian Federation or beyond.’³⁴ Similarly, Ariel Cohen argued that the Russian military and security services, the former Gosplan and the various Russian branch ministries had started in early 1992 a struggle for the re-establishment of the empire through military covert action, as well as diplomatic and economic measures.³⁵

Similar views regarding Russia’s assertive behaviour were expressed by Bruce D. Porter and Carol R. Saivetz.³⁶ According to these authors, after the end of the Soviet Union, Russia attempted to reassert its influence over the former Soviet states through a wide range of political, military and economic pressures and inducements, such as the revitalisation of the CIS, manipulation of oil and gas deliveries, diplomatic support for Russians living in the CIS, fiscal inducements, and outright military blackmail. Porter and Saivetz claimed that ‘whether originating from domestic political pressure or an objective reassessment of Russia’s own interests, the concrete political result was a partial reincarnation of a Russian empire, or at least a well-defined sphere of influence, throughout the territory of the former Soviet Union.’³⁷ Following a similar line of argument, William E. Odom and Robert Dujarric maintained that Russian leaders used the CIS as an instrument for the restoration of Russia’s economic and military power

³² Sergei Grigoriev, ‘Neo Imperialism: The Underlying Factors’, in *Russia: A Return to Imperialism*, p.4.

³³ *ibid.*, p.6.

³⁴ Uri Ra’anan, ‘Imperial Elements in Russia’s Doctrines and Operations’, in *Russia: A Return to Imperialism*, p.28.

³⁵ Ariel Cohen, ‘Revisiting Russia’s Turbulent Rim: Caucasus, Central Asia, and Moldova’, *Russia: A Return to Imperialism*, pp.87-103.

³⁶ Bruce D. Porter and Carol R. Saivetz, ‘The Once and Future Empire: Russia and the ‘Near Abroad’, *The Washington Quarterly*, 17, 1994, 3, pp.75-90.

³⁷ *ibid.*, p.77

over the states of Central Asia and Transcaucasia.³⁸ Peter Truscott also claimed that Russia was trying to dominate its former Soviet neighbours by flexing its economic, political and military muscle.³⁹ Likewise, Mark Smith suggested that, despite its manifold weaknesses, Russia was powerful enough to attempt to establish a 'Pax Russica' throughout the near abroad.⁴⁰ Stephen E. Miller also considered that Russia's policies towards the near abroad in the fields of peacekeeping, military and economic integration, and bilateral trade, tended increasingly to approach the model of 'domination.'⁴¹ Domination implied a strategy whereby Russia treated the former Soviet Union as its sphere of influence and emphasised its unilateral interests and prerogatives.

Taking a similar view, Mark Beissinger also claimed that Russia was trying to restore a sphere of influence over the new states of the former Soviet Union. In his view, Russia 'for the most part, denies the legitimacy of the collapse of its past state-building projects, seeks to extend its influence over the new system of states, and even openly seeks to reintegrate these new states under its lead.'⁴² According to Beissinger, this resulted from the difficulties that Russian elites were experiencing in coming to terms with the loss of empire. Renee de Nevers also raised a similar point when she wrote that 'Russia no longer appears willing to accept the independence of the rest of the former Soviet Union as a given. Instead, it is increasingly open to negotiation - or blackmail.'⁴³ Gerhard Simon also held the view that the neo-imperial rhetoric was increasingly becoming part of the policies of the Russian government. This explained, according to Simon, why Russia was having difficulty in treating the former Soviet states as truly independent,

³⁸ William E. Odom and Robert Dujarric, *Commonwealth or Empire? Russia, Central Asia and the Transcaucasus*, Hudson Institute, Indianapolis, 1995.

³⁹ Peter Truscott, *Russia First: Breaking with the West*, London and New York, 1997.

⁴⁰ Mark Smith, *Pax Russica: Russia's Monroe Doctrine*, Whitehall Paper Series, The Royal United Services Institute for Defence Studies, London, 1993. John Lough also argued that a widespread suspicion of a Russian neo-imperial design had developed among the newly independent states, to a great extent due to the instability and indeterminacy of Russia's behaviour. (John Lough, *Russia's Influence in the Near Abroad: Problems and Prospects*, Conflict Studies Research Centre, The Royal Military Academy Sandhurst, Camberley, August 1993).

⁴¹ Stephen E. Miller, 'Russian National Interests' in *Damage Limitation or Crisis?: Russia and the Outside World*, eds. Robert D. Blackwill and Sergei Karaganov, CSIA Studies in International Security, 5, Washington and London, 1994, pp.77-106.

⁴² Mark Beissinger, 'State Building in the Shadow of an Empire-State: The Soviet Legacy in Post-Soviet politics', in *The End of Empire?*, p.161. Ilya Prizel takes a similar view. (Ilya Prizel, *National Identity and Foreign Policy*, Cambridge, 1998.)

⁴³ Renee de Nevers, *Russia's Strategic Renovation - Russian Security Strategies and Foreign Policy in the Post-Imperial Era*, Adelphi Paper, 289, July 1994, p.72.

although it recognised them as such in December 1991, and was conducting an increasingly expansionist policy in the area.⁴⁴

Another line of interpretation, with which this thesis tends to coincide, sees Russia's behaviour towards the former Soviet states as assertive, but driven above all by pragmatic state concerns, which derived from its dominant position within the former Soviet space. Karen Dawisha argued that, as the largest and strongest country of the former Soviet Union, Russia found itself in a position of enormous comparative advantage after the Soviet Union collapsed.⁴⁵ According to her, Russian leaders often, but not always, exercised this advantage to the detriment of the other new states.⁴⁶ Although Russia's policies were not aimed at re-establishing an empire, Dawisha argued that the area surrounding Russia's borders was bound to remain critical to its well-being and security, and was to develop into what Michael McGwire called a 'national security zone.'⁴⁷ A similar view was taken by Hannes Adomeit, who argued that, from the second half of 1992 to early 1994, Moscow did indeed in several instances act unilaterally, applying military-political pressures and intervening as if it had a *droit de regard* in the former Soviet Union.⁴⁸ However, Adomeit claimed that even during that period, the overall character of Russian external policies was not one of restoration of empire and abandonment of co-operation with the West.⁴⁹ Similar views are expressed by Neil

⁴⁴ Gerhard Simon, 'La Russie: une hegemonie eurasiennne?', *Politique Etrangere*, 59, Spring 1994, 1, pp. 29-48.

⁴⁵ Karen Dawisha, 'Constructing and Deconstructing Empire in the Post-Soviet Space', in *The End of Empire?*, p.356-357.

⁴⁶ Similarly Rajan Menon argued that despite the lack of support among the Russian population to risk war or spend large sums of money to re-create the Soviet Union, the Russian government would probably conduct a policy of pre-eminence in the post-Soviet space. This was determined by Russia's historical legacy of colonial control over Transcaucasia and Central Asia, the overwhelming superiority of its power, and geographic proximity. Russia would not attempt to restore the Soviet Union, but would simply remain the dominant power in the region. (Rajan Menon, 'After Empire: Russia and the Southern "Near Abroad"', in *The New Russian Foreign Policy*, ed. Michael Mandelbaum, Council on Foreign Relations, New York, 1998, pp.100-166.)

⁴⁷ According to McGwire, the conceptual distinction between an empire and a national security zone is more than a difference of degree. The former has no basis in current international norms or laws, the latter allows one to focus on the natural interplay of relations between great powers and smaller states, an interplay in which great powers are infinitely more constrained than imperial powers and in which small states have significantly more leeway than colonies. (Michael McGwire, *Perestroika and Soviet National Security*, Washington DC, Brookings's Institution, 1991, cited by Dawisha, 'Constructing and Deconstructing Empire in the Post-Soviet Space', p.356).

⁴⁸ Hannes Adomeit, 'Russia as a 'Great Power' in World Affairs: Images and Reality', *International Affairs*, 71, 1995, 1, pp.35-68.

⁴⁹ *ibid.*, p.58. This view is also held by Hendrik Spruyt, who asserted that Russia had not sought to re-establish an empire over the former Soviet states, although in certain areas it had pursued an assertive policy. (Hendrik Spruyt, 'The Prospects of Neo-Imperial and Non-imperial Outcomes in the Former Soviet space', pp. 323, 330).

Malcolm and Alex Pravda, according to whom, economic, military and political pressures were applied in 1993 to forward Russia's interests and to bring the CIS governments into line.⁵⁰ However, Pravda and Malcolm argue that Russia's policies were not as assertive as they initially seemed. There was a strong reluctance in Moscow to make material sacrifices for the sake of CIS partners. Moreover, by 1994, domestic political weakness contributed to a lack of clarity in policy, and thus to the absence of a coherent and effective policy.⁵¹ These views coincide to a great extent with the conclusions reached by the current thesis, which argues that Russia's policies only partially fitted into a neo-imperialist pattern.⁵²

3. Testing the Imperialist Argument

In order to properly assess the nature of Russia's relations to the FSS, particularly to the CIS states, and in order to determine correctly whether it was aimed at building an informal empire in the post-Soviet space, the thesis first analyses the underlying principles of Russia's foreign policy towards the FSS and examines the overall debate on Russian foreign policy priorities which characterised the first years of Russia's

⁵⁰ Neil Malcolm and Alex Pravda, 'Introduction', in Neil Malcolm, Alex Pravda, Roy Allison and Margot Light, *Internal factors in Russian Foreign Policy*, The Royal Institute of International Affairs, Oxford, 1996, pp.7-10.

⁵¹ Ibid. Mark Webber also makes reference to the existing limits of Russia's great power revival and its attempts to create a sphere of influence, a result of its weak economic performance and reduced military means. (Mark Webber, *The International Politics of Russia and the Successor States*, Manchester and New York, 1996, pp.348-350). Similar views are expressed by Leon Aron, 'The Foreign Policy Doctrine of Post-Communist Russia and its Domestic Context', in *The New Russian Foreign Policy*, pp.33-42.

⁵² Besides the above-mentioned works, there is a whole body of literature that does not address the neo-imperialist question directly. However, a great deal of the material, both explicitly and implicitly contained in it, is relevant to the argument of the current thesis, such as the work edited by Celeste A. Wallander, *The Sources of Russian Foreign Policy After the Cold War*, which deals with the domestic factors that influenced Russian foreign policy (Celeste A. Wallander, *The Sources of Russian Foreign Policy After the Cold War*, The Harvard University Russian Research Center, Harvard, 1996), and the work edited by Adeed and Karen Dawisha, *The Making of Foreign Policy in Russia and the New States of Eurasia*, which analyses Russia's foreign policy from a domestic perspective by examining the mechanisms and institutions involved in foreign-policy formulation. (*The Making of Foreign Policy in Russia and the New States of Eurasia*, eds. Adeed and Karen Dawisha, New York and London, 1995). Also relevant to the current thesis is the following work: *The Emergence of Russia's Foreign Policy*, eds. Leon Aron and Kenneth M. Jensen, The United States Institute for Peace, Washington DC, 1994; Karen Dawisha and Bruce Parrott, *Russia and the New States of Eurasia: The Politics of Upheaval*, Cambridge, 1994; Alexander Rahr and Joachim Krause, *Russia's New Foreign Policy*, Arbeitspapiere zur internationalen Politik, 91, Bonn, 1995; Mette Skak, *From Empire to Anarchy: Post-Communist Foreign Policy and International Relations*, Hurst, 1996; *Russia and Europe: The Emerging Security Agenda*, ed. Vladimir Baranovsky, SIPRI, Oxford, 1997; Barnett R. Rubin and Jack Snyder, *Post-Soviet Political Order*, London and New York, 1998; Wynne Russell, 'Russian Relations with the "Near Abroad"', in *Russian Foreign Policy Since 1990*, ed. Peter Shearman, Boulder, Co., San Francisco, Oxford, 1995.

independence. A close look is taken at the official policy concepts and ideas of Russian decision-makers regarding Russia's national interests in the post-Soviet space.⁵³ What did Russian leaders consider to be the boundaries of the Russian state? What area did Russia regard as its strategic space? Did Russia feel entitled to defend the sovereignty and territorial integrity not only of Russia but of the other CIS countries as well? What populations did Russian leaders consider as Russian and therefore entitled to protection? What were Russia's national interests and how did they differ from Russia's former imperial interests? What were the threats to the territorial integrity and survivability of Russia? Having clarified Russia's leaders' views on the configuration of the Russian state and its national interests, the research then examines Russia's military, economic and diplomatic policies towards the republics of the former Soviet Union in order to determine to what extent and how Russia was attempting to restore its previous influence in the area. This chapter also overviews Russia's policies towards the Russian minorities that inhabited the FSS.⁵⁴ By looking at the Baltic case, it analyses whether Russia attempted to use this diplomatic tool to further its own interests in the area.

The research then analyses the peculiar structure of the Commonwealth of Independent States and the extent to which Russia used this political framework to achieve hegemony over the former Soviet republics, during 1992-mid 1996. It then examines the processes of military and economic integration within the CIS in order to determine whether Russia conducted an assertive policy aimed at restoring some sort of renewed union.⁵⁵ In the economic field, the thesis examines Russia's trade and monetary policies within the CIS

⁵³ Relevant literature on foreign policy thinking: Margot Light, 'Foreign Policy Thinking', in Neil Malcolm, Alex Pravda, Roy Allison, and Margot Light, *Internal factors in Russian Foreign Policy*, The Royal Institute of International Affairs, Oxford, 1996, pp. 33-100; *Rethinking Russia's National Interests*, ed. Stephen Sestanovich, Center for Strategic and International Studies, Washington DC, 1993; Marie Mendras, 'Towards a Post-Imperial Identity', and Aleksei Arbatov, 'Russian Foreign Policy Thinking in Transition', in *Russia and Europe: The Emerging Security Agenda*, pp. 90-103 and 135-159.

⁵⁴ Relevant literature on Russian minorities living beyond Russia's borders: Neil Melvin, *Forging the New Russian Nation*, The Royal Institute of International Affairs, London, 1994; Neil Melvin, *Russians beyond Russia*, The Royal Institute of International Affairs, London, 1995; Paul Kolstoe, *Russians in the Former Soviet Republics*, London, 1995; Igor Zevelev, 'Russia and the Russian Diasporas', *Post-Soviet Affairs*, 12, 1996, 3; Jeff Chinn and Robert Kaiser, *Russians as a New Minority: Ethnicity and Nationalism in the Soviet Successor States*, Colorado, 1996.

⁵⁵ Literature particularly relevant to the CIS: Mark Webber, *CIS Integration Trends: Russia and the former Soviet South*, The Royal Institute of International Affairs, London, 1997; Sherman W. Garnett, 'The Integrationist Temptation' *The Washington Quarterly*, 18, 1995, 2, pp. 35-44; Richard Sakwa and Mark Webber, 'The Commonwealth of Independent States, 1991-1998: Stagnation and Survival', *Europe-Asia Studies*, 51, 1999, 3, pp. 379-415; Yuri Shishkov and Vladimir Yevstigneyev, *Economic Relations Within the CIS: How Relevant is the Experience of Cooperation and Integration in Western Europe?*, Federal Trust for Education and Research,

space and the Belarussian-Russian negotiations on monetary integration. In the military field, the thesis looks at multilateral and bilateral forms of CIS military co-operation and examines the development of joint border protection and joint air defence arrangements. The objective is to determine whether these last policies were aimed at establishing a military sphere of influence over the CIS states, besides enhancing Russia's own security.⁵⁶ The research also looks at Russia's participation in four the major military conflicts that erupted in the post Soviet space - the wars in Transdnistria, Abkhazia, Nagorno-Karabagh, and Tajikistan - in order to examine whether Russia's involvement followed legitimate state concerns or whether, instead, it represented an attempt to destabilise these states in order to bring them back into Russia's orbit. The thesis then analyses the energy trade, by looking first at Russia's policies towards those states that depended on its resources, such as Ukraine and Belarus, in order to determine whether Russia used the energy dependence to exercise control over political and economic developments. The thesis then looks at Russia's policies towards the energy-rich Caspian states, to determine whether Russia's attempts to obtain shares in the lucrative Caspian oil deals and to control the flow of Caspian oil were aimed at bringing the Caspian states under Russia's sway.⁵⁷

London, 1994; Andrei Zagorskii, *SNG: Ot desintegratsii k reintegratsii?*, Issledovanie Tsentra Mezhdunarodnykh Issledovaniy MGIMO, Moscow, March 1994, 2.

⁵⁶ Relevant literature on CIS military integration, peacekeeping and conflict resolution: Roy Allison and Christopher Bluth, *Security Dilemmas in Russia and Eurasia*, The Royal Institute of International Affairs, London, 1998; Teresa Pelton Johnson and Stephen E. Miller, *Russian Security After the Cold War: Seven Views from Moscow*, CSIA Studies in International Security, 3, Washington, 1994; Valery Tishkov, *Ethnicity, Nationalism and Conflict in and after the Soviet Union*, PRIO, London, 1997; *Crisis Management in the CIS: Whither Russia?*, eds. Hans-Georg Ehrhart, Anna Kreikemeyer, and Andrei Zagorski, Baden-Baden, 1995; Roy Allison, *Peacekeeping in the Soviet Successor States*, Chaillot Paper, 18, Institute for Security Studies, Western European Union, Paris, 1994; *Challenges from the Former Soviet South*, ed. Roy Allison, Brookings, 1996; Pavel Baev, *The Russian Army in a Time of Troubles*, PRIO, London, 1996; Pavel Baev, *Russia's policies in the Caucasus*, The Royal Institute of International Affairs, London, 1997; *State-building and Military Power in Russia and the New States of Eurasia*, ed. Bruce Parrot, New York and London, 1995; John Wright, Suzanne Goldenberg and Richard Schonfield, *Transcaucasian Boundaries*, London, 1996; Edgar O'Ballance, *Wars in the Caucasus, 1990-1995*, London, 1997; *Contested Borders in the Caucasus*, ed. Bruno Coppieters, Brussels, 1996; *Regional Rivalries in the New Eurasia*, eds. Alvin Z. Rubinstein and Oles M. Smolansky, London and New York, 1995; Irina Zviagelskaya, *The Russian Policy Debate on Central Asia*, The Royal Institute of International Affairs, London, 1995; *Central Asia and the World*, ed. Michael Mandelbaum, Council on Foreign Relations, New York, 1994; Edmund Herzig, *Iran and the Former Soviet South*, The Royal Institute of International Affairs, London, 1995; Edmund Herzig, *The New Caucasus: Armenia, Azerbaijan, Georgia*, The Royal Institute of International Affairs, London, 1999.

⁵⁷ Relevant literature on the energy trade: John Roberts, *Caspian Pipelines*, The Royal Institute of International Affairs, London, 1996; Rosemarie Forsythe, *The Politics of Oil in the Caucasus and Central Asia*, Adelphi Paper, 300, London, 1996; Gavan McDonnell, *The Euro-Asian Corridor: Transport and Communications for Central Asia and the Caspian Region*, The Royal Institute of International Affairs, London, 1995; Vladimir Razuvaev, *Russian Interests in the Caspian Region: The Energy Dimension*, Stiftung Wissenschaft und Politik, Ebenhausen, May 1996; Josef C. Brada

The thesis reaches the conclusion that after the collapse of the Soviet Union and during 1992- mid 1996 Russia's policies only partially reflected an attempt by Russia to reassert its influence over the states of the former Soviet Union and to create an informal empire in the post-Soviet space. Russia's behaviour was particularly assertive in the military field as well as in its attempts to build a Russian-dominated CIS military infrastructure. However, Russia's policies were less aggressive in the economic sphere, except probably as far as energy policy is concerned, and regarding the fate of Russians in the near abroad. Russia's assertive behaviour in the former Soviet space was largely due to the difficulties Russia was experiencing in discarding its imperial legacy. Russian leaders found it difficult to come to terms with the fact that the former Soviet states no longer belonged to the Russian state and were to be treated as third countries. The lack of a clear idea among the Russian elites regarding what Russia was, where its boundaries ought to lie, and therefore, what its national interests were, seems largely to account for Russia's actions of an imperialist nature. However, motives that could be interpreted as legitimate state concerns - legitimate in that they were derived from Russian leaders' perceptions of the basic requirements of security, and economic and social well-being of the Russian state - also played an important part in determining Russia's actions. The pursuit of what were perceived as legitimate state interests demanded that Russia either conduct an active policy in the near abroad for the sake of its own stability and survival, or conversely, that it limit its actions when imperial over-extension was perceived as detrimental to Russia's domestic economic development. In other words, both the dimension of national interests and of imperial legacies combined to shape Russia's policies towards the former Soviet states, and this explains why policies were sometimes more restrained than is usually assumed. However, more often than not, Russia's policies followed an ambivalent and incoherent pattern, a result of the weak and fragmented character of the Russian state. Conflicting bureaucratic agendas, strongly divergent views among the various Russian ministries involved in relations with the FSS, and the struggle for power between the executive and the legislature, accounted for highly contradictory and counter-productive policies towards the CIS and the Baltic states. The absence of a clear foreign policy project determined that policies were most often reactive, rather than proactive, to events in the post-Soviet space. These three elements of imperial legacy, national interest, and

and Gregory V. Krasnov, 'Implicit Subsidies in Russian-Ukrainian Energy Trade', *Europe-Asia Studies*, 49, 1997, 5, pp. 825-843; Margarita Mercedes Balmaceda, 'Gas, Oil and the Linkages between Domestic and Foreign Policies: The Case of Ukraine', *Europe-Asia Studies*, 50, 1998, 2, pp. 257-286; Oles M. Smolansky, 'Ukraine's Quest for Independence: The Fuel Factor', *Europe-Asia Studies*, 47, 1995, 1, pp. 67-90.

incoherence, which were always present in Russia's policies towards the near abroad, elucidate to a great extent the complexities of Russia's behaviour in the former Soviet space, and explain why Russia's policies resulted in what may be called 'restrained assertiveness' - an assertive behaviour which rarely went beyond what Russia's leaders considered to be the country's interests.

When analysing Russia's policies towards the FSS two important points will be taken into consideration. First, there is the impact of the legacies of empire, which compelled Russia and the former Soviet states to interact amongst each other long after the collapse of the Soviet Union. Tight economic, military and political ties, which bound all the republics in a single whole, remained in place well after the collapse of the Soviet Union. Moreover, the disintegration of the Soviet Union left about 25 million ethnic Russians living beyond the borders of the Russian Federation. The main question to be asked in this respect therefore is whether Russia, as the dominant military, demographic, geographic and economic power in the region, faced a realistic alternative of disengagement or whether instead, it was bound to seek regional integration given that, at least geographically, 'Russia continued to reside in their midst.'⁵⁸ Karen Dawisha raised an important point in this respect. According to her, Russia's continuing pre-eminence in Eurasia as the dominant geographic colossus and economic power gave it an enormous advantage. However to conclude from this alone, that Russia would 'naturally' exercise imperial ambitions over the other new states was, according to Dawisha, to be too geographically deterministic, a position actually sustained by this thesis.⁵⁹ A second point to be taken into account is the fact that the distinction between the legitimate pursuit of state interests and informal empire-building is usually, although not always, entirely nebulous. There is probably no other region in the world where empire-building and state-building have been subject to such ambivalence. As Mark Beissinger correctly pointed out, whereas Russian elites seemed incapable of recognising the essential ambiguity that surrounded state-building and empire-building in the Eurasian context and the dilemmas that this presented, nationalising elites among the non-Russians were obsessed with this ambiguity, reading imperial intent into actions that, in other contexts, would be unlikely to be understood in that fashion.⁶⁰ The new Russian state that emerged from the disintegration of the Soviet Union, was as weak and fragmented as most of the other newly independent states. Like them, Russia also went through a transitional phase

⁵⁸ Karen Dawisha, 'Constructing and Deconstructing Empire in the Post-Soviet Space', p.358.

⁵⁹ *ibid.*, p.342.

⁶⁰ Mark Beissinger, 'The Persisting Ambiguity of Empire', p.180.

of state-building, resulting in policies often being incoherent and ambivalent, thus making the distinction between informal empire-building and state-building all the more difficult.

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Chapter 1: The Underlying Principles of Russia's Policy Towards the Former Soviet States

The current chapter will examine the main underlying principles of Russia's foreign policy towards the former Soviet states, in an attempt to determine whether Russian leaders were able to discard Russia's imperial legacy and envisage the conduct of relations with the new states on the basis of total equality and complete recognition of the new states' independence and sovereignty; or whether instead Russian leaders tended to view the former Soviet space as a natural sphere of Russian influence. In order to comprehend the true nature of Russia's relations with the former Soviet states, the current work will first analyse the views of key decision makers and influential foreign policy elites on "what is Russia?", on Russia's vital interests, and its role in the post-Soviet space.

I. What is "Russia"?

The break up of the Soviet Union in December 1991 entailed a profound transformation of the geopolitical landscape in the Eurasian land mass. A truncated Russian state, successor to the Soviet Union and surrounded by fourteen politically and economically fragile newly independent countries, emerged in the territory of the former USSR. This new geopolitical configuration not only put into question the "great power" status of the Russian state, it also created a whole series of new dilemmas in Russia's relations with the former Soviet republics. Above all, it produced a serious national identity crisis among the Russian elite and the Russian population at large, magnified by the demise of the Communist ideology, which had been for decades the source of legitimacy of both the Communist system and of the Soviet state. The RSFSR, re-baptised as "the Russian Federation", was in fact a Bolshevik invention. Its external borders and internal divisions did not correspond to any pre-existing geographical, political or ethnic reality. The borders of the Russian empire at the times of the last tsar, Nicholas II, almost totally coincided with the frontiers of the old USSR, if Poland and Finland are excluded, and not with the actual shape of the RSFSR.

Before the collapse of the Soviet Union, when the process of disintegration was well under way, members of the Russian intelligentsia and the political elite began questioning the legitimacy of the RSFSR as an independent country. Prominent thinkers refused to admit the possibility of a Russian state within the frame of the RSFSR and stressed the artificial nature of its existing borders. Political Scientist Aleksandr Tsipko argued that the RSFSR

had neither historical nor ethnic legitimacy. 'It is essentially a vestige of the division of old Russia into separate Soviet socialist republics,' Tsipko noted and added, 'this division was done in an off-hand way. No one, neither Lenin nor Stalin took a serious attitude towards the borders of these semi-state formations. As a result, the borders of the RSFSR are purely random in nature.'⁶¹ Consequently, he pointed out, some age-old Russian areas which were colonised by people originally from Central Russia ended up as parts of Ukraine and Kazakhstan. At the same time, many purely imperial conquests carried out by Tsarist Russia, for example in the Northern Caucasus, remained within the RSFSR, as part of what Tsipko called 'lesser Russia.'⁶² Moreover, Tsipko feared that the breakdown of the USSR would lead to the disintegration of RSFSR along similar lines. 'If all the republics become sovereign states, Tsipko argued, the Centre will die, and along with it, the state that for centuries has been called Russia.'⁶³

Throughout history, Russia's national identity had been based on an imperial idea of the Russian state. Unlike other overseas empires, the Russian empire and the Russian state had developed simultaneously, on the basis of the acquisition and colonisation of contiguous territory.⁶⁴ Consequently, the distinction between the Russian metropolis and the colonies remained blurred. As a result, Russians tended to associate the idea of Russian statehood with the existence of the Russian empire. As Vladimir Balakhonov, pointed out 'among Russians the imperial instinct is tremendously strong, and we cannot as yet imagine any form of existence other than our current empire, stretching from Brest to Vladivostok.'⁶⁵ The vast extent of the Russian territory and above all, the constant expansion of the Russian state throughout the centuries, was seen by many political scientists and historians as the determining feature of Russia's historical development.⁶⁶

This close identification with the vast expanses of Russian land explains the disarray felt by most Russians after the collapse of the Soviet Union, when the Russian state lost such large amounts of territory. As journalist Dmitrii Kosyrev noted, 'The point is not just that

⁶¹ Aleksandr Tsipko, 'Crisis of Russian Statehood', *Rossia*, 6-12 July 1991 p. 6 in *Current Digest of the Post-Soviet Press, (CDPSP)*, XLIII, 1991, 28, p.7.

⁶² *ibid.*

⁶³ Aleksandr Tsipko, 'Drama rossiiskogo vybora', *Izvestiya*, 1 October 1991, p.5.

⁶⁴ V.O.Kluchevsky, *A History of Russia*, tr. C.J.Hogarth, London 1931, p. 209.

⁶⁵ Vladimir Balakhonov, 'Sokhranenie imperii ili samosokhranenie na puti natsional'nogo suvereniteta - glavnyaya natsional'naya problema russkogo naroda segodnia' *Russkaya mysl'*, 23 June 1989 p.7.

⁶⁶ Yuri Polyakov, 'Rossiiskie prostory: blago ili proklyatie?' *Svobodnaya mysl'*, 12, 1992, pp.17-22.

we are still living in a state that feels uncomfortable within its new borders... More than that, the psychological adaptation to the fact that Belarus, Ukraine and [other former Soviet republics] are foreign states and that relations with them are, in fact, the realm of foreign policy, has not been easy. If it has occurred at all.⁶⁷ The end of the USSR led to new proposals which envisaged different models of reintegration of the former Soviet lands. Russian dissident Aleksandr Solzhenitsyn in his renowned article 'Rebuilding Russia' advocated in 1990 that Russia, Ukraine, Belarus and Northern Kazakhstan remain united in what he called a 'Russian [Rossiiskii] Union'.⁶⁸ Konstantin Zatulin, chairman of the Russian Duma CIS Committee (1993-1995), also expressed support for a union between Russia, Belarus, Ukraine and Kazakhstan, eventually to be joined by Tajikistan and Georgia.⁶⁹ Aleksandr Tsipko, instead, proposed turning the existing Commonwealth of Independent States into an asymmetrical confederation including those countries most eager to keep close ties with Russia, namely Belarus, Georgia, Armenia, Moldova, Tajikistan and Kazakhstan.⁷⁰ Academician Aleksei Arbatov, however, held the view that only an economic union with a selected group of states, particularly Ukraine and Belarus, because of their similar socio-economic developments, was desirable.⁷¹

Russians also expressed great concern over the fate of the 25 million ethnic Russians who found themselves living outside the current borders of the Russian Federation after the collapse of the Soviet Union. These Russians suddenly became "foreigners" in their own country, and suffered from a severing of ties with family and friends living in Russia.⁷² Consequently, after the collapse of the USSR, the Russian government not only found itself confronted with the costly and painful problem of resettling an increasingly high number of refugees, it also felt responsible for the protection of the rights of Russians living in the near abroad. Presidential advisor Sergei Stankevich believed Russia had both the moral obligation and the political responsibility to protect the fate of Russians living in the newly independent republics, while Academician Andranik Migranyan stressed Russia's special

⁶⁷ Dmitry Kosyrev, 'Nas neset v pereulki vneshnei politiki', *Rossiiskaya gazeta*, 1 December 1992 p.6.

⁶⁸ Aleksandr Solzhenitsyn, 'Kak nam obustroit Rossiyu?', *Literaturnaya gazeta*, 18 September 1990, Supplement, pp.3-6.

⁶⁹ Personal interview with Konstantin Zatulin, Moscow, November 1996.

⁷⁰ Alexander Tsipko, 'A New Russian Identity or Old Russia's Reintegration?', *Security Dialogue*, 25, 1994, 4, p.447.

⁷¹ Personal interview with Aleskei Arbatov, Moscow, November 1995.

⁷² Personal interview with Leonid Drachevskii, head of the CIS Department of the Russian Foreign Ministry, Moscow, November 1995, and with Russian diplomat Vladimir Plechko, Moscow, November 1995.

role as protector of Russians inhabiting the newly independent republics. 'Russia cannot be indifferent to the fate of Russians in Kazakhstan and Ukraine, or to the fate of the minorities in the autonomous entities of the seceding republics in general,' Migranyan wrote.⁷³ More radical voices expressed the view that the Russian people had become a "divided nation" as the Germans, the Jews and the Armenians had been divided in the past. Reintegration of the former Soviet republics, in one sort or another, was considered the best way to overcome such a tragedy.⁷⁴

The end of the Soviet Union also put into question Russia's "great power" status in the world arena - an important source of pride among the Russian people - , and this resulted in a deep sense of national humiliation. Although the Russian Federation became, to all intents and purposes, the legal successor of the USSR - it retained the Soviet Union's permanent seat at the UN Security Council, inherited its nuclear arsenal, and took charge of its debts and treaty obligations - Russians soon realised that the possession of nuclear weapons and the holding of a permanent seat at the UN Security Council were not enough to compensate for Russia's loss of global influence and for its reduced economic and military capabilities.⁷⁵ Although Russian politicians and intellectuals tended to insist that Russia still remained a great power, regular proclamations by Russian officials that Russia was a great power indicated the existence of reasonable doubt as to whether these assertions accurately reflected the reality.⁷⁶ Whether or not Russia *was* in fact a great power, its politicians and intellectuals tended to agree on the point that Russia should strive to become one, and should be respected as such by the world community. However, divergencies emerged as to which elements were to determine Russia's great power status. Among Liberal Westernizers, the idea that economic development, stability, and the people's well being would lead to great power status, gained ground.⁷⁷ According to

⁷³ Andranik Migranyan, 'Mozhet li vyzhit Yeltsinskaya Rossiya?', *Moskovskie novosti*, 6 October, 1991, p.9.

⁷⁴ Ksenia Myalo, 'Russkie idut?', *Etnologicheskii Vestnik Rossii*, 1993, 2, p.8; Personal Interview, Moscow, October 1995.

⁷⁵ Kozyrev preferred to call Russia not the successor but the "continuer" state of the USSR, knowing that this would reduce tensions with those newly independent states that had raised objections to Russia's position, such as Ukraine. (Andrei Kozyrev, 'Soiuz ostavil Rossii plokhoe vneshnepoliticheskoe nasledstvo', *Nezavisimaya gazeta*, 1 April 1992, p.3.)

⁷⁶ Andrei Kozyrev: 'And Yet Russia is Destined to be a Great Power...', *New Times*, 1992, 3, p.21; Hannes Adomeit, 'Russia as a "Great Power" in World Affairs: Images and Reality', *International Affairs*, 71, 1995, 1, p.35.

⁷⁷ These were the views of Konstantin Boroboi, head of the Party for Economic Freedom, and Sergei Stankevich, political advisor to President Yeltsin. ('Interesy Rossii: bezopasnost', politika, ekonomika', *Krasnaya zvezda*, 10 October, 1992, pp.4-5.)

Foreign Minister Kozyrev, 'Russia remains a great power, if we are talking about nuclear weapons. However, [great power status] is a question of economic potential, a capacity to solve regional conflicts.'⁷⁸ Moderate Nationalists, such as political analyst Vsevolod Rybakov, instead, believed that an important presence in the world arena rather than global influence, would make Russia a great power again.⁷⁹ Still, it was clear to most politicians that Russia remained a great power simply because of the vast extent of its territory, the large size of its population and the possession of nuclear weapons. Moreover, by 1993, a consensus emerged over the notion that Russia's great power status stemmed primarily from its influence over the former Soviet republics. In other words, Russia would be a great power as long as it remained the dominant power in the former-Soviet space.

The idea of "Russia" was also closely linked to the place Russia should occupy in the international system as well as its foreign policy orientation. Should it become part of the West, should it remain part of an "Eurasian" civilisation, or instead should it concentrate on its own internal development and remain isolated from the world arena? A heated debate among political scientists took place in 1992 which had a significant impact on the developments of Russian foreign policy. This debate on the overall orientation of Russian foreign policy was closely intertwined with a similar debate on the various models of domestic transformation. It began well before the collapse of the USSR and was, to some extent, the result of a revival of Russian national sentiments. During the years of perestroika, nationalism in the RSFSR had developed into two contrasting ideologies which envisioned two radically different developments of the Russian nation. On the one hand, patriotic nationalists insisted on the distinctiveness of Russian development and the specific mission of the Russian people, whereas liberal nationalists emphasised the unifying features of world civilisation and preferred to see Russians as 'normal people living in a normal country.'⁸⁰ As Viktor Zaslavsky explained, an early clash between the liberal-democratic, Europe-oriented anti-Communist nationalism and the xenophobic, authoritarian and anti-Western nationalism had already occurred in the Soviet Union in the late 1960s, in the form of an ideological struggle between Russian intellectuals connected with the more liberal journal *Novy mir*, and those grouped around the journals *Molodaya*

⁷⁸ Andrei Kozyrev, 'And Yet Russia Is Destined to Be a Great Power...', p.22.

⁷⁹ Vsevolod Rybakov, 'Stanet li Rossiya Velikoi Derzhavoi?', *Nezavisimaya Gazeta*, 20 June 1992, p.2.

⁸⁰ Sergei Chuprinin, 'Situatsiia', *Znamia*, 1, 1990, p.211.

gvardiya and *Nash sovremennik*, who took up the banner of Russian patriotism.⁸¹ The latter combined a genuine concern for the destruction of Russian culture and peasantry, the Russian Orthodox Church and Russian traditions, with a defence of Stalinism as the legitimate continuation of Russian imperial traditions. This movement suffered from an internal contradiction, since its supporters could never decide between a 'Russian revival' or 'the preservation of the empire.'⁸²

During the late 1980s, the imperial idea slowly lost ground, in view of the growing influence of liberal nationalists and the dissemination of nationalist ideas among the Russian liberal-democratic intelligentsia. General perceptions about the economic costs of the empire on the Russian population increased the desire of "seceding" from the rest of the Soviet republics. For the first time, an anti-imperial Russian nationalism that aspired toward the creation of a 'national' Russian state, emerged. Liberal nationalists called on the Russian people to cast off the backward, non-European, non-Christian component of the Soviet Union and to return to the home of European culture. They supported the opening of Russia to the influences of the industrially developed countries, Russia's transition to a market economy and its integration into the world market system. On the opposite side, as imperialist nationalism lost ground, Russian national patriots increasingly adopted a 'Russia first' posture, understood not only as a separation from all non-Slavic or even non-Russian republics, but even more crucially as a repudiation of the West and a search for a specifically Russian way of life and Russian spiritual values.⁸³

The failed August 1991 coup dealt a major blow to the Russian imperial nationalist idea. The Autumn of 1991 saw the progressive implementation of liberal nationalist ideas, which resulted in the disintegration of the Soviet Union in December 1991 and the emergence of a new Russian state. The new geopolitical reality confronted liberal nationalists with a series of new problems. On the one hand, many Soviet republics, usually the most economically dependent on Russia, proved reluctant to secede from Russia. On the other hand, Russia was forced to handle a series of delicate issues, such as the presence of large Russian minorities in the newly independent states, various border disputes, and the existence of

⁸¹ Victor Zaslavsky, 'The Evolution of Separatism in Soviet Society under Gorbachev', in *From Union to Commonwealth: Nationalism and Separatism in the Soviet Republics*, eds. Gail W. Lapidus, Victor Zaslavsky, and Philip Goldman, Cambridge, 1992, p.80.

⁸² Anatolii Streliaii, 'Pesni zapadnykh slavyan', *Literaturnaya gazeta*, 8 August 1990, p.3.

⁸³ Leokadia Drobizheva, 'Perestroika and the ethnic consciousness of Russians', in *From Union to Commonwealth: Nationalism and Separatism in the Soviet Republics*, pp.98-111.

several dozen nationalities and ethno-territorial units within the Russian Federation, which were expected to press their claims for independence from Russia. In view of these difficulties, imperialist nationalist ideas in support of the restoration of the Soviet Union in a new form again made themselves heard. Among the Russian population deep nostalgia for the Soviet Union gained ground as people found it hard to come to terms with the existence of Russia within its new boundaries and the development of the former Soviet republics, particularly Ukraine and Belarus, as independent states. However, the longing for empire did not actually translate into an active and consistent strategy aimed either at the restoration of the USSR or at the creation of an informal empire, despite the fact that certain aspects of Russian foreign policy towards the FSS, particularly towards the CIS states, did acquire a neo-imperialist character, as will be shown in the next chapters.

II. The Foreign Policy of the New Russian State

1. Russia's Pro-Western Orientation

The collapse of the USSR opened up a new era in the foreign policy of the Russian Federation, no longer a republic of the defunct Soviet Union but an independent sovereign state. Following on the lines of the Russian national liberal programme, Russia's Foreign Minister Andrei Kozyrev adopted a distinctly pro-Western orientation and a clearly anti-imperialist approach, based on the recognition of the former Soviet republics as sovereign and independent states, and on the rejection of any forcible change of borders among the FSS.⁸⁴ 'We simply have to learn to live as independent states and to view each other as equal partners,' Kozyrev wrote in an article on *Izvestiya* in January 1992.⁸⁵ The newly independent states were allowed freely to join a new non-coercive organisation with Russia, the Commonwealth of Independent States (CIS), which was seen by Russian leaders as a way of preserving a common economic and politico-military space in the former Soviet space and as a means of further deepening integration, albeit on a voluntary basis. Kozyrev

⁸⁴ Although in late August 1991, President Yeltsin questioned the legitimacy of the new republic's borders, the CIS agreements adopted in December 1991, which put an end to the Soviet Union, explicitly proclaimed the inviolability of the existing borders among the new states. (*Agreement on the Creation of a Commonwealth of Independent States*, 8 December 1991, art. 5, Tass, 9 December 1991, in RIA-Novosti, January 1992, p.2.) Deputy Foreign Minister Fedor Shelov-Kovedyayev, noted in an interview, 'The fatherland is surrounded by states that are just as independent and just as much subjects of international law as Russia is.' (Aleksandr Gagua, 'V kritike vneshnei politiki Rossii my stalkivaemysya s opasnym neprofessionalizmom', *Nezavisimaya gazeta*, 30 July, 1992, p.5.)

⁸⁵ Andrei Kozyrev, 'Preobrazhennaya Rossiya v novom mire', *Izvestiya*, 2 January 1992, p.3.

sustained that only natural, voluntary ties among the CIS, and not forceful integration, would create a viable and solid institution.⁸⁶ He called for the creation of 'belt of good-neighbourliness' along the entire perimeter of the Russian Federation, and the withdrawal of Russia's military presence from abroad.⁸⁷ Similar views were shared by Galina Starovoitova, Yeltsin's advisor on nationality issues, who supported Andrei Sakharov's Union Treaty project, which was based on a flexible structure, and on total equality among all member states.⁸⁸ Starovoitova claimed that Russians had to discard their imperial legacy and abandon a significant part of responsibility for developments in the former 'colonies of the empire.'⁸⁹ She believed that the Soviet Union was the last disintegrating empire and saw decolonisation as 'the basic meaning of [Russia's] present history.'⁹⁰ She also supported a Western-oriented foreign policy because, according to her, 'the Russian people, by their mentality, are oriented to European values' and stressed that Russia could not be divided by the Ural mountains between Europe and Asia, East and West.⁹¹

These views were shared by leading democrat Yurii Afanasev, who argued that Russians had to repudiate their pretence 'to originality, uniqueness, and a special predestination.' Russia, in Afanasev's view, represented an exhausted form of 'Eurasian civilisation' which combined Buddhist and Byzantine Christian elements, and which had to be rejected in favour of the contemporary Western model.' This Western model, which was adopted by the new Russian leadership in early 1992, envisioned the opening of Russia to the influences of developed industrialised countries, Russia's transition to the market economy and its integration into the world economic system. Russia's foreign policy, under the leadership of the Foreign Ministry, was aimed above all at creating a favourable domestic and international environment which would facilitate the economic and political transformation of Russia.⁹² Kozyrev repeatedly stressed the need to join the club of the more dynamically democratic states, and Russia's desire to transform its old enemies in the West into partners and eventually allies. In an interview with *Izvestiya* in June 1992, President Yeltsin also expressed Russia's intentions to co-operate with the United States and to bring the era of confrontation to an end. 'We will no longer consider ourselves

⁸⁶ *ibid.*

⁸⁷ Yurii Leonov, 'Khorosha kontseptsiya, no vryad li osushchestvima', *Nezavisimaya gazeta*, 20 February 1992, p.4.

⁸⁸ Stanislav Oganyan, 'Geografiya - glavnyi urok istorii', *Pravda*, 21 February 1992, p.3.

⁸⁹ Galina Starovoitova, 'Zanyat'sya sobstvennym ustroistvom', *Moskovskie novosti*, 5 April 1992, p.2.

⁹⁰ 'Inform-TV' 16 November 1991, in *USSR Today*, 16 November 1991, 1053/19.

⁹¹ *ibid.*

⁹² Andrei Kozyrev, 'Soiuz ostavil Rossii plokhoe vneshnepoliticheskoe nasledstvo', p.1.

potential opponents, but allies,' he said.⁹³ In an earlier speech at the UN Security Council in February 1992, Yeltsin had gone as far as proposing the creation of a global defence system based on the establishment of a global anti-missile project in co-operation with the United States.⁹⁴ The Russian Foreign Ministry foresaw the fulfilment of the country's national interests through Russia's participation in various global and regional security systems, such as the UN, the CSCE and NATO, and the development of multilateral agreements and international co-operation.⁹⁵

2. The Foreign Policy Debate

This pro-Western stance immediately provoked a heated debate among the Russian academic and political community on Russia's national identity and the orientation of its foreign policy. The old nineteenth-century debate between Slavophiles and Westerners seemed to resurface, although with some noticeable differences due to the new domestic circumstances and the changed international environment. *Liberal Westernizers*, following directly on Gorbachev's New Political Thinking, stressed the link between Russia's domestic structure and its foreign policy orientation. Scholar Nikolai Kosopalov insisted that the primary concern of Russia's foreign policy had to be the establishment and the consolidation of a democratic and liberal domestic political system. Only by transforming its internal structure, Kosopalov argued, would Russia be able to discard its old imperial legacy and assertive foreign policy traditions.⁹⁶ Kosopalov supported Russia's participation in the construction of a democratic international system, based on the United Nations and other regional organisations, arguing that such a system would help Russia compensate for the country's deficit in effective traditional foreign policy instruments and levers.⁹⁷ Liberal Western thinking discarded the pre-Gorbachev Soviet foreign policy tradition which tended to perceive the world as a struggle for power among states. Liberal Westernizers, instead, supported the development of an international system based on the

⁹³ "Vera, nadezhda, i terpenie, spasut svobodnuiu Rossiiu", *Izvestiya*, 11 June 1992, p.1.

⁹⁴ 'Gotovy k prodolzheniyu partnerstva. Vystuplenie B.N. El'tsina na zasedanii Soveta Bezopasnosti OON', *Rossiiskaya gazeta*, 3 February 1992, p.3.

⁹⁵ Yurii Leonov, 'Khorosha kontseptsiya, no vryad li osushchestvima', p.4.

⁹⁶ Nikolai Kosopalov, 'Vneshnyaya politika Rossii: Problemy stanovleniya i politikoformiruiushchie faktory', *Mirovaya ekonomika i mezhdunarodnye otnosheniya*, 1993, 2, pp.5-20. The importance of Nikolai Kosopalov in Liberal-Western thinking was brought forward by Margot Light. (Margot Light, 'Foreign Policy Thinking', in Neil Malcolm, Alex Pravda, Roy Allison, and Margot Light, *Internal Factors in Russian Foreign Policy*, Oxford, The Royal Institute of International Affairs, 1996, pp.52-53.)

⁹⁷ Nikolai Kosopalov, 'Natsional'naya bezopasnost' v menyaiushchemsya mire', *Mirovaya ekonomika i mezhdunarodnye otnosheniya*, 1992, 10, pp.5-19.

primacy of international law and co-operation through international organisations. These views, which were adopted by the Russian Foreign Ministry, received very harsh criticisms from Russian *Imperial Nationalists*, who could not resign themselves to the loss of the Soviet Empire, and from their new variant, the *Neo-Eurasianists*.

Russian *Imperial Nationalists*, such as the writers Aleksandr Prokhanov and Eduard Limonov, and the leader of the Russian nationalist opposition in the Supreme Soviet, Sergei Baburin, regretted the collapse of the Soviet Union, and refused to consider such developments as irreversible. They believed that the Russian empire had to be recreated in one form or another. Eduard Limonov advocated the re-creation of a single powerful state 'within the limits of Russian civilisation.'⁹⁸ Russian borders should, as a minimum, include those areas inhabited by Russians, and as maximum cover those regions resided by people who regarded themselves as belonging to the Russian civilisation.⁹⁹ Baburin questioned the new borders of Russia, arguing that the Russian Federation was 'an offspring of Bolshevik experiments..., an unnatural formation.'¹⁰⁰ Similar views were shared by high-ranking officials in the Russian government, such as Vice-President Aleksandr Rutskoi, who refused to equate the Russian Federation with the true borders of Russia, and saw the CIS as 'a transitional form between the former Soviet Union and a new unitary state to be created by the former Union republics.'¹⁰¹ Rutskoi called for the restoration of a single democratic state in the territory of the Eurasian landmass. If the Union could not be revived, Russia had to become a strong power and discontinue its economic assistance to other CIS states.¹⁰² Imperialist Nationalists were endowed with strong anti-Western sentiments, and as such they rejected Russia's membership of the IMF and other Western-dominated organisations. In sharp contrast to Liberal-Western thinking, they tended to interpret the world as a an arena of perennial struggle between two global forces, one maritime - or Atlanticist - , and the other continental - or Eurasianist - , which had only one predetermined outcome. 'The future belongs to the East not to the West', Yurii Borodai wrote.¹⁰³

⁹⁸ Eduard Limonov, *Sovetskaya Rossiya*, 12 July 1992, p.1

⁹⁹ *ibid.*

¹⁰⁰ Vladimir Todres, 'Situatsiia vzryvaet natsional'naya ushchemlennost' russkikh', *Nezavisimaya gazeta*, 9 January 1992, p.2.

¹⁰¹ Aleksandr Rutskoi, 'V zashchitu Rossii', *Pravda*, 30 January, 1992, p.1.

¹⁰² Aleksandr Rutskoi, 'Sil'naya vlast' - dlya demokratii', *Nezavisimaya gazeta*, 13 February 1992, p.2.

¹⁰³ Yurii Borodai, 'Tret' Put' ', *Nash sovremennik*, September 1991, p.147.

These views very much coincided with the ideas of *Neo-Eurasianists*, like Konstantin Pleshakov and Brontoi Bediurov. Digging in the sources of the Eurasian movement of the 1920s and 1930s, Eurasianists stressed the unique cultural and geopolitical character of the Eurasian space, going as far as bestowing Russia with a special mission in Eurasia. 'Living together within common borders for decades or centuries has formed a common space of civilisation,' Konstantin Pleshakov argued, and added,

'in a sense, Russia does not end on the border of the Baltic states or on the foothills of the Great Caucasian Range, any more than it does on the steppe-lands of northern Kazakhstan. The empire is gone. But its geopolitical, political, military, economic, cultural and intellectual space is not. Russia is closely integrated in the affairs of all the new independent regions of the former Soviet Union.'¹⁰⁴

Pleshakov foresaw total chaos in continental Eurasia, and a redrawing of frontiers and war, unless Russia dominated the region militarily, and deterred conflicts and potential aggressors.¹⁰⁵ In a similar tone, Brontoi Bediurov repeated the earlier Eurasian view that Eurasia constituted a unique continent. 'We are indeed an integral state-political and cultural-historical continent, a distinctive Eurasian cosmos. We are neither Europe nor Asia; we are both of them together' he wrote, and stressed the need for all the FSS to live together.¹⁰⁶ Although Eurasianists advocated a restoration of the Soviet Union, their views remained at a theoretical level, given that they neither put forward clear foreign policy proposals on how to achieve the desired goals, nor did they examine more practical issues such as the resolution of ethnic conflicts or the protection of Russian minorities in the near abroad.

More moderate Eurasianists, such as Sergei Goncharov and Professor Aleksei Vasilev limited themselves to stressing Russia's links with the Islamic world and emphasised the need to develop close relations with former Soviet Islamic states.¹⁰⁷ 'The Eurasian space that used to be occupied by the Soviet Union and the largest part of which is now occupied by Russia, has traditionally been a zone of cohabitation, interpretation and interaction between the Slavic (primarily Russian) and Turkic ethnic groups, between Orthodox and

¹⁰⁴ Konstantin Pleshakov, 'Russia's Mission: The Third Epoch', *International Affairs* (Moscow), January 1993, 1, p.20.

¹⁰⁵ *ibid.*

¹⁰⁶ Brontoi Bediurov, 'Komu pokrovitel'stvuet dukh vselennoi?', *Den*, 9-15 May 1993, p.5.

¹⁰⁷ Sergei Goncharov, 'Osobyie interesy Rossii - v chem zhe oni zakliuchaiutsya', *Izvestiya*, 25 February 1992, p.6.

Moslems,' Vasilev wrote.¹⁰⁸ Therefore, he added 'it is in the interests [of both Islam and Russia] to use all conceivable means to convert inevitable conflicts between them into a non violent form and work to resolve them.'¹⁰⁹ Sergei Stankevich, in his renowned article published in *Nezavisimaya gazeta* on 28 March 1992, also emphasised the need to strengthen Russia's positions in the East, and to reach 'mutual understanding and co-operation with the Turkic and Muslim components, which have performed a tremendous role in Russia's history.'¹¹⁰ Russia's geographical location between East and West placed it in a unique position to conduct its specific 'mission', which entailed support for the multilateral dialogue of cultures, civilisations and states.¹¹¹

Kozyrev's pro-Western, 'anti-imperialist' foreign policy approach received also more moderate, though certainly more influential critics from Russian scholars and from other members of the political elite during the course of 1992 and 1993. *Moderate Liberals* such as Vladimir Lukin, Russian Ambassador and later head of the Duma International Affairs Committee, and Aleksei Arbatov, Academician and member of the Duma Defence Committee, neither questioned the collapse of the Soviet Union nor the independence of the other former Soviet republics. They argued instead that the Helsinki principle of the inviolability of borders should form the basis of relations among the former Soviet republics.¹¹² Although their views were not significantly different from those of the Liberal Westernizers, they emphasised the need for a distinctly Russian foreign and security policy based on the specifics of Russia's geopolitical reality. Consequently they placed highest priority on Russia's relations with the newly independent states.¹¹³ 'Relations with its closer neighbours have always been a priority for Russia', Lukin wrote in the Autumn of 1992, 'but the break-up of the Soviet Union, having turned Russia's former territories into new and independent neighbours, has transformed traditional interests into something much more complex and vital.'¹¹⁴ Lukin believed that Russia had a special role to play in the Eurasian heartland, 'Russia cannot just passively observe threatening developments taking place within the zone of its vital interests, especially in areas inhabited by millions of

¹⁰⁸ Aleksei Vasilev, 'Rossiya i musul'mansky mir: partnery ili protivniki?', *Izvestiya*, 10 March 1992, p.6.

¹⁰⁹ *ibid.*

¹¹⁰ Sergei Stankevich, 'Derzhava v poiskakh sebya', *Nezavisimaya gazeta*, 28 March 1993, p.4.

¹¹¹ *ibid.*

¹¹² Aleksei Arbatov, 'Russia's Foreign Policy Alternatives', *International Security*, 18, Autumn 1993, 2, p.27.

¹¹³ *ibid.* p. 11; Vladimir Lukin, 'Our Security Predicament', *Foreign Policy*, 88, 1992, pp. 66-67.

¹¹⁴ Vladimir Lukin, 'Our Security Predicament', pp.66-67.

Russians,' he wrote.¹¹⁵ Arbatov instead argued that Russia had to be extremely cautious as far as intervention in the internal affairs of other republics was concerned, even when invited by local governments. Peacekeeping or peace enforcement operations should be conducted on the basis of multilateral decisions and actions. Russia's main role should be that of an impartial mediator. Arbatov supported the use of sanctions, including the use of military force, only as an instrument of last resort, in order to protect the rights of minorities, especially of Russian-speakers living beyond the Russian Federation.¹¹⁶ As far as relations with the FSS are concerned, Arbatov argued in favour of voluntary integration, on an economic basis first.

Similar calls for greater emphasis on developing closest ties with the republics of the former Soviet Union were expressed by Academician Sergei Rogov.¹¹⁷ According to Rogov, relations with the FSS deserved priority, since Russia's main danger lay in the possibility of being dragged into territorial and ethnic conflicts with those states. Russia had to establish friendly, preferably allied relations with the new states, in view of the fact that so many Russians lived there. Rogov seemed particularly worried that some of the former republics might fall under the influence of rival regional powers, such as China or Iran.¹¹⁸ Academician Sergei Blagovolin also agreed that Russia should not totally retreat from the former Soviet republics. 'The idea that we must abandon all spheres of influence, acquired throughout the decades, and even centuries, is not only absurd but also as dangerous, as is the idea of an overall presence,' Blagovolin declared.¹¹⁹ However, Blagovolin retained the view that Russia belonged to European civilisation and that a rapprochement with the West, would best allow Russia to fulfil its interests. Academician Sergei Goncharov also stressed the need to develop co-operation with the West, which, according to him had rightfully been chosen as the model of socio-economic development. But he maintained that, in its partnership with the West, Russia had to retain its independence. Russia should pursue its own national interests, and not simply provide

¹¹⁵ *ibid.*

¹¹⁶ Aleksei Arbatov, 'Imperiya ili velikaya derzhava?', *Novoe Vremya*, 1992, 49 and 50, pp.16-18 and pp.20-23.

¹¹⁷ Intellectuals and politicians often changed their views, and this explains why they are placed within different groups at different periods of time. Rogov's views, for example, initially were rather moderate; later, he participated in the formation of the Civic Union's concept and his views became more assertive.

¹¹⁸ Sergei Rogov, 'Nuzhna li Rossii svoya politika natsional'noi bezopasnosti?', *Nezavisimaya gazeta*, 6 March 1992, p.2.

¹¹⁹ 'Interesy Rossii: bezopasnost', *politika, ekonomika*, p.5.

unconditional support for human rights, Goncharov argued.¹²⁰ Moderate Liberals were therefore in favour of a pro-active policy in the near abroad, and a more independent policy towards the West. However, they were not calling for the restoration of a informal empire over the former Soviet states, and therefore displayed a readiness to discard Russia's imperial legacy.

Moderate Nationalists such as Academician Andranik Migranyan, and Evgenii Ambartsumov, Chairman of the Supreme Soviet Joint Committee on International Affairs and Foreign Economic Relations, on the other hand, could not reconcile themselves to the demise of the Soviet Union. Although they did not advocate reunification by military force, they adopted a very assertive stance as far as the former Soviet space is concerned, and vehemently criticised Russia's pro-Western foreign policy orientation. Ambartsumov and Migranyan wanted Russia to play a special role in the entire post-Soviet geopolitical space, thus indirectly putting into question the independence and sovereignty of the former Soviet republics. According to them, Russia's specific role resulted from the presence of over 30 million Russian-speakers in the former Soviet states, and the arbitrary character of the borders of the former USSR, which had given rise to inter-ethnic conflicts and clashes between nationalities. According to Migranyan, 'many of these territories, such as South Ossetia, Karabagh, the Crimea and Transdnistria, were part of the Russian Empire long before they were incorporated into the newly formed independent states,' and therefore they had to be protected by Russia.¹²¹ Ambartsumov was particularly emphatic on the need to call the entire geopolitical space of the former USSR a sphere of Russia's vital interests, and of having such interests recognised by the world community. In his view, Russian leaders had to make sure that the international community recognise Russia's role as 'the political and military guarantor of stability in the post-Soviet space.'¹²² Ambartsumov remained sceptical about the future of the CIS, and called Russia to play a leading role in recreating, not the Soviet Union, but a confederation of states. He believed that the dismantling of the USSR was a completely irresponsible and not properly considered step. Only through co-operation with the former Soviet republics could Russia overcome the

¹²⁰ Sergei Goncharov, 'Osobyie interesy Rossii - v chem zhe oni zakliuchaiutsya', p.6.

¹²¹ Andranik Migranyan, 'Podlinnye i mnimye orientiry vo vneshnei politike', *Rossiiskaya gazeta*, 4 August 1992, p.4.

¹²² Konstantin Eggert, 'Rossiya v roli "Evraziiskogo zhandarma"?'', *Izvestiya*, 7 August 1992, p.6.

current crisis. 'The fusion of the CIS states is inevitable,' he thought, 'because it is impossible to draw geographic and even family borders.'¹²³

Similar ideas were expressed by influential formations in the Russian Supreme Soviet. In October 1992, the Civic Union, in its document *Towards a Strong Unified, Democratic and Prosperous Russia* called the territory of the former Soviet Union a sphere of Russia's vital interests, and argued in favour of deepening economic and political integration among the FSS.¹²⁴ Although Civic Union leaders, such as Arkady Volsky, regretted the current configuration of Russia, they considered the re-establishment of the USSR unfeasible at the present moment.¹²⁵ In August 1992, the Council on Foreign and Defence Policy - an independent organisation established to discuss foreign policy issues under the leadership of Academician Sergei Karaganov - produced a major document on Russia's foreign policy priorities, entitled *A Strategy for Russia*, which had a major impact on the orientations of Russian foreign policy. The document argued in favour of an active policy in the former Soviet space, including the use of force, particularly as far as resolving inter-ethnic conflicts were concerned, which were seen as a main threat to Russia's own security.¹²⁶

The authors declared their support for a 'variable speed' integration among the former Soviet states and expressed particular concern for the fate of Russian minorities living in the former Soviet space. The document argued in favour of using diplomatic means to protect their rights, and called for the thriving of Russian minorities as a Diaspora. Although no particular reference was made to restoring an informal empire over the former Soviet space, the implementation of the Council's proposals might have led to the conduct of neo-imperialist policies in the former Soviet space.

3. Russian Leaders Adopt a More Assertive Policy

Faced with harsh criticism from influential academic circles, and under strong pressure from the powerful centrist groups in the Supreme Soviet, Yeltsin and Kozyrev began progressively to adopt a more assertive stance regarding the post Soviet-space during the

¹²³ Evgeny Ambartsumov, 'Sami sebya sagnali v ugol, samim iz nego i vykhodit' ', *Rossiiskaya gazeta*, 13 April 1992, p.7.

¹²⁴ B. Utekhin, 'The Russia which we lost', *Komsomol'skaya pravda*, 21 October 1992, p.1, in *CDPSP*, XLIV, 1992, 42, p.9.

¹²⁵ Gennadii Yastrevtsov, "Rossiiu spasut liudi bez nenavisti v glazakh", *Pravda*, 9 September 1992, p.1.

¹²⁶ 'Strategiya dlya Rossii - Tezisy Soveta po Vneshnei i Oboronnoi Politike', (hereafter, 'Strategiya dlya Rossii'), *Nezavisimaya gazeta*, 19 August 1992, p.3-4.

autumn of 1992.¹²⁷ The first major turn in Russia's foreign policy occurred in September 1992, when Yeltsin cancelled his trip to Japan, yielding to the nationalist camp. After that, Yeltsin's tone hardened. In a speech at the Foreign Ministry Collegium on 27 October 1992, he stressed the need to take national interests into account when formulating foreign policy and criticised the 'excessive timidity' with which the Russian Foreign Ministry was behaving in the world community, especially in the near abroad. In his view, this resulted from what he called an 'inverted imperial syndrome'.¹²⁸ 'We are hesitant to speak about our Russian national interests,' Yeltsin said, 'we are constantly afraid that we will be accused of great-power chauvinism... worst of all is the fact that we are not struggling against attempts by some of the former USSR republics to resolve their problems at Russia's expense.'¹²⁹

In an attempt to reach broader consensus, Kozyrev presented to parliament a new *Draft Foreign Policy Outline* in December 1992, which gave clear priority to relations with Russia's near abroad. Russia's foreign policy would aim at establishing a 'belt of good-neighbourliness' beyond its borders and would work towards the development of multilateral forms of co-operation among the CIS states. Particular attention would be devoted to the settlement of conflicts in the CIS, the defence of the CIS external borders, and the protection of the rights of Russian minorities. As far as the latter was concerned, Kozyrev proposed 'to protect the rights, lives and dignity of Russians above all by political means and diplomatic methods, using the mechanisms of international organisations.'¹³⁰ However, if these methods failed, 'the carefully considered application of economic and military force, not in the Yugoslav version, needless to say, but within the framework of the law', had to be envisaged.¹³¹ Despite the growing focus on the former Soviet space, the document still contained elements of Kozyrev's pro-Western stance and clearly reflected an anti-imperialist approach. The promotion of Russian democracy, the creation of favourable conditions for the development of a market economy, and the integration of Russia into the

¹²⁷ In July 1992, the Supreme Soviet proposed the creation of a separate Ministry for Commonwealth affairs, in order to strengthen cooperation with the FSS. (Pavel Golub, 'Sozdanie otdel'nogo ministerstva po delam Sodruzhestva mozhet stat' politicheskoi oshibkoi', *Izvestiya*, 24 July 1992, p.2.) In December 1992, the Russian Congress of People's Deputies appealed for the creation of a confederation joining together the states of the former USSR. (Moscow Radio Rossii, 14 December 1992, in *FBI/SSOV-92-241-S*, 15 December 1992, p.3.)

¹²⁸ 'U nashei vneshnei politiki mozhet byt' tol'ko odna ideologiya - interesy Rossii', *Krasnaya zvezda*, 28 October 1992.

¹²⁹ *ibid.*

¹³⁰ Andrei Kozyrev, 'Vneshnyaya politika Rossii - MID predlagaet i otstaivaet', *Rossiiskie vesti*, 3 December 1992, p.2.

¹³¹ *ibid.*

world community 'in a manner befitting its status as a great power', were considered Russia's fundamental national interests. Foreign and domestic policies were strongly connected, and priority was given to individual, human and minority rights. In its relations with other states, Russia committed itself to use diplomatic methods. Force would be used only in carefully considered manner, and strictly within the framework of international law. Moreover, Russia would try to transform the previous relations of global confrontation with the West into a system of global co-operation, and would aim at partnership and allied relations with the West.¹³²

Although Russia's policies during 1992 did not reflect a neo-imperialist behaviour, the Russian leadership paid growing attention to events in the former Soviet states. Particular efforts were devoted by the President and the Foreign Minister to mediate in the military conflicts that erupted in the near abroad, and Russian troops became involved in peacekeeping operations in Transdnistria and South Ossetia. Despite the disintegration of the post-Soviet economic and military spaces, the Russian government attempted to preserve a certain degree of military and economic co-operation among CIS states. Russian diplomats moreover, conducted various efforts aimed at settling the thorny issue of discrimination against Russian minorities in the Baltics. The adoption of a more active policy and a more assertive rhetoric were determined by a series of factors. First and foremost, the failure of economic reforms led to a deterioration of the economic and social situation in Russia and to a growing dissatisfaction among the population at large. As a result, the Russian political leadership became more vulnerable to pressure from nationalist groups and increasingly powerful and uncompromising factions within the Supreme Soviet, and began giving in to their demands. In May 1992, Yeltsin set up the Security Council under the leadership of its Secretary, Yurii Skokov, a promoter of Moderate Nationalist ideas. The Ministry of Defence in turn, became more directly involved in policy formulation and policy making, directly rivalling the Foreign Ministry.

Second, the economic inter-dependence of all republics and the difficulties of simply 'going it alone' soon became apparent. The potential collapse of neighbouring economies meant that Russia could not simply stand idly by. Deep economic recession in the former Soviet states was bound to have direct negative repercussions on Russia's own industrial and agricultural production. This explained the leadership's efforts to strengthen economic and

¹³² *ibid.*

political co-operation within the CIS. Third, the eruption of ethnic conflicts along Russia's borders, which created casualties among the local Russian population and among the Russian troops located in the areas of tension, and resulted in widespread instability, prompted the Russian government to react. Moreover, Russian minorities became victims of discrimination, especially in the Baltic states and in certain Central Asian countries. Last but not least, disappointment over Western behaviour led to the partial discard of pro-Western views. The rather limited financial support provided by Western governments and financial institutions, and the unfulfilled expectations, as far as international co-operation with Europe, the US and NATO was concerned, led to a general disenchantment with the West and Western ideas.

During the early Spring of 1993, as pressure from the opposition increased in the domestic front, Russia's foreign policy discourse became significantly more assertive. In an effort to obtain the support of the Civic Union in the VIII Congress of Peoples' Deputies, Yeltsin adopted a very assertive foreign policy stance. Speaking at the Civic Union Forum in late February 1993, he stressed the need for closer integration among the CIS states and clearly stated Russia's special role on the territory of the former USSR,

'Stopping all armed conflicts on the territory of the former USSR is Russia's vital interest. The world community sees more and more clearly Russia's special responsibility in this difficult undertaking. I believe the time has come for distinguished international organisations, including the UN, to grant Russia special powers as a guarantor of peace and stability in the regions of the former USSR'¹³³

In mid-March, Yeltsin directly appealed to the leaders of the CIS states, calling for deeper military and economic co-operation. Yeltsin expressed Russia's eagerness to co-operate with the CIS states, 'on the basis of equality, in order to achieve further economic and social development, and so as to provide the necessary stability and security in the entire CIS space.'¹³⁴ Although these speeches were intended primarily for internal consumption and CIS support, they pointed to a new direction in Russia's foreign policy. Above all, they indicated Yeltsin's readiness to compromise with the opposition on foreign policy issues, in order to preserve the upper hand on the domestic agenda. As a result, during 1993, Russian foreign policy became more assertive and the political discourse took a more nationalist tone, focusing increasingly on developments in the near abroad, particularly on the need to deepen CIS integration and settle military conflicts.

¹³³ Russian Television, 28 February, 1993, in *FBIS-SOV-93-038*, 1 March 1993, p.21.

¹³⁴ 'El'tsin obratilsya k lideram SNG', *Nezavisimaya gazeta*, 18 March 1993, p.1.

The *Basic Provisions of the Russian Federation Foreign Policy Concept*, approved by Yeltsin in April 1993, provided the best indication of this change in course. Primarily the work of Skokov, and approved by all the major Russian ministries involved in foreign policy, the document significantly diverged from the Foreign Ministry Draft both in terms of tone and content, and focused on a more assertive policy towards the West and towards the FSS.¹³⁵ Top priority was given to relations with the former Soviet republics and to the deepening of integration among the states of the former Soviet Union, based however, on principles of strictly voluntary participation and reciprocity. Russia was entrusted with the responsibility of strengthening stability and security on the territory of the former Soviet Union, and this explained the inclusion in the document of provisions on the development of CIS co-operation in the political and military sphere, such as the creation of an effective collective security system, Russia's protection of the CIS's external borders, and the preservation of Russian military infrastructure in the former Soviet states, as part of an integral CIS security system.¹³⁶ Human rights' violations, armed conflicts along Russia's periphery, and any actions intended to weaken or undermine Russia's international prestige, as well as the integrity of the Russian Federation and the integration of the CIS, were seen as potential threats to Russia's security.

4. A Broad Consensus is Reached

The approval of the Concept reflected the emergence of a broad consensus among the various sections of the Russian political elite over Russia's role in the world and its relations with the FSS. The tenets endowed in the Concept reflected the views of Moderate Nationalists and, to a great extent, indicated a desire to build an informal empire, especially in military terms, in the former Soviet space. Such views continued to permeate Russian foreign policy thinking throughout 1993, despite the victory of President Yeltsin over conservative forces in the Russian Supreme Soviet in September-October 1993. In the Autumn of 1993, the Russian President, and in particular Foreign Minister Kozyrev adopted an increasingly neo-imperialist tone. Between September and November 1993,

¹³⁵ Vladislav Chernov, 'Natsional'nye interesy Rossii i ugrozy dlya ee bezopasnosti', *Nezavisimaya Gazeta*, 29 April 1993, p.1,3 (The author provided a summary of the document). The document identified Russia's vital interests as follows: The territorial integrity of the Russian state and the creation of the right conditions to ensure the consolidation of economic and political reforms; and Russia's active participation in the building of a new system of international relations, in which Russia would be assured a worthy place.

¹³⁶ *ibid.*

Kozyrev issued a series of statements which not only stressed Russia's unique role as the guarantor of stability in the post-Soviet space, but also clearly expressed Russia's willingness to remain the dominant power in the region. In an article in *Nezavisimaya gazeta* on 22 September 1993 Kozyrev mentioned Russia's historical duty to provide stability to the areas of the former Soviet Union. 'This is not a 'neo-imperialistic' space, he wrote, but a unique geopolitical one in which no one is going to keep the peace for Russia.'¹³⁷ In a subsequent article for *Nezavisimaya gazeta* on 13 October 1993, Kozyrev's words became even more assertive, as he maintained that 'no international organisation or group of states is able to replace Russia's peacekeeping efforts in the specific post-Soviet space' and added, that 'either [Russia starts] carrying out military actions for the support and restoration of peace in the areas of our traditional geopolitical interests, or [it] will lose our influence there, and the vacuum will be filled by others, including unfriendly forces or even forces competing against us.'¹³⁸

Interviewed by *Nezavisimaya gazeta* on 24 November 1993, Kozyrev recognised the important role played by the UN and the CSCE in resolution of conflicts, but emphasised the leading role of Russia. 'It would be a mistake to ignore the role of the UN and the CSCE [in this sphere], but the other extreme would be to totally hand in this sphere into the hands of these organisations. This is an area of Russian interests...Moreover, the UN and the CSCE do not have today, neither the strength, nor the means to carry out these operations.'¹³⁹ Russian leaders saw the near abroad as a sphere not only of Russia's vital interest, but also of its exclusive influence. The victory of Zhirinovskiy's Liberal Democratic Party of Russia (LDPR) party in the December 1993 elections only contributed to harden Kozyrev's views. At a Foreign Ministry's conference on 18 January 1994, Kozyrev characterised the protection of the rights of Russians in the former Soviet state as one of Russia's main strategic aims, and stressed the need to maintain a military presence in all former Soviet states, an area where 'Russia's vital strategic interests' lay.¹⁴⁰

¹³⁷ Andrei Kozyrev, 'Rossiya fakticheski v odnochku neset bremya real'nogo mirotvorchestva v konfliktakh po perimetru svoikh granits', *Nezavisimaya gazeta*, 22 September 1993, p.1.

¹³⁸ Andrei Kozyrev, 'Demokratiya i mirotvorchestvo - dve storony odnoi medali', *Nezavisimaya gazeta*, 13 October 1993, p. 1. See also Maksim Yusin, 'Polgoda nazad Ruskoi skazal mne: "Ya ikh nenavizhu, etikh krasno-korichnevykh"', *Izvestiya*, 8 October 1993, p.3.

¹³⁹ Igor Rotar, 'Voennye dolzhny obladet' iskusstvom mirotvorchestva', *Nezavisimaya gazeta*, 24 November 1993, pp.1-2.

¹⁴⁰ Vitalii Portnikov, 'Andrei Kozyrev opredelyaet priority', *Nezavisimaya gazeta*, 20 January 1994, p.1, 3; 'Kozyrev za voennoe prisutstvie v sosednikh gosudarstvakh', *Nezavisimaya gazeta*, 19 January 1994, p.1.

Kozyrev feared that if Russian troops withdrew, the security vacuum would be filled by forces which might be hostile and unfriendly to Russia.¹⁴¹

Kozyrev's views on peace-making in the former Soviet space very much resembled the positions adopted by the Russian Defence Ministry at the time. The *Basic Provisions of the Russian Military Doctrine*, published in November 1993, considered it Russia's duty 'to maintain stability in regions bordering on the Russian Federation and allied countries,' and foresaw the use of the Russian Armed Forces 'to check armed conflicts and violence on Russia's border and on the border of other states, in accordance with treaty commitments.'¹⁴² Moreover, the Doctrine saw 'the suppression of rights, freedoms and legitimate interests of citizens of the Russian Federation in foreign states' as a threat to Russia's security.¹⁴³ These positions were reaffirmed by Grachev in an article in *Nezavisimaya gazeta* on 19 June 1994, where he noted that 'Russia considers the maintenance of stability in the regions adjoining its borders and the observance of international commitments to be the basic principles for resolving questions of military security.'¹⁴⁴ Grachev also stressed the need to reach closer CIS integration.

The increasingly assertive discourse adopted by the Russian leadership did not entirely reflect Russia's practical policy during most of 1993. All FSS, except for the Baltic states, were brought into the CIS, and Russia became deeply involved in the conflicts that flared up beyond its borders in a way which very much corresponded to a neo-imperialist behaviour. It provided military support to certain factions in the conflicts, introduced peacekeeping forces, and established military bases. However, in the economic field, Russia behaved much less assertively. The CIS economic space underwent further disintegration, as Russia seemed increasingly unwilling and incapable of paying the high price of integration. Energy prices to CIS states progressively approached world levels, and subsidies to CIS states were significantly curtailed. As far as military integration was concerned, the year 1993 saw a further disintegration of the common military space. However, Russia began progressively to restore parts of the former joint military infrastructure on a bilateral basis, and by the end of 1996, many elements of the system

¹⁴¹ Ibid.

¹⁴² 'Osnovnye polozheniya voennoi doktriny Rossiiskoi Federatsii', *Izvestiya*, 18 November 1993, p.4.

¹⁴³ Ibid.

¹⁴⁴ Pavel Grachev, 'Voennaya doktrina i bezopasnost' Rossii', *Nezavisimaya gazeta*, 19 June 1994, p.1.

were partially restored. Russia defended more assertively the rights of Russian minorities in the Baltics, but refrained from adopting radical measures such as the imposition of an economic blockade or the prolonged suspension of troops withdrawals.

Despite this mixed record, the near abroad increasingly became an area of active Russian involvement. By the end of 1993, and throughout 1994-1995, Russian foreign policy priorities no longer focused on the integration of Russia into the community of civilised nations, although efforts at developing co-operation with the West, especially with Western financial institutions, continued.¹⁴⁵ Most efforts were aimed at resolving the armed conflicts that had developed along the periphery of Russia's borders, and at protecting the rights of Russian minorities. 'Conscious of its particular responsibility for maintaining peace, Russia has made the peacemaking and the protection of human rights, particularly that of national minorities, the priority of its foreign policy, first of all in the territory of the former USSR,' Kozyrev stressed in his speech to the UN General Assembly in September 1993.¹⁴⁶ In his address to the Federation Council in February 1994, Yeltsin made it clear that 'in all spheres of relations with the CIS and the Baltic states, priority will be given to the fate of Russian citizens living beyond Russia's borders. Wherever they live, our compatriots must feel full and equal citizens.'¹⁴⁷ Moreover, Russian foreign policy placed increasing attention to the strengthening of CIS economic and military integration.¹⁴⁸ In his message to the Federal Assembly on 24 February 1994, Yeltsin gave top priority to Russia's relations with the newly independent states and to the development of the CIS.¹⁴⁹ However, emphasis was put on the notion that integration had to be cost-effective and not detrimental to Russia's interests.¹⁵⁰ Renewed importance was also placed on the idea that that Russia had to become a strong economic and political state first, before CIS integration could move

¹⁴⁵ 'My gotovy k sotrudnichestvu na ravnopravnoi osnove - Vystuplenie Prezidenta Rossii Borisa El'tsina na 49-i sessii Generalnoi Assamblei OON', *Rossiiskaya gazeta*, 28 September 1994, pp.1,3; 'O deistvennosti gosudarstvennoi vlasti v Rossii', *Rossiiskaya gazeta*, 17 February 1995, pp.1,3-5 (Yeltsin's annual address to the Federal Assembly); Therese Rapahel, Claudia Rosett and Suzanne Crow, 'An Interview with Russian Foreign Minister Andrei Kozyrev', *RFE/RL Research Report*, 3, 15 July 1994, p.40.

¹⁴⁶ ITAR-TASS, 28 September 1993, *BBC SWB* SU/1807 B/3, 1 October 1993.

¹⁴⁷ 'Strategicheskaya tsel' - sozdat' protsvetaiushchiu stranu' - Vystuplenie Prezidenta Rossii v Federal'nom Sobranii, *Rossiiskaya gazeta*, 25 February 1994, p.5.

¹⁴⁸ Andrei Kozyrev, 'Ne partiinye a natsional'nye interesy', *Rossiiskaya gazeta*, 2 February 1994, p.1.

¹⁴⁹ 'Strategicheskaya tsel' - sozdat' protsvetaiushchiu stranu', p.3. Yeltsin also repeated the idea that the near abroad was 'a sphere of special responsibility and special mutual interests for Russia and its neighbours,' and added that '[Russia] is more tightly linked to them than usually are other neighbouring states.'

¹⁵⁰ *ibid.*; Yeltsin's speech to Federation Council, Moscow, Ostankino TV, 24 Feb. 1994, *FBIS-SOV-93-037*, 24 February 1994, p.19.

ahead. It was assumed that a strong and economically successful Russia would act as a magnet of deeper integration.

These views were shared by the Council for Defence and Foreign Policy, which in its second document, *A Strategy for Russia (2)* published in May 1994, argued that the deteriorating economic situation of the former Soviet states, as well as Russia's reduced economic capabilities, ruled out the creation of a EU-type union, let alone a new federate state. Instead, it was suggested that Russia develop tight economic and politico-military relations with the CIS states, in exchange of unlimited access to their markets and natural resources. This policy, defined as 'leadership instead of direct control', was aimed at granting Russia economic and security benefits without having to bear direct responsibility for the economic well-being of those states populations.¹⁵¹ The *Strategic Course of the Russian Federation towards the member-states of the CIS*, which was approved by Yeltsin in September 1995, and which systematically spelled out the main objectives of Russia's foreign policy towards the CIS, followed on similar lines, although in a slightly more assertive fashion. Russia's main aim was to create an economic and political integration of states; 'capable of occupying a fitting place in the world.'¹⁵² Integration was considered essential for the sake of containing centrifugal tendencies inside Russia and for ensuring lasting stability within the CIS states.¹⁵³ Russia was to become the leading force behind the formation of a new system of inter-state political and economic relations in the post-Soviet space, but its policies in the area would take strict account of Russia's national interests.¹⁵⁴

During 1993-1995, therefore, overall agreement had been reached among the government and most members of the Russian political elite on Russia's foreign policy priorities. Russia's foreign policy was to focus on deepening economic, military and political integration, on keeping the peace in the post-Soviet space, and on protecting the rights of Russian minorities living beyond Russia's borders. Agreement had also been reached on the view that Russia had to strive to remain a great power, and this was to be reflected in Russia's hegemonic position in the near abroad. The reaching of an overall consensus on foreign policy was mainly due to the change in foreign policy focus conducted by Yeltsin

¹⁵¹ 'Strategiya dlya Rossii (2)', *Nezavisimaya gazeta*, 27 May 1994, pp. 4-5.

¹⁵² *Strategicheskii Kurs Rossii s Gosudarstvami - Uchastnikami Sodruzhestva Nezavisimykh Gosudarstv*, (hereafter, *Strategicheskii Kurs*), 14 September 1995, p.1.

¹⁵³ *ibid.*, pp.1-8.

¹⁵⁴ The document also stressed Russia's need to assist in the development of politically and economically stable states which would develop friendly relations with Russia.

and Kozyrev, and to the fact that Moderate Liberal and Moderate Nationalist views managed to reach the higher echelons of power. Liberal Westernizers in turn became totally marginalised, as their views lost popularity. They either abandoned the government - Gennadii Burbulis, Yegor Gaidar and Boris Fyodorov - or adopted more conservative views - Kozyrev and Yeltsin. Moreover, the Defence Ministry, supportive of an active involvement in the former Soviet space, played a growing role in foreign policy formulation and implementation, given that military issues remained high on the near abroad agenda. In addition, the security and defence agencies - the Ministry of Defence, the Foreign Intelligence Service, and the Federal Security Service - gained major influence in policy-making and Yeltsin increasingly relied on his old team of subordinates from his time as Secretary of the Sverdlovsk Communist Party Organisation - Yurii Petrov, Viktor Iliushin and Oleg Lobov -, most of whom were characterised by rather authoritarian credentials. Furthermore, representatives of Moderate Nationalist thinking became part of Yeltsin's team of advisors, such as Academician Andranik Migranyan. Yeltsin's and Kozyrev's change in foreign policy approach was to a great extent the result of their own political weakness. Yeltsin's growing dependence on the military and security services for keeping his hold on power after the October 1993 storming of parliament, and the gains of Zhirinovskiy in the 1993 Duma elections, compelled him to adopt more assertive policies, in order to satisfy their wishes, and retain their support. But as Neil Malcolm correctly pointed out, this mood of national accord was brought at a price. Lack of clarity in policy and disarray in decision-making characterised Russian foreign policy, which in general tended to reflect attempts to reach broad domestic compromise and satisfy domestic constituencies, rather than consistently follow Russia's national interest.¹⁵⁵

Russia's foreign policy record during 1994-1995 however was not as assertive and neo-imperialist as indicated by the rhetoric. Although increased emphasis was placed on CIS integration - major economic integration treaties were signed and big steps were taken down the road of multilateral military integration - very little implementation followed, to a great extent due to the unwillingness of Russia's leaders to cover the costs involved. Russia's policies in support of minorities in the Baltics also remained restricted to diplomatic initiatives, as Russia withdrew all its troops from the region. Russia's policies remained more assertive, however, in the areas of peacekeeping, military basing, restoration of control over the former Soviet borders and the air defence system, although

¹⁵⁵ Neil Malcolm, 'Foreign Policy Making', in Roy Allison, Margot Light, Neil Malcolm, Alex Pravda, *Internal Factors in Russian Foreign Policy*, p.139.

implementation suffered from lack of funding. In the energy sector, Russia tried to obtain control over the Caspian oil transportation routes and to participate in the major oil deals.

Despite the more assertive behaviour in various aspects of Russia's relations with the FSS, and the overall consensus reached in foreign policy, differences of opinion remained and the debate over foreign policy continued throughout 1994 and 1995, albeit in a less passionate manner. The growing assertiveness of Russian foreign policy throughout 1994 led to growing criticisms, on the one hand, from Liberal Westernizers and Moderate Liberals who became alarmed about the radical shifts in Russian foreign policy, and on the other, from Moderate and Imperialist Nationalist who instead believed Kozyrev's new policies reflected only cosmetic changes - an indication that Russian foreign policy was not really following a coherent strategy of 'neo-empire building.' Liberals such as Professor Vyacheslav Dashichev and Moderates such as Aleksei Arbatov expressed great concern over the Russian leadership's apparent efforts to transform the former Soviet Union into a sphere of Russia's special influence. Dashichev saw Russia's policies towards the near abroad as a return to great power expansionism, and insisted that only a concept of interdependence could serve as the basis of CIS integration. Ideally, the CIS should be transformed into an association of democratic states.¹⁵⁶ Arbatov recognised that Russia had special interests in the near abroad but considered the claiming of 'special responsibilities' as counter-productive. Russia's policies should be aimed at preventing the domination of the near abroad by powers hostile to Russia, but Russia should not strive for such domination itself. Russian leaders were to use diplomatic and economic levers to enhance influence and refrain from fuelling internal tension in neighbouring states. The main aim of Russia's foreign policy in the former Soviet space, according to Arbatov, was to foster the emergence of independent, stable, peaceful and neutral states.¹⁵⁷ Similarly, the Council for Foreign and Defence Policy, in its document, *Strategy for Russia (2)*, regretted the deterioration of relations with the West, and expressed concern over Russia's increasing isolation in the world arena, and the potential revival of the Cold War. Russian leadership's great power rhetoric was creating suspicions that Russia was aiming at 'imperial revanche.'¹⁵⁸

¹⁵⁶ Vyacheslav Dashichev, 'Vykrutasy Rossiiskogo vneshnepoliticheskogo myshleniya', *Nezavisimaya gazeta*, 23 April 1994, p.4.

¹⁵⁷ Aleksei Arbatov, 'Russian National Interests', in *Damage Limitation or Crisis*, eds. Robert Blackwill and Sergei Karaganov, CSIA Studies in International Security, Washington, 1994, pp.60-67.

¹⁵⁸ 'Strategiya dlya Rossii (2)', p.4.

Russian politicians also received criticisms from the conservative wing of the Russian political spectrum, which characterised Russia's foreign policy as improvised, incoherent and subject to abrupt reversals. Conservative Nationalists expressed great concern over Russia's growing isolation, made more evident by NATO's enlargement plans.¹⁵⁹ Russia's inability to counter NATO's enlargement and to influence Western policy in Bosnia during September-December of 1995, made Russia's isolation and loss of great power status all the more evident. Liberal Westernizers, such as *Izvestiya* journalist Konstantin Eggert and *Segodnya* journalist Leonid Velekhov, seriously questioned the advantages of Russia's striving to remain a great power.¹⁶⁰ However, the more conservative range of the political spectrum insisted that Russia was and remained a great power.¹⁶¹ Communist Party leader, Gennady Zyuganov, made it clear that the party would fight for the restoration of Russia's great power and prestige if it won the Presidential elections. Zyuganov argued that once in power he would restore Russia's role as the unique guarantor of security and stability in Eurasia, and would work towards the restoration of the Soviet Union - thus attesting to a clearly neo-imperialist approach. Such restoration was considered a historical necessity, dictated by Russia's own security needs.¹⁶² Zyuganov based his arguments on the assertion that Russia belonged to a different, 'communal' type of civilisation prevalent in Asia. Nationalist leader Vladimir Zhirinovskiy instead argued in favour of the creation of a powerful new Russian state within the old Soviet Union borders, divided into tsarist-like provinces rather than ethnically based republics.¹⁶³ He also called for drastic action against the discrimination of Russian minorities in the Baltic states, Kazakhstan and Moldova - a

¹⁵⁹ Andranik Migranyan, 'Vneshnyaya politika Rossii: katastroficheskie itogi trekh let', *Nezavisimaya gazeta*, 10 December 1994, p.1; Alexander Deikin, 'Russia in Geopolitical Isolation', *New Times*, October 1995 p. 42. On Lukin's concern over NATO's expansion see Mikhail Karpov, 'My okazalis' v ochen' plokhoy geopoliticheskoy situatsii', *Nezavisimaya gazeta*, 14 March 1995, pp.1-2.

¹⁶⁰ Konstantin Eggert, "Derzhavnaya" vneshnyaya politika stoit slishkom doroogo', *Izvestiya*, 16 December 1995, p.3; Leonid Velekhov, 'MID mezhdru proshlym i budushchim', *Segodnya*, 22 December 1995, p.9.

¹⁶¹ Sergei Stankevich and Viktor Kalashnikov, 'C rossiiskoi bezoglyadnost'iu v Evropu', *Segodnya*, 8 April 1994, p.8

¹⁶² Gennadii Zyuganov, 'Se noi Communisti vinciamo a Mosca', *La Repubblica*, 8 February 1996, p.11. Similarly, the Party Programme adopted at the Third Congress of the Communist Party of the Russian Federation stipulated that once in power the party would 'do everything within [its] power to promote the economic and political integration of the republics of the .. dismembered Soviet Union.' ('Programme Adopted at Third CPRF Congress on 22 January 1995', *Sovetskaya Rossiya*, 2 February 1995, pp.1-2, in *FBIS-SOV-96-131-S*, electronic version)

¹⁶³ Mezhdunarodnyi blagotvoritel'nyi fond politiko-pravovykh issledovaniy 'Interlegal', *Politicheskie partii i bloki na vyborah*, Moscow 1993, p. 47.; *Izvestnyi-neizvestnyi Zhirinovskii i evo partiya posle oktyabrya 1994 goda (dokumenty i materialy)*, Liberal Democratic Party of Russia, Moscow, 1995, pp. 50-58.

position also adopted by the Communist party and its leader Zyuganov.¹⁶⁴ Nationalist Conservatives, moreover, saw Western, and in particular American, increasing involvement in the FSS with great concern.¹⁶⁵ Although criticism of the Foreign Ministry's policies on 'near' and 'far abroad' issues continued to be voiced during 1994-1995, the Duma took a less hostile stance than the Supreme Soviet had in the past and proved more ready to negotiation and persuasion.¹⁶⁶

5. Primakov at the Foreign Ministry

The arrival of Primakov at the Foreign Ministry in January 1996, did not significantly alter Russia's foreign policy orientations, although foreign policy in general became more coherent, better organised and increasingly focused on top priority issues, such as responding to NATO's enlargement, and deepening CIS integration. Primakov's views resembled, to a great extent, those of Moderate Conservatives, although in his behaviour Primakov showed great moderation, thus not entirely embracing the neo-imperialist project. Foreign policy was to be focused on protecting Russia's interests and creating the best conditions for the strengthening of the Russian state.¹⁶⁷ Efforts were to be devoted to stabilising the situation in the former Soviet states, and developing fruitful international relations in order to prevent the emergence of new hotbeds of tension. Top priority was given to accelerating the process of CIS integration, albeit on a voluntary basis, and above all in the economic field. Primakov envisaged the creation of a varied-speed organisation, with a group of leading states, probably Russia, Belarus and Kazakhstan, moving faster along the path of integration, joining their economies and creating supranational structures.¹⁶⁸ Primakov did not intend to restore the Soviet Union, the independence of the former Soviet republics was in fact considered irreversible.¹⁶⁹ It can therefore be argued that although under Primakov, the FSS remained an area of top priority, Russia's foreign policy did not follow a clearly defined neo-imperialist path.¹⁷⁰

¹⁶⁴ Gennadii Ziuganov, 'My - russkoe soprotivlenie', *Den*, 27 September -3October, 1992, p.1.

¹⁶⁵ Andranik Migranyan, 'Vneshnyaya politika Rossii: katastroficheskie itogi trekh let', p.1.

¹⁶⁶ Anna Ostapchuk, 'Prezidentskie lobbisty gotovy deistvovat', *Nezavisimaya gazeta*, 3 August 1994, p.1; Alex Pravda, 'The Public Politics of Foreign Policy', in Neil Malcolm, Alex Pravda, Roy Allison and Margot Light, *Internal Factors in Russian Foreign Policy*, p. 209.

¹⁶⁷ 'Primakov nachinaet s SNG', *Moskovskie novosti*, 14-21 January 1996, p.13.

¹⁶⁸ Maksim Yusin, 'Deputatam obeshchana velikaya derzhava', *Izvestiya*, 10 February 1996, p.3; Stanislav Kondrashov, 'Rossiya ishchet novoe mesto v mire', *Izvestiya*, 6 March 1996, p.3.

¹⁶⁹ Maksim Isayev, 'Razvedka: Obshchenatsionalnoe dostoyanie', *Nezavisimaya gazeta*, 22 December 1995, p.1.

¹⁷⁰ 'Primakov nachinaet s SNG', *Moskovskie Novosti*, p.13. Primakov also argued that despite the current difficulties, Russia remained a great power and that its policy towards the outside world

III. Russia's Motivations in its Behaviour towards the Former Soviet States

In their efforts to conduct an active policy in the post-Soviet space, Russia's leaders were drawn by a series of motivations. First, deep economic and military ties kept the former republics very closely tied together. The collapse of the Soviet Union and the conduct of independent policies by the CIS states immediately brought to light the close inter-linkage of the CIS economies. Second, Russian politicians considered the near abroad as a source of constant conflict and instability, and expressed serious doubts about the viability of the newly independent states. A clear perception existed that direct threats to Russia's interests emanated from the near abroad. Presidential advisor Sergei Stankevich believed that Russia needed stability along its borders in order to turn full attention to its own economic problems.¹⁷¹ Some analysts, such as Andranik Migranyan, argued that the passiveness displayed by the international community had forced Russia to take over the task of putting an end to violence in the near abroad. 'It has become clear that the world community cannot, and moreover does not want to get deeply involved in the Dniestr region, in Karabagh, or in South Ossetia and Abkhazia, Migranyan noted, and added, 'Unless Russia becomes seriously engaged as an intermediary and guarantor in these conflict zones, the violence will escalate further and the ethnic conflicts will spill over into the territory of the Russian Federation itself.'¹⁷² Conflicts resulted in streams of refugees, weapons, narcotics and crime pouring into Russia, which threatened the internal stability of the state.¹⁷³

Third, Russian leaders were particularly concerned over the fate of Russians living in the former Soviet states, and over the strain that both Russian and non-Russian refugees migrating into Russia placed on the country's economy and on the population at large. 'To where are we going to evacuate hundreds of thousands of residents of the Dniestr Region? What will we be able to offer them?.. Where will we get the money for this great migration from many areas of the former USSR where conflicts are flaring up?', Deputy Foreign Minister Fedor Shelov-Kovedyaev asked in an interview with *Nezavisimaya gazeta* on July 30 1992. Official records estimated the total number of refugees and forced migrants

had to correspond to such a status. Primakov favoured the development of an equitable and mutually advantageous partnership with the West.

¹⁷¹ Sergei Stankevich, 'Rossiya uzhe sdelala antiimpersky vybor', *Nezavisimaya gazeta*, 6 November 1992, p.2.

¹⁷² Andranik Migranyan, 'Rossiya i blizhnee zarubezh'e', *Nezavisimaya gazeta*, 12 January 1994, p.4

¹⁷³ Aleksandr Aleksandrov, 'Dolzha li Rossiya vyvesti voiska iz Tadzhikistana?', *Rossiiskie vesti*, July 22 1993, p.1.

residing in Russia to be between 1.7 and 2 million people in May 1994. Most refugees came mainly from areas of conflict, such as Tajikistan, but also from Uzbekistan, Kyrgyzstan, Kazakhstan and Armenia, as well as from areas where they had difficulties in obtaining citizenship, such as in Latvia.¹⁷⁴

Fourth, Russian leaders were extremely concerned about the potential disintegration of the Russian Federation, and about the negative impact that developments in the former Soviet space could have on the fragile territorial integrity of the Russian Federation. Particular concern in this respect was expressed over events in the Transcaucasus. In the view of Andranik Migranyan,

‘Russia cannot simply withdraw from the Transcaucasus, as it did from the Baltics or Central Asia. Withdrawal from that area will jeopardise Russia’s presence in the Caucasus in general... a decision to withdraw from the Transcaucasus will bring neither peace nor stability on the borders with the Transcaucasus republics. To the contrary, it could have unpredictable consequences for Russia and its territorial integrity. Centrifugal tendencies in the republics and regions would receive a new impetus towards separatism and the disintegration of Russia...’¹⁷⁵

After leaving the Transcaucasus, Russia would be forced to abandon the North Caucasian autonomous entities, where Russia was already losing control.¹⁷⁶ Russian leaders felt that secessionist movements and separatist tendencies in the former Soviet states could set a precedent for events in Russia. This explained Yeltsin’s unwillingness to support secessionist movements with a strong pro-Russian orientation, as well as his desire to exert some sort of influence over events in the near abroad.

Fifth, Russian leaders were particularly anxious about the ‘threat’ of Islamic fundamentalism emanating from the Central Asian republics, particularly from Tajikistan. Russian leaders became particularly wary about the spread of Islam when in July 1993, over twenty Russian border guards were killed in the Tajik-Afghan border. Kozyrev wrote in an article in *Izvestiya* on 4 August 1993 that putting up a barrier against Islamic extremism in Central Asia was one of the main reasons why Russian troops had been deployed along the Tajik-Afghan border. Similar views were expressed by Deputy Foreign

¹⁷⁴ The Russian Independent Institute for Social and Nationality-based Problems, ‘Emi-graine, Immi-graine: However You Say It, It Spells Migraine’, *Rossiia*, 18-24 May 1994, p.4, in *CDPSP*, XLVI, 1994, 20, p.12.

¹⁷⁵ Andranik Migranyan, ‘Podlinnye i mnimiye orientiry vo vneshnei politike’, *Rossiiskaya gazeta*, 4 August 1992, p.4.

¹⁷⁶ Andranik Migranyan, ‘The Soviet Union Has Gone Off in All Directions’, *Megapolis-Express*, 28 October 1992, pp.20-21, in *CDPSP*, XLIV, 43, 1992, p.11.

Minister Georgii Kunadze in an interview with *Nezavisimaya gazeta* on 29 July, 1993. Kunadze stressed the 'need to prevent the explosive charge of Islamic extremism... from penetrating into Russia.' Concern about Islam and its potential penetration into Russia was also voiced by leading journalists. Mikhail Leontiev, wrote in *Segodnya* on 20 July 1993 that 'the spread of expansionist Islamic fundamentalism can be considered the internal affair of individual countries as much as the spread of expansionist fascism.'¹⁷⁷ However, Academician Aleksei Malashenko from the Institute of Oriental Studies, considered that the threat of Islam was being exaggerated and that there was not much Russia could actually do to prevent Islam from taking ground in Central Asia. He believed that Islam could take moderate forms if it was not repressed by Russia.¹⁷⁸

Finally, Russian leaders were particularly worried about foreign states acquiring a predominant influence in the territories of the former Soviet Union. Russian leaders remained categorically opposed to the enlargement of NATO into Eastern Europe and the Baltic states.¹⁷⁹ The Russian Military Doctrine adopted in 1993 regarded 'the build-up of forces on the borders of the Russian Federation to limits which upset the existing balance', as well as 'the deployment of foreign troops on the territory of states adjacent to the Russian Federation as a direct threat to the security of Russia.'¹⁸⁰ Russia's concerns, however, were not limited to these eventualities. Fear of foreign, particularly Western, direct participation in the resolution of conflicts in the former Soviet Union was strong among members of the Russian political elite.¹⁸¹ In July 1992, Marshal Shaposhnikov, then CIS Commander-in-Chief, overtly opposed UN peacekeeping intervention in the military conflicts that had arisen in the near abroad. Asked by a journalist as to whether the UN would be asked to participate in settling the Dniestr and Karabagh conflicts, he replied, 'I am categorically opposed. I think the CIS is quite capable of dealing with all issues that arise within the CIS. Are we to allow foreign peacemakers make peace between us?'¹⁸² This view was not initially supported by the Foreign Ministry, which throughout 1992 and 1993 asked the UN and the CSCE to help Russia settle the conflicts in the near abroad. However, Foreign Minister Kozyrev's view changed during the autumn of 1993, as he

¹⁷⁷ Mikhail Leontiev, 'Stanet li Rossiya vtorym Tadzhikistanom?', *Segodnya*, 20 July 1993, p.3.

¹⁷⁸ Aleksei Malashenko, 'Islam nepobezhdennyi', *Nezavisimaya gazeta*, 21 July 1993, p.1.

¹⁷⁹ Sergei Stankevich, 'Rossiya uzhe sdelala antiimpersky vybor', p.2.

¹⁸⁰ 'Osnovnye polozheniya voennoi doktriny Rossiiskoi Federatsii', p.3

¹⁸¹ Yurii Glukhov, 'Kroty istorii roit vslepuiu', *Pravda*, 24 February 1992, p.1; Vladimir Peresada, 'NATO i Nakhichevan', *Pravda*, May 26 1992, p.3.

¹⁸² "Russia" TV Channel 11 July 1992, in *BBC SWB SU/1431 C4/1*, 22 July 1992.

openly challenged the leading role of the UN and the CSCE in peacekeeping in the near abroad.

Some journalists expressed concern for the eventual emergence of a 'cordon sanitaire' around Russia, which would control Russia's export arteries and plunge Russia into isolation.¹⁸³ Academician Aleksei Vasilev went as far as expressing concern over the integration of all states of the former Soviet Union into the CSCE. Although he regarded CSCE's participation as positive, he hoped it would not become a channel for Western influence in the area.¹⁸⁴ Vasilev was also worried about the increased influence of Iran and Turkey in Central Asia and the Transcaucasus. Similar anxieties were voiced by various politicians, such as Sergei Stankevich, Vasilii Lipitskii, a member of Rutskoi's party, and above all Andranik Migranyan. 'Russia's long-term interests require that Turkey's advance into the Transcaucasus, and into Central Asia be halted. This advance could disrupt the balance of power on Russia's southern borders and create a potential threat to its interests.'¹⁸⁵ Similar concerns were even expressed by Kozyrev during 1994, with particular reference to potential Turkish peacekeeping operations in Nagorno-Karabagh and Russia's potential loss of control over export routes to Turkey, Georgia and Iran.¹⁸⁶

IV. Russian minorities in the Baltic States: Citizenship Laws and Troop Withdrawals

The current section will provide an overview over the development of Russian policies towards the Baltic states as far as Russian minorities are concerned.¹⁸⁷ The collapse of the Soviet Union had a major impact on the Russian communities living beyond the borders of the Russian Federation. Virtually overnight, large numbers of ethnic Russians - 25 million according to 1989 estimates - and Russified non-Russians found themselves living as minorities in the new independent states.¹⁸⁸ This new situation had a profound impact on the lives of the Russian diaspora. Used to occupying, if not a privileged status, at least a

¹⁸³ Dmitrii Yevstafiev, 'Rossiya pered litsom "novogo sderzhivaniya"', *Nezavisimaya gazeta*, 25 February 1994, p.2.

¹⁸⁴ Aleksei Vasilev, 'Rossiya i musul'mansky mir: partnery ili protivniki?', p.6.

¹⁸⁵ Andranik Migranyan, 'Podlinnye i mnimiye orientiry vo vneshnei politike', p.4.

¹⁸⁶ Georgii Plekhanov, 'Karabakhskoe uregulirovanie: Moskva po-prezhnemu khochet byt' glavnoe', *Nezavisimaya gazeta*, 10 November 1994, p.3.

¹⁸⁷ For reasons of space the topic has not been further expanded, but the author is in possession of extensive material on the topic to substantiate the thesis.

¹⁸⁸ Neil Melvin, *Forging the New Russian Nation*, Discussion Paper 50, The Royal Institute of International Affairs, London, 1994, p.17.

similar position to the titular nationalities in the non-Russian republics, Russians suddenly became second-class citizens.¹⁸⁹ As a result, Russian politicians on almost all sides of the political spectrum came out vociferously in support of Russians' human and civil rights. The situation of Russian minorities proved to be extremely adverse in the Baltic states, particularly in Latvia and Estonia, in view of the restrictive citizenship laws that were adopted, and which in essence, left a high number of Russians, stateless. Russians in Estonia and Latvia represented a significantly high percentage of the population at the time of Baltic independence - approximately 30.3 percent of the total population in Estonia and 34 percent in Latvia.¹⁹⁰ The demographic Russification which occurred after 1945 created among Latvians and Estonians the perception that the character of their country was changing and that their culture and survival as a nation was in danger.¹⁹¹ Consequently they adopted a series of language and citizenship laws aimed at reversing the Russification trends.

1. Citizenship Laws in Estonia and Latvia

Although citizenship was not denied to Russian minorities, the conditions for naturalisation remained quite difficult to fulfil. The Estonian citizenship law, adopted on 26 February 1992, stipulated that only those who had resided in Estonia before 1940 and their descendants would be granted automatic Estonian citizenship. Others currently residing in Estonia, including the vast majority of the Russian population, were forced to apply for citizenship, and fulfil the stipulated conditions in order to become naturalised - namely having resided in Estonia for two years, starting on 30 March 1990; showing minimal competence in the Estonian language, and swearing allegiance to the Estonian state.¹⁹² On the surface, these stipulations sounded quite inclusive. However, the two years of residency began only after 30 March 1990, which meant that non-citizens could obtain citizenship only on 30 March 1993 at the earliest, if the extra year between the submission of the application and the granting of citizenship is taken account. Until that time, even those who had lived their entire lives in Estonia, but could not trace their roots back to inter-war

¹⁸⁹ See the thesis' introduction, and Paul Kolstoe, *Russians in the Former Soviet Republics*, London, 1995; Jeff Chinn and Robert Kaiser, *Russians as a New Minority: Ethnicity and Nationalism in the Soviet Successor States*, (hereafter *Russians as a New Minority*), Boulder, Co., 1996.

¹⁹⁰ Paul Kolstoe, *Russians in the Former Soviet Republics*, p.108.

¹⁹¹ Jeff Chinn and Robert Kaiser, *Russians as a New Minority*, p.98.

¹⁹² Riina Kionka, 'Estonian Political Struggle Centers on Voting Rights' *RFE/RL Research Report*, 12 June 1992, p.15.

Estonia, were foreigners. In addition, the language requirements for naturalisation were unclear in the law and, therefore, there was room for discretion by local government officials.¹⁹³ Although modifications to the law followed in February 1993 and January 1995, upon recommendation from the Council of Europe (CE) and the Conference on Security and Co-operation in Europe (CSCE), the major elements of the law were left unaltered.¹⁹⁴ The modifications did not increase the number of applications for citizenship, because potential applicants still found it difficult to reach the required level of proficiency in Estonian.¹⁹⁵

The law that caused the most controversy was the 'law on Aliens', adopted on 21 June 1993, which stipulated that all non-citizens had to obtain residence and work permits within two years if they wished to remain in Estonia. At the same time, they had to decide whether they wanted to apply for either Estonian or another citizenship, or else apply for an Alien's passport. Dual citizenship was excluded. The majority of non-Estonian citizens were residing in Estonia on the basis of their Soviet registration or *propiska* and most of them had neither applied for Estonian citizenship nor taken Russian citizenship.¹⁹⁶ This law therefore was aimed at putting an end to this situation. The main problem with the law was not only that it had a retroactive effect - it was designed for those who would come to Estonia in the future as well as for those who were residents in Estonia before 1 July 1990 - but that it gave no guarantees to non-Estonians that they would be granted a residence permit, which in any case would have to be renewed every five years.¹⁹⁷ It was seen by members of the Russian-speaking community and by the Russian leadership as giving the Estonian authorities the opportunity to expel non-citizens who had lived most, if not all of their lives in Estonia.¹⁹⁸ In response to criticisms from the CE and the CSCE High Commissioner for National Minorities (HCNM), the Estonian parliament adopted a modified version of the law on 8 July 1993, which guaranteed residence and work permits to those permanent residents of Estonia who had settled in the country prior to 1 July

¹⁹³ Lowell Barrington, 'The Domestic and International Consequences of Citizenship in the Soviet Successor States' (hereafter, 'The Domestic and International Consequences'), *Europe-Asia Studies*, 47, 1995, 5, p.736.

¹⁹⁴ Human Rights Watch Helsinki, *Integrating Estonia's Non-Citizen Minority*, 5, October 1993, 20, p.7; Lowell Barrington, 'The Domestic and International Consequences', p.736.

¹⁹⁵ Human Rights Watch Helsinki, *Integrating Estonia's Non-Citizen Minority*, p.7.

¹⁹⁶ Ann Sheehy, 'The Estonian Law on Aliens', *RFE/RL Research Report*, 24 September 1993, pp. 8-9.

¹⁹⁷ *ibid.*, p.9; Leonid Levitsky, 'Estoniya: zakon ob inostrantsakh vosprinyat mnogimi kak ob'yavlenie voiny', *Izvestiya*, 23 June 1993, p.2.

¹⁹⁸ *ibid.*

1990.¹⁹⁹ Although the requirement that permanent residence permits had to be renewed every five years was dropped, aliens were initially granted only a temporary permit which could be exchanged for a permanent residence permit only after a three-year period. In other words, although the independent recommendations were taken into account, the basic thrust of the law was left unaltered.²⁰⁰ Moreover, the conditions for denying a residence permit as stipulated by the law were hardly modified, thus allowing too much room for arbitrary decisions.²⁰¹

In Latvia, the official citizenship law was not adopted until 22 July 1994. Prior to that, the Latvian Supreme Soviet adopted a resolution on 15 October 1991 which determined that only those who could trace citizenry back to 1940 could obtain Latvian citizenship automatically.²⁰² The Latvian Supreme Soviet decided that the official citizenship law could only come into effect after the establishment of the Latvian Parliament, the Saeima. Naturalisations were not allowed in practice until the formal guidelines were established, and therefore, few Russians had a chance to become citizens until the official law was passed. During 1993-1994, the Latvian Parliament discussed a series of draft laws, which draw sharp criticisms from the CE and the CSCE. The main objection to the draft law adopted on first reading by the Saeima on 25 November 1993 was the introduction of a system of annual naturalisation quotas for non-citizens, which foresaw that only about 2,000 people would be able to obtain citizenship each year. This meant that about 500,000 permanent residents of the republic would end up as stateless persons before the year 2000.²⁰³ Moreover, these quotas would be decided upon 'taking into consideration the demographic and economic situation in the country, in order to ensure the development of Latvia as a single-nation state.'²⁰⁴ The draft law also envisaged a ten-year residency threshold, conversational ability in the Latvian language, knowledge of the Latvian constitution, and an oath of loyalty to Latvia.²⁰⁵

¹⁹⁹ United Nations General Assembly (UNGA), A/48/259, 12 July 1993, p.3.

²⁰⁰ Ann Sheehy, 'The Estonian Law on Aliens', p. 9.

²⁰¹ Residence permits were denied to anyone who had served in a career position in the armed forces of a foreign state, which meant that former Soviet Army officers who had retired in Estonia would face expulsion.

²⁰² Dzintra Bungs, 'The Latvian-Russian Treaty or Vicissitudes of Interstate Relations', *RFE/RL Research Report*, 28 February 1992, p.32.

²⁰³ Elena Visens, 'Parlament Latvii odobril zakonproekt o grazhdanstve', *Segodnya*, 11 June 1994, p.5.

²⁰⁴ *ibid.*

²⁰⁵ *ibid.*; Saulius Girnius, 'Relations between the Baltic States and Russia', *RFE/RL Research Report*, 26 August 1994, p.31.

The law on citizenship adopted on second reading by the Saeima in June 1994 ignored the recommendations of the CE and CSCE, and instead retained the system of quotas. This drew great criticism from the CE, which noted that if Latvia intended to join the organisation, it had to modify the law.²⁰⁶ As a result, on 22 July 1994, the Saeima adopted a final law which followed the CSCE and CE recommendations regarding the quota system. However, the law still remained very exclusive, given that the application review was based on the age and place of birth of the applicant. Although there were no longer any fixed quotas limiting the number of applications that could be accepted, most non-Latvians could not get automatic citizenship and many could not even apply for naturalisation until after the year 2000.²⁰⁷ Although CSCE HCNM Max van der Stoep noted that the Latvian law conformed on the whole with the recommendations of international organisations, he still complained about the 'excessively high demands' placed on the applicants for citizenship with regard to knowledge of the Latvian language.²⁰⁸ The language requirement in fact proved to be a major obstacle in the acquisition of Latvian citizenship.²⁰⁹ Although opinion polls had shown that an overwhelming majority of non-citizens wanted to acquire Latvian citizenship, the number of applicants was extremely low.²¹⁰ However, the laws were not modified.²¹¹ In addition, several irregularities were noted in the application of the law 'On the Registration of Residents' (1991), and the 'Law on the Status of Former USSR Citizens who are not Citizens of Latvia or any other State' (1995) which were aimed at regulating the status of non-citizens residing in Latvia.²¹²

²⁰⁶ The Council experts repeated van der Stoep's objections that the system of quotas did not allow non-citizens born in Latvia to determine exactly when they might receive Latvian citizenship. (Elena Visens, 'Latviiský zakon o grazhdanstve ne ponravilsya Sovetu Evropy', *Segodnya*, 16 June 1994, p.1).

²⁰⁷ Lowell Barrington, 'The Domestic and International Consequences', p.739.

²⁰⁸ Vladimir Abarinov, 'Po mneniiu rossiiskogo posla, vlasti Latvii vvodyat v zabluzhdenie komissara SBSE', *Segodnya*, 13 September 1994, p.3; Mark A. Jubulis, 'The External Dimension of Democratization in Latvia: The Impact of European Institutions', *International Relations*, XIII, December 1996, 3, p. 71.

²⁰⁹ Letter by the CSCE High Commissioner on National Minorities (HCNM) Max van der Stoep to the Minister of Foreign Affairs of the Republic of Latvia, 516/96/L, 14 March 1996.

²¹⁰ *ibid.*

²¹¹ On 16 March 1995, the Citizenship Law was liberalised through amendments adopted by the Saeima. However the modifications were applied only to permanent residents of Latvian origin who did not have any other citizenship, and women and their descendants who had lost their Latvian citizenship through marriage to a foreign citizen, as well as those who had completed their education in Latvian. In other words, it did not affect Russian speakers.

²¹² Human Rights Watch Helsinki, *Violations by the Latvian Department of Citizenship and Immigration*, 5, October 1993, 19, p. 3; UNGA, A/C.3/51/13, 8 November 1996, p.2.

The Russian community, not being able to obtain automatic citizenship, was denied a number of significant political and economic rights. In Estonia, non-citizens were not allowed to vote in national elections. As a result, virtually, all the Russian-speaking population, was forced to wait at least until March 1993 to obtain citizenship, and thus saw their right to vote in parliamentary elections, which they had exercised in March 1990, taken away.²¹³ Russian residents who did not hold Estonian citizenship were also barred from holding national or local offices and from becoming members of political parties.²¹⁴ However, resident non-citizens were allowed to vote in local elections, although they were barred from running as candidates.²¹⁵ Moreover, non-Estonian citizens were initially neither allowed to participate in the privatisation process nor to own land. However, on 3 May 1994, the government of Estonia adopted a resolution that guaranteed social and economic rights to those non-citizens who were registered as permanent residents of Estonia before July 1990.²¹⁶ In Latvia, the restrictive citizenship laws had an even more negative impact on the political and economic rights of the non-Latvian residents. Non-citizens were not allowed to vote in either national or local elections. Those without citizenship were prohibited from holding state office, from serving as judges or barristers and from taking part in diplomatic and consular services. Moreover, non-citizens were not allowed to own land and other natural resources, and were prohibited from buying houses from the state and, in some cases, from purchasing privatised co-operative flats. Also, non-citizens received fewer privatisation vouchers and smaller pensions. Finally, prior to 1995, they were not guaranteed the right to return to Latvia after leaving, nor the right to choose their place of residence.²¹⁷

2. Russia's Policies in Support of the Russian-speaking Population

In order to reverse the citizenship laws adopted by Estonia and Latvia, the Russian government conducted an intensive diplomatic campaign aimed at enlisting the support of

²¹³ Leonid Levitskii, 'Neestonskie zhiteli Estonii otstraneny ot vsenarodnogo golosovaniya', *Izvestiya*, 29 June 1992, p.3.

²¹⁴ Dzintra Bungs, Saulius Girnius, and Riina Kionka, 'Citizenship Legislation in the Baltic States', *RFE/RL Research Report*, 18 December 1992, p.39.

²¹⁵ Ilya Nikiforov, 'Estoniya: Negrazhdane imeiut pravo golosovat', *Nezavisimaya gazeta*, 22 May 1993, p.3.

²¹⁶ Yurii Maloveryan, 'Pravitel'stvo izbezhalo novogo konflikta so "svoimi" russkimi', *Segodnya*, 5 May 1994, p.5.

²¹⁷ Lowell Barrington, 'The Domestic and International Consequences', pp. 745-746; Irina Litvinova, '50 protsentov zhitel Latvii poluchat 85 protsentov ee sobstvennosti', *Izvestiya*, 4 September 1992, p.2.

the international community for a modification of the laws. In addition, it put pressure on the Estonian and Latvian governments by linking the issue of Russian minorities' rights to the withdrawal of Russian troops stationed in those countries. As far as the first aspect is concerned, throughout 1992-1996, the Russian Foreign Ministry made regular and consistent appeals to the UN, the CE and the CSCE expressing concern over the discriminatory practices conducted by Latvia and Estonia, and demanding their intervention in favour of a resolution of the contentious issue. In September 1992, Kozyrev went as far as requesting that the UN become the guarantor of the rights of the Russian minorities, and specifically asked that a UN guardianship be established over national minorities.²¹⁸ However such initiative did not receive much support. As highly restrictive citizenship laws were adopted in 1993-1994, the rhetoric of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs became much more assertive. Foreign Minister Kozyrev and his deputy Vitalii Churkin went as far as labelling the Baltic states' behaviour "apartheid" and "ethnic cleansing".²¹⁹ However, the Russian Foreign Ministry made it clear that it intended to find a solution to the controversy within the framework of generally recognised international standards and rules, and concentrated most of its efforts on the diplomatic front, by continuing its appeals to the UN, the CSCE and the CE.²²⁰ Russia's efforts to find a diplomatic solution to the question of Russian minorities involving an active international participation suggests that Russia was not trying to use the Russian diaspora as an instrument of Russian hegemony over the Baltic states. On the contrary, Russia was willing to bring in international organisations in order to protect the rights of the Russian diaspora and to allow for a better integration of Russians into the Latvian and Estonian societies.

The Russian government also tried to put pressure on the Baltic states by making the withdrawal of Russian troops conditional upon the modification of the discriminatory legislation. During the 1992 negotiations with Latvia and Estonia on modalities of the withdrawal of Russian troops, the Russian Foreign Ministry regularly demanded that retired military officers be given the opportunity to obtain Latvian citizenship, and that those soldiers and officers who wanted to remain in Latvia or Estonia after demobilisation, as well as all Russians already living there, be granted automatic Latvian or Estonian

²¹⁸ Aleksandr Shlaney, 'A. Kozyrev s tribuny OON kritikuyet narusheniya prav cheloveka v Estonii i Latvii', *Izvestiya*, 23 September 1992, p.4.

²¹⁹ Itar-tass, 23 June 1993 cited by Ann Sheehy, 'The Estonian Law on Aliens', p.10; Irina Grudinina, "Svobodnaya" Estoniya i "chastichno svobodnaya Rossiya" prodolzhaet vyasnyat' otnosheniya', *Segodnya*, 11 February 1994, p.3.

²²⁰ UN Economic and Social Council, E/CN.4/1994/107, 4 February 1994, p.2.

citizenship, according to where they lived.²²¹ Furthermore, in August 1992, Foreign Minister Kozyrev made the withdrawal of troops conditional upon a change in the laws that infringed upon the rights of the Russian-speakers.²²² On 29 October 1992, President Yeltsin went as far as ordering a temporary suspension of the withdrawal of Russian troops from Latvia and Estonia, in order to put pressure on Tallinn and Riga so that they modify their citizenship laws.²²³ However, Russian Deputy Foreign Minister Vitalii Churkin denied that Moscow's progress on troop withdrawals was directly dependent on the resolution of the minorities problem, arguing instead that Moscow was only calling upon the governments of the Baltic states 'to address these issues in a civilised manner with due consideration for the existing historical realities.'²²⁴ Despite the denials, however, the linkage between both issues remained clear. In particular, Russia's decision in September 1992, to agree to the withdrawal of troops from Lithuania, a country which had a much higher military-strategic value for Russia, but which had introduced much less more inclusive citizenship laws, clearly indicated that the Russian government was using the presence of Russian troops to put pressure on the Estonian and Latvian governments to improve the condition of Russians living in those countries.²²⁵ Moreover, during 1993-1994, the Russian Defence Minister several times openly threatened to suspend the withdrawal of Russian troops unless discrimination against Russian minorities stopped.²²⁶ However, Russia never actually implemented these threats, and all attempts to link the issue actually failed. Despite all the rhetoric, the withdrawal of all Russian troops from the Baltic states was completed punctually, on 31 August 1994.

Although it has often been argued that Russian leaders used the fate of Russian minorities to keep a military presence in the Baltic states,²²⁷ the evidence seems to show that, despite early wishes to keep a small military presence in the area, Russia agreed in early 1992 to

²²¹ Dzintra Bungs, 'Soviet Troops in Latvia,' *RFE/RL Research Report*, 28 August 1992, p.24.

²²² Konstantin Eggert, 'Ministry inostrannykh del Baltii i Rossii khotyat, chtoby snachala dogovorilis' ikh prezidenty', *Izvestiya*, 7 August 1992, p.5.

²²³ Boris Vinogradov, 'Vyvod voisk iz Pribalkiti priostanovlen. Odnazh prichin - narusheniya prav russkikh', *Izvestiya*, 30 October 1992, p.1.

²²⁴ Interfax, 30 October 1992, cited by Stephen Foye, 'Russian Politics Complicates Troop Withdrawal', *RFE/RL Research Report*, 20 November 1992, p.33.

²²⁵ Colonel Vadim Solovev, 'Vyvod Rossiiskikh voisk iz Baltii', *Nezavisimaya gazeta*, 17 October 1992, p.3.

²²⁶ Natalya Pachegina, 'Moskva Priostannavlivaet vyvod voisk is Baltii', *Nezavisimaya gazeta*, 31 March 1993, p.1; Pavel Felgengauer, 'Anniversary: Russia proposes its Own Version of 'Partnership'', *Segodnya*, 7 May 1994, p.1, in *CDPDP*, XLVI, 1994, 18, p.10.

²²⁷ Dzintra Bungs, 'Progress on Withdrawal from the Baltic States' *RFE/RL Research Report*, 18 June 1993, p. 51; Pavel Baev, *The Russian Army in a Time of Troubles*, PRIO, London, 1996, p.161.

withdraw its troops from the Baltic states. Russia's intention to withdraw its troops is indicated by the preliminary agreements reached to that effect with the Baltic states in January 1992, the various rounds of negotiations on the specifics of the withdrawal held during 1992-1993, and above all, the slow, but uninterrupted, withdrawal of all Russian troops from the region between 1992 and 1994, despite the lack of formal agreements. Russia's decision to withdraw its troops was influenced, to a great extent, by the pressure exerted by Western countries, particularly the United States, and its decision to make economic aid to Russia conditional upon the withdrawal of Russian troops. However, Russia's behaviour still indicated a readiness to relinquish its presence from an area of major strategic importance, and as such attested to the absence of a neo-imperialist policy. Although the withdrawal of troops was never smooth, the delays experienced were primarily related to the acute lack of housing and to the desire to provide adequate living and employment conditions for Russian servicemen returning home, as well as to attempts to bring pressure to bear on the Latvian and Estonian governments so that they did not violate the rights of Russian minorities.²²⁸

The Russian government also reverted to economic measures in order to bring pressure to bear on the Estonian and Latvian governments. When the Estonian parliament adopted the first version of the Law on Aliens in June 1993, the Russian government threatened to impose economic sanctions, and on 25 June temporarily suspended Estonia's gas supplies. Although Russian leaders insisted that the halt in supplies was related to unpaid arrears of 10 billion rubles, Russia's actions seem to have also been motivated by the desire to put pressure on Tallinn so that it drop the Law on Aliens.²²⁹ This was indicated by the fact that gas deliveries from Russia to Estonia resumed shortly after the Estonian government delayed ratification of the law.²³⁰ Yeltsin's suggestion, on 24 June 1993, that the Estonian leadership, yielding to the pressures of nationalism, had 'forgotten certain geopolitical and demographic realities, which Russia could remind it of', indicated that Russia was ready to act assertively.²³¹ Similarly, when in the Summer of 1994, the Latvian government adopted the various draft citizenship laws, Russian leaders threatened to impose economic

²²⁸ Natalya Pachegina, 'Moskva Priostannavlivaet vyvod voisk is Baltii', p.1.

²²⁹ Russia's claims might well have been true given Russia simultaneously cut off supplies to Lithuania, Estonia, Latvia and Moldova because of accumulated debts. Moreover, once Estonia paid the outstanding debt of \$10 million, supplies resumed. (*Russia: Country Report*, Economist Intelligence Unit, 3rd Quarter 1993, p.10.)

²³⁰ 'Estonia', *Petroleum Economist*, July 1993, p.43.

²³¹ 'Zayavlenie Prezidenta Rossiiskoi Federatsii', *Rossiiskaya gazeta*, 25 June 1993, p.2.

sanctions and made implementation of the Most Favoured Nation status dependent on the successful resolution of the citizenship issue.

3. Assessment of Estonian and Latvian Policies and of Russia's Responses

Were Russia's concerns and complaints regarding Russia's rights in the Baltic states legitimate, or were they instead intended as an instrument for exerting hegemony over the Baltic states? The UN fact-finding missions to Estonia on 7-11 February 1992, and Latvia on 27-30 October 1992, found neither evidence of discrimination along ethnic or religious grounds, nor traces of gross and systematic violations of *human rights*.²³² Instead, the UN observed considerable anxiety among the Russian, Belorussian and Ukrainian communities inhabiting Latvia and Estonia in view of the restrictive citizenship laws.²³³ Similar assessments were expressed by the CSCE HCNM, Max van der Stoep, who noted that there was neither evidence of persecution of the non-Latvian/Estonian population nor incidents pointing to inter-ethnic violence.²³⁴ However, the Commissioner also added that given that the majority of non-Latvians and non-Estonians wished to remain in Latvia or Estonia respectively, the Latvian and Estonian governments had to conduct a policy aimed at their integration.²³⁵

International law gives states great - though not unlimited - freedom in setting requirements for citizenship. Article 1 of the 1930 Hague Convention on *Certain Questions relating to the Conflict of Nationality Laws* stipulates that 'it is for each state to determine under its own law who are its citizens.'²³⁶ Article 15 (1) of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights stipulates that 'everyone has the right to a nationality' but this provision did not oblige Estonia or Latvia to grant citizenship to all its residents without conditions.²³⁷ In other words, the issue of citizenship was left by international law within the realm of a state's jurisdiction. Nevertheless, the fact that the citizenship laws adopted by these

²³² UNGA, A/48/511, 26 October 1993, p.2; UNGA, A/47/748, 2 December 1992, p.3.

²³³ *ibid.*

²³⁴ Recommendations by the CSCE HCNM on his visit to Latvia on 15-20 January and 1-2 April 1993 and to Estonia on 12-13 January and 30-31 March 1993. (Letter by CSCE HCNM Max van der Stoep to the Minister of Foreign Affairs of Latvia, 283/93/L/Rev, 6 April 1993; Letter by CSCE HCNM Max van der Stoep to the Minister of Foreign Affairs of Estonia, 206/93/L/Rev, 6 April 1993.)

²³⁵ *ibid.*

²³⁶ Kees Groenendijk, 'Nationality, Minorities and Statelessness: The Case of the Baltic States', *Helsinki Monitor*, Netherlands Helsinki Committee, 4, 1993, 3.

²³⁷ UNGA, A/48/511, 26 October 1993, p.7.

countries left over one third of the population stateless, and consequently deprived of important political and economic rights, indicated the existence of a major gap in international law. The Estonian and Latvian cases were particularly relevant because of the repercussions of the citizenship laws on the democratic character of both states. As the Helsinki Watch report on Estonia wrote, 'a representative democracy in which nearly forty percent of the population does not enjoy citizenship rights is far from representative.'²³⁸ Moreover, the lack of citizenship for long-term residents and people born in either Latvia or Estonia had an impact on their political and economic rights. It can therefore be argued that Russia had a strong case for expressing concern over the fate of Russians living in these two countries, since they were suffering from some kind of injustice.

Some scholars, however, questioned the right of Russia to actually claim protection over these communities. Neil Melvin argued that the case for Russia's involvement with the Russian-speaking communities in all former Soviet states is extremely weak. 'It is far from clear what the basis for Russia's claim to have a special relationship to these communities is,' he wrote.²³⁹ In his view, there was little evidence of formal discrimination against Russians, and consequently, the reason why the issue of the Russian Diaspora has become so important lies in domestic politics.²⁴⁰ Although there is little doubt that the Russian government reacted to pressure from the domestic opposition, which demanded a more assertive policy regarding Russians in the Baltics, Melvin's views are not entirely correct. No state could ignore the presence of millions of its co-ethnics concentrated, as many of the Russians abroad are, just across its borders. The Russian government faced the daunting task of providing housing and jobs to a large numbers of Russians if they suddenly decided to return to Russia. If for no other reason, therefore, the Russian authorities had a legitimate interest in the fate of co-ethnics outside Russia's borders. Rein Mullerson also argued that 'it would certainly be unrealistic to think that states would completely ignore the plight of their ethnic brethren in other countries.'²⁴¹ However, Mullerson noted that from the point of view of international law, the mother countries had no legal grounds for 'protecting' ethnic brothers. International law permits states to exercise diplomatic protection of their citizens abroad. Citizens of other countries or

²³⁸ Human Rights Watch Helsinki, *Integrating Estonia's Non-Citizen Minority*, p. 30. A similar point was raised by the Council of Europe, and by the CSCE; Letter by the CSCE HCNM Max van der Stoep to the Foreign Minister of Latvia, 1463/93/L, 10 December 1993.

²³⁹ Neil Melvin, *Forging the New Russian Nation*, p.26

²⁴⁰ *ibid.*

²⁴¹ Rein Mullerson, *International Law, Rights and Politics: Developments in Eastern Europe and the CIS*, London and New York, 1994, p.112.

stateless persons, whatever their ethnic origin, are under the protection of international human rights law and not that of the state where their ethnic brethren lives. Thus, according to Mullerson, Russia had no more right to interfere on behalf of the Russian minority in Estonia than, for example, Great Britain had. But Mullerson also noted that ‘it would be unrealistic to expect ‘motherlands’ to remain indifferent to real violations of the rights of their ethnic brothers and sisters in other countries.’²⁴² Consequently it can be argued that, although in purely legal terms Russia had no right to claim the protection of ethnic Russians across its borders, it still had a kind of moral right to express concern for fate of the Russian diaspora abroad.²⁴³

V. Conclusions

Most members of the Russian leadership and the Russian political elite at large had serious difficulties in accepting the disintegration of the Soviet Union and the emergence of a new Russian state within the administrative borders of the old RSFSR. Their idea of “Russia” remained closely linked with the former Soviet Union and the former Russian Empire, both in terms of territorial dimension and population composition. Moreover, Russians were at pains with accepting the fact that their country no longer fitted entirely with the qualities of a “great power” in the world arena. Russian national consciousness had been shattered by the psychological effects of Russia’s loss of empire. However, despite the longing for empire, the Russian leadership, President Yeltsin and Foreign Minister Kozyrev in particular, did not adopt a neo-imperialist attitude towards the FSS when the Soviet Union collapsed. On the contrary, endowed with a strong anti-imperialist approach Yeltsin and Kozyrev attempted during 1992 to bring Russia into the ‘civilised group of Western nations’, and treated the former Soviet states as independent and sovereign entities of international law. However, harsh criticisms from both Moderate and Imperialist Nationalists groups, as well as events in the former Soviet states, such as the eruption of military conflicts, the discrimination against Russian minorities, and the deep economic interdependence among the FSS, compelled Kozyrev to adopt a more active stance towards the near abroad. During 1993, the tone of the Russian political discourse became

²⁴² *ibid.*

²⁴³ The case of Irish Catholics in Northern Ireland represents an interesting case of comparison. In the Anglo-Irish agreement of 1985, the British government recognised the right of the Irish government to be consulted over policies affecting Irish Catholics in Northern Ireland. However, the right of involvement in protection of Irish minorities was in this case sealed in a treaty. (Anglo-Irish Agreement’, 15 November 1985, art. 2, www.nio.gov.uk.) This did not happen in the case of Russians in the Baltic states.

increasingly assertive, as Kozyrev and Yeltsin increasingly adopted neo-imperialist stances, giving in to Moderate Nationalists who challenged Yeltsin's power base on the domestic and foreign policy fronts. Kozyrev regularly referred to Russia's intention to preserve its influence over the FSS, whereas Yeltsin spelled out the main areas of Russian foreign policy priority: the settlement of the conflicts in the former Soviet space, the protection of the rights of Russian minorities, and the integration of the former Soviet states within the CIS framework. These three elements remained a priority of Russian policy throughout 1994-1996.

Despite the assertive tone adopted by Russian foreign policy makers, the foreign policy record during 1993-1996 was not as neo-imperialist as indicated by the discourse, except for certain areas, such as military integration and conflict resolution. And here again, Russia's policies often followed legitimate state interests, such as the restoration of stability along Russia's borders, the prevention of the spread of weapons, drugs into Russia, and regularly underwent significant modifications. More often than not, Russia's policies were characterised by a lack of clarity and disarray, rather than by the systematic pursuit of national interest, a result of Yeltsin's attempt to reach a broad domestic compromise to counterbalance his own domestic political weakness. Still, Russia remained highly involved in events in the former Soviet Union, and this was determined by various factors. First, deep economic and military links tied all former Soviet states together making it extremely difficult for Russia to adopt an isolationist policy. Second, the presence of a large Russian and Russian-speaking community in the near abroad, whose civic rights were often infringed upon, particularly in the Baltic states, meant that Russian leaders could not just stand idly by. Third, Russian leaders considered the near abroad a source of constant instability and conflict, and feared the spread of weapons, refugees, drugs and criminals into Russia. No borders existed between the former Soviet states, and as a result, events in the near abroad had a direct impact on Russia's internal developments. Fourth, Russian leaders were very much concerned about the potential disintegration of Russia and the effects that events in the near abroad could have on Russia's own fragile territorial integrity. Fifth, Russians feared the spread of Islamic fundamentalism in Russia, as well as the overall spread of instability. Finally, Russians tended to view the former Soviet space as a sphere of Russia's vital interests and exclusive influence, and as such were particularly worried about other states acquiring a predominant influence in the region. Although they welcomed UN and CSCE/OSCE participation in the mediation of conflicts in the FSS, they refused to grant these organisations a predominant

role in the post-Soviet space, and to allow foreign military forces play the role of peacekeepers, thus indicating a reluctance to totally discard Russia's imperial legacy.

As far as Russian minorities are concerned, this section shows that in the case of the protection of Russian diaspora, Russia was following its legitimate state interests and was not trying to use the difficulties faced by the Russian communities in these countries as a pretext to exert or keep some sort of influence in the area. On the contrary, the fact that Russian leaders put pressure on the Estonia and Latvian governments to facilitate their acquisition of citizenship by Russians, shows that Russian leaders actually wanted these minorities to integrate into their new state. In other words, Russian leaders did not display a neo-imperialist behaviour. Russian leaders showed concern for the fate of Russian minorities for a variety of reasons: First, Russian leaders were rightly worried about the economic and social consequences that might arise as a result of a massive influx of ethnic Russians back into the mother country, if these Russians were unable to integrate into their new states. Second, Russian leaders could not remain indifferent to the fate of their ethnic brethren, once it became quite obvious that they were suffering from some sort of discrimination, if only on moral grounds. The fact that such a high percentage of the total population of each country, roughly 30 percent, was not granted immediate automatic citizenship, showed that there was a problem. It can therefore be argued that Russia's policies followed legitimate state concerns and not a neo-imperialist agenda. The Russian government was not using the fate of Russians in order to restore some sort of influence over the region. Despite the fact that certain members of the Russian political elite would have liked the Russian government to be more protective of Russians in the Baltics, and Communists and Nationalists put great pressure on the government, Russian politicians mostly used diplomatic methods to press their case. Russian leaders also several times linked troop withdrawals to the fate of Russian minorities, as a means to putting pressure on the Baltic governments so that they modify their legislation. However, under Western pressure, Russia eventually withdrew its troops from the area, and sought other means to protect Russians living in Latvia and Estonia. Pressing the case of Russian minorities in the Baltics at various international forums eventually proved much more successful.

Chapter 2 : Russia and the Commonwealth of Independent States

The current chapter will examine whether Russia used the CIS framework as a vehicle of hegemony over the former Soviet states, and as instrument of integration of the CIS states into a Russian-led union; or whether instead, Russia's policies reflected an attempt to establish close political, military and economic co-operation and integration, on a voluntary basis, among the CIS states, for the benefit of both Russia and the other CIS member states.²⁴⁴ The chapter will analyse Russia's motivations behind the creation of the CIS, as well as its policies regarding CIS military and economic integration, in an attempt to determine whether they fitted the pattern of "neo-imperial" behaviour. In this section, Russia's policies towards the CIS as an organisation will be analysed, as opposed to individual policies towards the FSS, which will be examined in subsequent chapters. Russia's bilateral relations with the other CIS states in the military and economic sphere will be examined whenever Russian leaders found bilateralism a more effective way of pursuing their objectives in CIS affairs.

²⁴⁴ The literature falls into several categories: Andrei Zagorski, William E. Odom and Robert Dujarric have supported the neo-imperialist argument, claiming that Russia used the CIS to impose its dominance in the region. (Andrei Zagorski, 'Reintegration in the Former USSR?', *Aussenpolitik*, 45, 1994, 3, pp. 263-272; Andrei Zagorskii, *SNG: Ot Desintegratsii k Reintegratsii?*, Issledovanie Tsentra Mezhdunarodnykh Issledovanii MGIMO, Moscow, March 1994, 2; Robert Dujarric and William E. Odom, *Commonwealth or Empire: Russia, Central Asia and the Transcaucasus*, Hudson Institute, Indianapolis, 1995.) Abraham S. Becker examined the developments of CIS economic integration and argued that political-strategic considerations, as well as economic factors, motivated Russia's drive towards integration. Although not explicitly supporting the neo-imperialist argument, Becker nevertheless argued that Moscow was promoting CIS integration despite its potentially high direct and indirect costs, including the post-ponement of Russia's integration into the world economy. In other words, Russia seemed ready to create a Russian-subsidised union. (Abraham S. Becker, 'Russia and Economic Integration in the CIS', *Survival*, 38, Winter 1996-1997, 4, pp. 117-136.) Mark Webber and Richard Sakwa adopted a more moderate view. According to them, Russia did indeed use the CIS as a convenient mechanism for institutionalising Russian influence among the FSS. However the depth of its commitment to the organisation was far from equivocal. Moreover, Russia tried to minimise the burdens of CIS-led cooperation upon the failing Russian economy. (Richard Sakwa and Mark Webber, 'The Commonwealth of Independent States, 1991-1998: Stagnation and Survival', *Europe-Asia Studies*, 51, 1999, 3, pp. 379-415; Mark Webber, *CIS Integration Trends: Russia and the Former Soviet South*, The Royal Institute of International Affairs, London, 1997.) Irina Isakova argued that pragmatic economic and military considerations, such as development of the CIS transportation network, access to the Kaliningrad region, and preventing Russia's isolation, motivated Russia's efforts of integration with Kazakhstan and Belarus. (Irina Isakova, *The CIS and Europe: Evolving Security Relationships*, London Defence Studies, 45, London, 1998.)

I. The Path Towards the Creation of the CIS

On 8 December 1991 the leaders of Ukraine, Belorussia and the RSFSR put an end to the seventy years old Soviet state and created the Commonwealth of Independent States (CIS) out of its remains. They were joined on 21 December 1991 by most of the former USSR republics with the exception of the Baltic states, which had achieved internationally recognised independence after the August 1991 coup, and Georgia, which at the time was caught up in a fierce civil war between supporters and opponents of President Zviad Gamsakhurdia. Initially conceived as an association of independent states united by their common Soviet past, the CIS was aimed at dismantling the old state structures of the USSR and at preserving a common economic and military space.²⁴⁵ The establishment of this new entity was the result of long and almost always fruitless negotiations, begun in 1990 between the centre and the USSR republics, and aimed at establishing a new Union treaty that would adapt the old state structures to the new political realities. The growing aspirations of the various Soviet nationalities for self-determination, reflected in the various declarations of sovereignty adopted by all USSR republics between late 1988 and 1990, seriously questioned the integrity of the Soviet state. Sovereignty declarations and amendments to republican constitutions often granted republican laws precedence over those of the Union, thereby undermining Union prerogatives and disrupting national economic policy.²⁴⁶ The Soviet leader, Mikhail Gorbachev, also had to face the emergence of the RSFSR as a political force in its own right, distinct from the centre, and a defender of the interests of the Russian state. Russia's leader, Boris Yeltsin, became a serious challenge to Gorbachev as he managed to get legislation adopted that sought to wrest control of the RSFSR economy from the all-Union bureaucracy and to implement market reforms. Yeltsin's presidency pitted the giant Russian republic, with more than half of the population of the Soviet Union, three fourths of its territory, and much of its natural resources, against the centre.²⁴⁷

These factors prompted Gorbachev to negotiate with the various republics of the USSR a new Union treaty which would determine the nature of the relations among its members.

²⁴⁵ *Agreement on the Creation of the CIS*, Tass, 9 December 1991, translated by RIA-Novosti, London, January 1992, p.1.

²⁴⁶ Ann Sheehy, 'The State of the Multinational Union', *Report on the USSR*, 4 January 1991, p.16.

²⁴⁷ Ann Sheehy, 'A Bankrupt System, Nationalism and Personal Ambitions', in *The Demise of the USSR: From Communism to Independence*, eds. Vera Tolz and Iain Elliot, London, 1995, p.43.

The draft Union Treaties proposed in November 1990 and March 1991 significantly expanded the powers of the republics by introducing confederate elements into what was still described as a federal state. However, they were insufficient to satisfy many of the republics. Indeed, for the Baltic republics, Armenia, Moldova and Georgia, the whole process of negotiating a new federal settlement was, by late 1990, considered superfluous. The first draft Union Treaty published in November 1990 had been deemed unsatisfactory even by some of the republics that had declared themselves in favour of remaining part of the Union. Faced with a growing paralysis of power, Gorbachev decided to bypass the republican leaderships and parliaments and to appeal directly to the population. In March 1991, he called a Soviet-wide referendum on the desirability of a reformed Union. Although the referendum was boycotted by the authorities of six republics (Georgia, Armenia, Moldova and the three Baltic republics) it received the endorsement of the majority of the population in the remainder republics. This provided an incentive for further negotiations on a Union treaty. A new process was set in motion after a meeting held in Novo-Ogarevo on 23 April 1991, between Gorbachev and the nine republics which had held the referendum, namely Russia, Ukraine, Belarus, Azerbaijan, Kazakhstan and the four Central Asian republics. But from the early stages of the negotiations, fundamental differences emerged between the various republics on the one hand, and the leaders of the USSR on the other, that were never reconciled. Whereas Gorbachev insisted that the future political union had to be a state in its own right, with a single all-Union market, common monetary systems, finances, price policies and taxes, by 1991 republican leaders began pushing for a confederation of sovereign states. Consequently, the series of negotiated draft treaties were, above all, the result of temporary compromises and contained essential contradictions, particularly regarding the very nature of the new Union state and the relations of the republics to the centre. The attempt to build up a confederation of sovereign republics within the framework of a federal state was a contradiction in terms and this was shown in the series of draft treaties which were negotiated throughout 1991. The Treaty on the Union of Sovereign States, which was agreed upon on 23 July 1991 and was to be signed on 20 August 1991, stated in Article 1 that 'Each republic party to the treaty is a sovereign state' but then added that 'The USSR is a sovereign, federate democratic state, formed as a result of the unification of equal republics and exercising state power within the limits of the powers voluntarily invested to it by the parties.'²⁴⁸

²⁴⁸ 'Dogovor o Soiuze Suverennikh gosudarstv', *Pravda*, 27 June 1991, p.3.

The failed August 1991 coup gave a decisive boost to the ongoing process of disintegration and dramatically altered the political landscape in the USSR by increasing the weight of the republics in relation to the centre. The Baltic republics obtained internationally recognised independence, the centre became completely discredited and weakened, and Russia emerged as the dominant republic. In early September 1991, changes were made in the structure of the Union parliament and in the top executive organs that gave the republics a dominant role.²⁴⁹ Executive power was transferred to a State Council consisting of the republican presidents to whom the defence, security (KGB), internal affairs (MVD) and foreign policy organs were subordinated, and to an Inter-republican Economic Committee in charge of implementing economic reform and social policy. As a result, republican representatives became officially involved in decision-making in such key areas as foreign policy and defence. Russian leader Boris Yeltsin gave an additional blow to the Union during the Autumn of 1991, when he nationalised control over natural resources on RSFSR soil, made Russia responsible for the 1991 budget, and took control over the entire Soviet economy on Russia's territory, the result of which was the closure of 80 percent of the USSR government.²⁵⁰ In spite of the strength of centrifugal forces, a number of factors played in favour of the continuation of some form of political and economic union: the interdependence of the republican economies, the presence of a large Russian Diaspora in the non-Russian republics, the existence of a unified military structure, and the threat of mutual territorial claims should the Soviet Union cease to exist. The need for Western credits and assistance to cope with the ever worsening economic situation made it a matter of urgency for the republics to present some semblance of order by reaching agreement on economic and political union. In October 1991, ten of the twelve remaining republics signed a treaty setting up an Economic Community, but the latter failed to materialise. Negotiations for a political union also resumed in October but again similar disagreements re-emerged regarding the very nature of the new political union.²⁵¹ The final blow to the treaty was given, however, by Ukraine's overwhelming vote for independence on 1 December 1991, which determined Yeltsin's final decision to break with the old centre and create a new association of truly independent states - the Commonwealth of Independent States (CIS).

²⁴⁹ 'Proekt - Zakon Soiuza Sovetskikh Sotsialisticheskikh Respublik "Ob ogranakh gosudarstvennoi vlasti i upravlenie Soiuza SSR v perekhodnyi period"', *Rossiiskaya gazeta*, 5 September 1991, p.3.

²⁵⁰ 'Ukaz Prezidenta Rossii', *Pravda*, 23 August 1991, p. 3, S. Razin, 'Osenny "putch" Borisa Yeltsina', *Komsomol'skaya pravda*, 19 November 1991, p.1.

²⁵¹ Sergei Parkhomenko, 'Document: The Text of the Union Treaty Has Been Agreed Upon in Principle', *Nezavisimaya gazeta*, 16 November 1991, p.1, in *CDPSP*, XLIII, 1991, 46, p.11.

II. The Creation of the CIS

The CIS was initially conceived as an association of independent states aimed at putting an end to the Soviet Union as a subject of international law, dismantling the old state structures of the USSR and establishing new-type relations among its members on the basis of mutual recognition and respect for state sovereignty, equality and non-interference in internal affairs.²⁵² However, it was also conceived as an instrument for the preservation of a common economic and military-strategic space and for the promotion of co-operation in the fields of security, economic and foreign policy.²⁵³ Co-operation was expected to be particularly deep in the field of economic policy due to the legacy of close economic interdependence amongst the former USSR republics. The republics pledged to conduct co-ordinated radical economic reform, and to construct economic relations and carry out settlements on the basis of the existing monetary unit - the ruble. The CIS states also agreed to co-ordinate their foreign policies as well as to preserve, and maintain under joint command, their common military-strategic space, including single control over nuclear weapons, so as to ensure international stability and the security of CIS member-states.²⁵⁴

What led to the dismantling of the USSR and what were the objectives pursued by the Russian leadership when establishing the CIS? The leadership of the RSFSR has often been accused of contributing to the dismantling of the Soviet Union, indeed of being the main promoter of the collapse of the Soviet state.²⁵⁵ Although there is hardly any doubt that many of the policies conducted by the Russian leadership during 1991, and especially after the August coup of 1991, dealt a significant blow to the preservation of central union structures, it would be a mistake to assume that the ultimate objective of Russia's policies was the dismantling of the Union. Not only did many of the non-Russian republics play a big part in the process of disintegration, but President Yeltsin's policies were aimed above all at destroying the totalitarian nature of the Soviet state and at introducing market reforms. In view of the fierce opposition to radical reform at Union level, Yeltsin decided to use Russian governmental structures to pursue his policies. Interviewed by *Soyuz*, Yeltsin

²⁵² The CIS states also recognised and respected the territorial integrity of one another and the inviolability of existing borders within the Commonwealth. (*Agreement on the Creation of the CIS*, pp.1-5.)

²⁵³ *ibid.*

²⁵⁴ *ibid.*; 'Alma-Atinskaya Deklaratsiya', *Pravda*, 23 December 1991, p.1.

²⁵⁵ Andrei Grachev, *Final Days: The Inside Story of the Collapse of the Soviet Union*, Boulder, Co., 1995.

explained that when he became USSR People's Deputy, he soon understood that there would be no radical reforms at the union level 'and so I thought to myself: If the reforms cannot be carried out at that level, why not try Russia?'²⁵⁶ In fact, during 1990, the Russian parliament under Yeltsin acted more radically than the all-Union legislature voting in favour, for example, of an immediate switch to a market system - a drastic move that the USSR Supreme Soviet rejected.²⁵⁷ In his book, *The View from the Kremlin*, Yeltsin explained that his disagreements with President Gorbachev during the winter of 1990-91 resulted, among other things from the latter's decision to bury the 500-day programme. 'It had been our only economic hope at the time,' he wrote.²⁵⁸

Yeltsin, however, seemed most willing to conduct reforms within the Union, if renewed structures would grant Russia significant powers to do so, as indicated by his support for the Treaty on the Union of Sovereign States which was expected to be signed on 20 August 1991. The treaty left all global matters of foreign policy, defence and a large part of the financial system under Soviet control, but granted Russia the right to conduct its own economic reform programme independently.²⁵⁹ 'It will create the conditions for transferring to the Russian republic's jurisdiction all enterprises and organisations operating on Russian territory and, in turn, will make it possible to accomplish what is perhaps the most important task - immediately granting the republics the right to choose for themselves the form of ownership and terms of economic management,' Yeltsin noted in support of the treaty.²⁶⁰ But the August 1991 coup dealt a severe blow to the negotiations on the Treaty on the Union of Sovereign States. Russia and most republican leaders proceeded hastily towards the dismantling of the Soviet state. On the one hand, Russia seized control over the Union structures, especially the economic bodies, and on the other hand, the Soviet republics began demanding increasing powers from the centre. Immediately after the coup, most republics declared their independence from the USSR, many placed Communist Party property under republican jurisdiction, and some started forming their own armed forces.

²⁵⁶ *Soyuz*, September 1990, 38, pp. 6-7, cited by John Dunlop, *The Rise of Russia and the Fall of the Soviet Empire*, Princeton, New Jersey, 1993, p. 55.

²⁵⁷ Alexander Rahr, 'Gorbachev and Yeltsin in a Deadlock', *Report on the USSR*, 15 February 1991, p.1.

²⁵⁸ Boris Yeltsin, *The View from the Kremlin*, London, 1994, pp. 23-24. The 500-day programme, drafted by economists Grigorii Yavlinskii and Stanislav Shatalin, was rejected by Gorbachev and the Soviet parliament. It was passed in an altered form by the Russian parliament, which, in effect, had no power to implement it at the time.

²⁵⁹ *ibid.* p.36.

²⁶⁰ 'Russia, Kazakhstan, Uzbekistan, Tajikistan, and Belarussia are prepared to sign the Union Treaty on 20 August,' *Nezavisimaya gazeta*, 13 August 1991, p.1, in *CDPSP*, XLIII, 1991, 32, p.6.

Executive power was transferred to a State Council composed of the Presidents of the republics, which in early November 1991 abolished 36 Union ministries and 37 departments, including the Ministry of Foreign Economic Relations, the Ministry of Justice, the Ministry of Finance and the Ministry of Agriculture.²⁶¹

Moreover, efforts to conduct a co-ordinated policy of economic reforms within a common economic space did not see the light of day, either. Whereas for many republics the preservation of the union was seen as a means of prolonging subsidies from the centre in the form of budget transfers and low internal prices, Russian leaders were anxious to start economic reform by freeing internal prices. Russia's decision to launch a package of radical market reforms in mid-November 1991, which introduced major changes in the functioning of the Russian economy, was not followed by the rest of the republics, leading to severe havoc at Union level. In addition, Ukraine's decisions to set up its own armed forces, to distance itself from the economic treaty, and to conduct a referendum on independence, dealt another blow to the union. Russia would have hardly accepted a union that would not have included Ukraine. As *Rossiiskaya gazeta* journalist Vladimir Kuznechevskii wrote 'it would be very difficult to be part of the Union without Ukraine, its own blood sister,' and added, 'this is difficult to imagine even genetically and psychologically: Russia began in Kiev after all.'²⁶²

In view of these developments, on 8 December 1991, Yeltsin together with the Ukrainian and Belarussian republican leaders put an end to the USSR and created the CIS. Russia's decision was determined by various factors. First, it appeared as a means of overcoming the impasse in talks on the new Union Treaty.²⁶³ In the words of RSFSR State Secretary and first Deputy Chairman of the government, Gennady Burbulis '[the CIS] is a constructive way out of the long negotiating process. Hopefully a full-blooded and fully viable union of independent states will be created on the ruins of the totalitarian communist system.'²⁶⁴ Russian leaders had become aware that the process of the secession of the republics from the USSR and the formation of independent states had become a real fact. According to Russian State Counsellor Sergei Shakhrai, 'the actual inactivity of the union

²⁶¹ G. Alimov, 'Chto zhe budet esli ustanet ne karaul, a narod?', *Izvestiya*, 5 November 1991, p.1.

²⁶² Vladimir Kyzhnechevsky, 'Novo-Ogarevskoe Vaterloo Gorbacheva', *Rossiiskaya gazeta*, 28 November, 1991, p.1.

²⁶³ *Statement by the Heads of the Belorussian Republic, the RSFSR and Ukraine*, Tass, 8 December 1991, translated by RIA-Novosti, London, January 1992, p.6.

²⁶⁴ Moscow Radio, 10 December 1991, in *FBIS-SOV-91-238*, 11 December 1991, p.36.

bodies is obvious. Therefore, at issue is not the dismantling of the union, not the legal decision to eliminate it, but a medical diagnosis, the establishment of a fact.²⁶⁵ Thus, an association of independent states appeared as the only possible solution to overcome the existing deadlock.²⁶⁶

Second, Russian leaders were particularly concerned with the reluctance of Ukraine to sign any kind of Union Treaty and were aware of the dangers that a reckless dismemberment of the USSR could bring about. In his speech to the Supreme Soviet on 12 December 1991, Yeltsin explained: 'On 1 December, the people of Ukraine voted for independence in a referendum. Ukraine has refused to sign the treaty and the consequences of this are obvious: serious disruptions in the geopolitical equilibrium in the world, and an escalation of the conflicts within the former Soviet Union. Under these conditions, it would have been criminal to conclude a treaty on a Union of seven republics, without Ukraine, to remain calm, wait for the next co-ordination meetings and not do anything.'²⁶⁷ In an interview with paper *Trud*, Yeltsin again stressed that 'without the Ukraine we do not represent the Union. First, it is a state with a colossal population - 52 million people. Second, 11 million of these are Russian. Third, we are linked by a millennium of history and by thousands of economic, political and social threads to this day.'²⁶⁸ The presence of over 25 million Russians in the new independent republics also determined the creation of an organisation which could deal with the problems resulting from discrimination and violation of their human and civic rights.²⁶⁹

Finally, the reform-minded and democratic politicians of the RSFSR saw the CIS as a way of finally getting rid of the centre, and gaining control over the Russian economy, its enterprises and natural resources, in order to carry out the long-awaited radical economic transformations. As Sergei Shakhrai noted 'the Commonwealth has opened the way for economic reform in the Russian Federation', and added that 'from now on, the Russian government and parliament will not have to fight on three fronts, against the old Union structures, against the lack of agreement among the positions of republics having different

²⁶⁵ *ibid.*, p.37.

²⁶⁶ This view was shared by President Yeltsin. See his interview in 'Russia - Policy of Protecting Individual Rights and Freedoms', *Rossiiskie vesti*, 30 April 1996, p.1, in *BBC SWB* SU/2601 B/5, 2 May 1996.

²⁶⁷ 'Vystuplenie Prezidenta RSFSR B.N. El'tsina', *Rossiiskaya gazeta*, 13 December 1991, p.1.

²⁶⁸ Yurii Lepskii and Aleksandr Potapov, 'It is very difficult for us, but we will stand our ground', *Trud*, in *FBIS-SOV-91-241*, 16 December 1991, p.36.

²⁶⁹ *ibid.*

social and economic conditions, and against the crisis in the economy.²⁷⁰ The CIS agreements in fact, stipulated that members should conduct radical economic reforms, within the common economic space.²⁷¹ The CIS, however, was not conceived by Russian leaders simply as an instrument of ‘civilised divorce.’ Russian leaders saw it as a new mechanism aimed at co-ordinating the relations of the republics that had been part of a single unified state, and as a means of peacefully dividing the USSR assets and property among its member states.

III. Russia’s Policy Orientations Towards the CIS

Russia’s policy towards the CIS underwent significant evolution in 1992. Whereas in the Autumn of 1991, the view had prevailed that only by significantly reducing the power of the Union structures, and eventually abolishing the centre altogether, Russia would quickly and effectively pursue economic and political reforms, already in early 1992, preserving a high degree of integrity within the post-Soviet space became a main foreign policy priority. As early as February 1992, at a seminar on “Russia’s role in the New World”, Foreign Minister Kozyrev noted that Russia’s foreign policy attached particular importance to the establishment of a viable CIS. In his view, ‘the forming of the CIS involves our vital interests and fundamental issues connected with Russia’s joining the civilised world.’²⁷² He stressed that Russia’s interests in the CIS lay, in particular, in preserving a single army, an integrated economy, a unique cultural space and a common language.²⁷³ Kozyrev, however, made it clear that the CIS would be formed on a strictly voluntary basis. In his view, ‘the viability of the emerging CIS lies in the fact that natural ties will be much stronger than the shackles of a totalitarian system.’²⁷⁴ Forcible restoration of the USSR was considered counter-productive. Instead, patient and persistent talks with CIS partners was seen as the most complex, but the only realistic path towards strengthening the CIS. Russia would seek co-ordination of joint work ‘every time our Commonwealth partners are ready for it,’ Kozyrev noted.²⁷⁵ This strategy of co-operation on a strictly voluntary basis, which became

²⁷⁰ Konstantin Katanyan, ‘On the Path of Major Reforms’, *Kuranty*, 6 January 1992, p. 4, in *CDPSP*, XLIV, 1992, 2, p.5.

²⁷¹ *Declaration of the Governments of the Republic of Belarus, Russian Federation and Ukraine, on Coordination of Economic Policies*, Tass, 8 December 1991, translated by RIA-Novosti, London, p.7.

²⁷² Interfax, 26 February 1992, in *FBIS-SOV-92-039*, 27 February 1992, p.34.

²⁷³ *ibid.*

²⁷⁴ Andrei Kozyrev, ‘Preobrazhennaya Rossiya v novom mire’, *Izvestiya*, 2 January 1992, p.3.

²⁷⁵ ‘A Transformed Russia in a New World’, *International Affairs*, Moscow, 1992, 4-5, p.88.

one of the main elements of Russia's policies towards the CIS, reflected a passive attitude towards the CIS and significantly hindered Russia's thrust towards integration. It was based on the assumption that the new states would be unable to resist the gravitational pull of Russia's military and economic influence, and would eventually re-orient themselves back to Moscow. It also reflected Moscow's intention to abandon its previous imperialist policies, and to conduct relations with its former 'colonies' on an equal basis.

Russia's lenient attitude towards the CIS and the growing centrifugal tendencies of the CIS states resulted in a rapid disintegration of the post-Soviet military and economic spaces. In the early Spring of 1992, most CIS states began setting up their own armed forces, and in May 1992, Russia itself went ahead with the creation of its own military structures, thus eliminating hopes that a united, albeit smaller, CIS army could be preserved. In the economic sphere, the inter-republican trade system collapsed as tariff barriers were erected, Russia took control over the ruble, republics introduced parallel currencies, and CIS states conducted uncoordinated economic policies. Although the CIS had allowed for a peaceful division of former USSR assets, it seemed to lack the necessary instruments to put an end to the bloody ethnic conflicts which were ravaging some of the CIS states in the Spring and Summer of 1992. Disagreements among CIS members as to the degree of CIS co-operation desired led to the emergence of a group of states within the CIS ready for closer co-operation (Kazakhstan, Russia, Tajikistan, Uzbekistan, Kyrgyzstan and Armenia, all of which signed the Collective Security Treaty) and another group of states for which the CIS was just a mechanism for 'civilised divorce' (Ukraine, Moldova, Azerbaijan, and to a lesser degree Turkmenistan.) In view of the different approaches towards CIS integration, Russian leaders planned to push forward integration with those states ready to do so, and to form with them a political and economic core which would be the locomotive of integration and reforms.²⁷⁶ Behind the idea of a 'varied speed' development of the CIS, lay the hope that those states that did not participate in the early CIS development would sooner or later join the developing institution. However, the Russian leadership did not initially identify the CIS states with which the country had an interest in developing closer co-operation, either for economic, cultural, or geopolitical reasons. During 1992 and 1993, all CIS countries were seen as vital to Russia's interests, thus indicating that Russia did not have a clear CIS integration project. Only in 1995 were Belarus, Kazakhstan,

²⁷⁶ Kozyrev's Address to the Sixth CPD. (Moscow Radio Rossii Network, 18 April 1992, in *FBIS-SOV-92-078-S*, 22 April 1992, p.15.)

Kyrgyzstan and Armenia clearly singled out as crucial military and economic allies, and efforts to deepen integration further with them were conducted.

The Ministry of Foreign Affairs' policy of voluntary co-operation with the CIS was interpreted by members of the opposition in parliament and certain figures in the Russian leadership as not properly fulfilling Russia's interests.²⁷⁷ As described in Chapter 1, the opposition in Parliament viewed the former Soviet states as falling within Russia's natural sphere of interest and considered the CIS as an instrument of Russia's hegemony over the former Soviet states. Evgeny Ambartsumov, Chairman of the Supreme Soviet's Joint Committee on International Affairs and Foreign Economic Relations, called for Russia to play a leading role in a future confederation of states, and recommended that Russia consider the entire geopolitical space of the former Union a sphere of vital interests.²⁷⁸ Similarly, political scientist Andranik Migranyan called for Russia to play an active role in the CIS since 'within the CIS, Russia is *de jure* and *de facto* called upon to play a special role in the entire geopolitical space of the former Soviet Union.'²⁷⁹ In August 1992, the Council for Foreign and Defence Policy, in its report *A Strategy for Russia*, called for deeper CIS integration and argued in favour of Russia conducting 'an enlightened post-imperialist course, which would involve efforts to preserve and build CIS inter-governmental structures.'²⁸⁰ Major efforts had to be conducted to build a compact network of permanent inter-governmental organs which would regulate relations in all spheres of life: economy, transport, energy, finance, education, culture and defence.²⁸¹ The report also identified a particular group of former Soviet states - Belarus, Kazakhstan, and Georgia - as vital to Russia's interests, and argued in favour of creating a deeper union with them. Following this last view, many political analysts argued that Russia should abandon its policy of granting concessions to unsupportive CIS states, such as Ukraine, and should instead, deepen integration with those states most prone for co-operation.²⁸²

²⁷⁷ Pavel Golub, 'Sozdanie otdel'nogo ministerstva po delam Sodruzhestva mozhet stat' politicheskoi oshibkoi', *Izvestiya*, 24 July 1992, p.7.

²⁷⁸ Evgenii Ambartsumov, 'Sami sebya zagnali v ugol, samim iz nego i vykhodit', *Rossiiskaya gazeta*, 13 April 1992, p.7; Konstantin Eggert, 'Rossiya v roli "Evraziiskogo Zhandarma"?'', *Izvestiya*, 7 August 1992, p.6.

²⁷⁹ Andranik Migranyan, 'Podlinnye i mnimiye orientiry vo vneshnei politike', *Rossiiskaya gazeta*, 4 August 1992, p.4.

²⁸⁰ 'Strategiya dlya Rossii - Tezisy Soveta po Vneshnei i Oboronnoi Politike', (hereafter, 'Strategiya dlya Rossii'), *Nezavisimaya gazeta*, 19 August 1992, pp.3-4.

²⁸¹ *ibid.*

²⁸² Sergei Stankevich, 'Derzhava v poiskakh sebya', *Nezavisimaya gazeta*, 28 March 1993, p.4; Aleksei Bogaturov and Mikhail Kozhokin, 'Vostochny vopros dlya Rossii', *Nezavisimaya gazeta*, 26 March 1992, p.2.

In view of these critics, the Russian Foreign Ministry began revising its CIS policies. In September 1992, Deputy Foreign Minister Fedor Shelov-Kovedyaev, produced a report which argued in favour of adopting an active CIS integrationist policy.²⁸³ Shelov-Kovedyaev recognised that Russia's initially passive and uncoordinated policies towards the CIS had led to a loss of influence throughout the area, but argued that Russia could only restore its influence and acquire an internationally recognised role as leader in the former Soviet space on the basis of dynamic and successful reform at home. The reinvigoration of Russia was seen as a precondition for a 'co-ordinated and firm policy' in the near abroad, and a 'decisive break-through in the direction of integration in the CIS.'²⁸⁴ Shelov-Kovedyaev suggested that Russia conduct a differentiated policy in the CIS and that it deepen relations with those countries whose policies coincided with those of Russia. He insisted, however, that integration should be a gradual process and that Russia should take into account the interests of other states when implementing reform policies that were liable to affect them.²⁸⁵ In other words, although CIS integration was to be given top priority, it was recommended that Russia act with caution. Although Shelov-Kovedyaev resigned shortly after handing in his proposals, his recommendations were taken over by the Russian Foreign Ministry. For instance, the *Draft Concept of the Foreign Policy of the Russian Federation*, approved in November 1992, referred to 'relations with the near abroad' as a priority of foreign policy and insisted on the necessity of strengthening co-operation within the CIS.²⁸⁶ Writing in January 1993, Kozyrev supported the preservation, in an appropriate legal form, of a Russian military presence in the former Soviet states, the joint defence of the foreign borders of the CIS, the preservation of a single economic space and the defence of Russians abroad.²⁸⁷ In spite of the Ministry's intentions to activate CIS policy, pressure from the opposition, which was still dissatisfied with Russia's policy, continued. At the Seventh Congress of People's Deputies in December 1992, deputies appealed to the parliaments of the new independent states to create a new confederation with all the former Soviet states.²⁸⁸ Similarly, the Civic Union's January 1993 programme

²⁸³ John Lough 'Defining Russia's relations with neighbouring states', *RFE/RL Research Report*, 14 May 1993, pp.55-56.

²⁸⁴ *ibid.*

²⁸⁵ *ibid.*

²⁸⁶ 'Russia's Foreign Policy Concept', *International Affairs*, Moscow, January 1993, 1, p.15.

²⁸⁷ 'Rossiya: god minuvshy i god nastupivshy', *Diplomaticheskii Vestnik*, 1993, 1-2, pp.3-4.

²⁸⁸ Itar-tass, 14 December 1992, in *FBIS-SOV-92-241-S*, 15 December 1992, p.3.

insisted on the need to create a new confederation on the territory of the former USSR which would replace the CIS, seen as a non-viable organisation in the longer term.²⁸⁹

In view of the mounting centrifugal tendencies and in order to counter the ever-increasing pressure, the Russian Foreign Ministry adopted a more assertive policy towards the CIS during 1993, especially at rhetoric level. Russian leaders began talking with greater insistence about the need of deepening military and economic integrating among the CIS states and strengthening CIS institutions. In February 1993, speaking at the Civic Union Forum, Yeltsin stressed the need for closer integration among the states of the Commonwealth. He noted that 'our countries, which until recently constituted one country, perceive especially strongly today, how great their mutual independence is' and stated clearly Russia's special role on the territory of the former USSR as being the main guarantor of peace and stability in the post-Soviet space.²⁹⁰ The following month, in view of the coming meeting of CIS Heads of State, Yeltsin appealed for increased military and economic co-operation within the CIS, for the strengthening of the CIS institutions, and for the implementation of the CIS Charter in order 'to prevent the CIS from becoming an amorphous organisation.'²⁹¹ At the April 1993 CIS summit in Minsk, Yeltsin spelled out in detail Russia's strategy for the CIS. In the economic field, Yeltsin placed particular emphasis on the need to develop multilateral co-ordination in key industrial sectors, to co-operate in the sphere of investment, and to create a new and effective currency union. In order to achieve tight economic co-operation, a special permanent committee with 'appropriate powers' had to be created. Yeltsin also called for the creation of a defensive union and even mentioned the possibility of setting up joint armed forces in the future, under single command. With regards to the CIS Charter, which had been adopted by a group of CIS states in January 1993, Yeltsin made it clear that those states that did not sign it remained outside the main channels of CIS co-operation.²⁹² Similarly, the *Basic Provisions of the Russian Federation Foreign Policy Concept* approved by Yeltsin in April 1993 stressed Russia's special responsibility 'for the creation of a new system of positive relations among the former Soviet states, Russia being the guarantor of the

²⁸⁹ Alexander Rahr, 'Russia: the struggle for power continues,' *RFE/RL Research Report*, 5 February 1993, p.3.

²⁹⁰ Russian Television, 28 February, 1993, in *FBIS-SOV-93-038*, 1 March 1993, p.21.

²⁹¹ 'El'tsin obratilsya k lideram SNG', *Nezavisimaya gazeta*, 18 March 1993, p.1.

²⁹² Ostankino Channel 1 TV, Moscow, 16 April 1993, in *BBC SWB*, SU/1666 C1/1 and C1/2, 1993.

stability of those relations.²⁹³ Top priority was given to relations with the former Soviet republics and to the desire to achieve the greatest possible degree of integration among the states of the former Soviet Union. Moreover, actions aimed at undermining the integrationist process within the CIS were considered a fundamental threat to Russia's security.²⁹⁴

In spite of all these vehement calls for deeper CIS integration, the record for 1993 remained mixed. In the institutional field, a CIS Charter outlining the main objectives and the structure of the organisation was adopted, and Russian pressure brought new members back into the organisation in the Autumn.²⁹⁵ However, no supranational or enforcing bodies were created and most of the agreements signed were never implemented. In the economic field, the process of disintegration did not stop, as trade continued to decline, Russia reduced its subsidies and increased its energy prices, the ruble zone was brought to an end, and the integration projects adopted, the Economic Union in particular, were too ambitious to be implemented in the short term. In the military sphere, very little was achieved at multilateral level. The Collective Security Treaty failed to develop into a multilateral instrument for security and no supranational air defence and border protection systems were set up. Most CIS states proceeded with the creation of their own armed forces, and Russia itself tried to achieve integration outside of the CIS structures, through a dense network of bilateral relations. These bilateral agreements, however, allowed Russia to increase its military presence in the CIS area, in the form of peace-keeping operations, military bases, military assistance, technical co-operation, air defence and border protection, and eventually formed the basis of the multilateral integration projects agreed upon in 1995-1996.

Russia's inability to achieve higher levels of integration was to a large extent attributed to Russia's reduced financial resources as well to the reluctance of most CIS states to set up supra-national organs. The benefits of economic reform in Russia were taking longer than expected to arrive, and the CIS states, although in need of Russia's economic support, were adamant in their refusal to subordinate themselves to new organs of power, where Russia was expected to play a predominant role. Paradoxically, Russia also proved

²⁹³ Vladislav Chernov, 'Natsional'nye interesy Rossii i ugrozy dlya ee bezopasnosti', *Nezavisimaya gazeta*, 29 April 1993, p.1.

²⁹⁴ *ibid.*

²⁹⁵ Azerbaijan joined the CIS in September 1993, Georgia in December 1993, and Moldova in April 1994.

reluctant to create supranational organs. Kazakhstan's initiatives to create an 'Eurasian Union' with those CIS states in favour of deep economic, military and political integration, did not enjoy Moscow's support.²⁹⁶ If implemented, Kazakhstan's proposals would have radically altered the nature of the existing CIS, transforming its ailing structures into an organisation similar to the European Union. Nazarbaev's Eurasian Union envisaged the delegation of some powers to interstate co-ordinating bodies, the creation of powerful common executive organs enjoying substantial supranational powers, for co-operation above all in the economic sphere,²⁹⁷ Russia refused to accept such a union because it would have placed Russia under collective control within the Eurasian Union framework. Although this was never openly acknowledged, Russia's integration concepts did not envisage the surrender of Russian sovereignty to supra-national organs. On the contrary, it was usually assumed that states would co-ordinate or subordinate their economic and military policies to Russia.

In view of Russia's difficult economic situation and Russia's reluctance to create supra-national organs where it would not be dominant, the idea that integration had to be pursued strictly in accordance to Russia's own interests, and that it had to be economically beneficial to Russia, began gaining ground among the political elite during 1994, and eventually became one of the main elements of Russia's CIS strategy. During 1994-1995, the goal of achieving deep CIS military and economic integration remained, but emphasis was placed on cost-effectiveness. In his speech to the Federation Council, Yeltsin spelled out Russia's aim of reaching closer CIS military and economic integration, but added that 'integration should not damage Russia itself, nor should it be effected at the cost of our forces and resources, material and financial alike, being stretched to breaking point.'²⁹⁸ Similarly Foreign Minister Kozyrev at a Russian Foreign Policy Council meeting in the Summer of 1994 stressed that integration had to benefit both sides, and made it clear that Russia would reject those proposals put forward by some CIS states, which were clearly motivated by the bid to get more help from Russia.²⁹⁹ Renewed emphasis was also placed on the idea that Russia had to become a strong economic and political state first, before CIS integration could go ahead. It was assumed that a strong and economically successful

²⁹⁶ 'Nursultan Nazarbaev: "We Need a Union", *Literaturnaya gazeta*, 19 August 1992, in *CDPSP*, XLIV, 1992, 33, p. 23; Vitalii Portnikov, 'Evraziiskii Soiuz po Nazarbaevu poimut li prezidenta Kazakhstana na etot raz?', *Nezavisimaya gazeta*, 31 March 1994, p.1.

²⁹⁷ *ibid.* The Eurasian Union also envisaged a common citizenship and freedom of movement for citizens of the union's states.

²⁹⁸ Moscow, Ostankino TV, 24 February 1994, in *FBIS-SOV-94-037*, 24 February 1994, p.19

²⁹⁹ 'Russian Interests in the CIS', *International Affairs*, Moscow, 1994, 11, p.14.

Russia would act as a magnet of further and deeper CIS integration.³⁰⁰ These policy orientations were shared by most members of the influential Council on Foreign and Defence Policy. In their second document *Strategy for Russia (2)* published in May 1994, they suggested that Russia set up a relationship, whereby the political independence of the CIS states was preserved in exchange for unlimited access to their markets of goods, services, and capital. An effective defensive military-political union was to be set up as well as a single legal space for all ethnic minorities that would ensure their full rights.³⁰¹ This policy was considered cheaper and more profitable than a union of states, since Russia would not bear direct responsibility for maintaining the standard of living of the populations of the CIS states, while at the same time it would secure for itself access to their natural, economic and human resources.³⁰² Only after getting out of the economic crisis, successfully implementing economic reform, and achieving economic prosperity would Russia be able to afford closer integration with those former USSR republics that would want it. Integration would then proceed, only if it was advantageous to Russia.³⁰³

Russia's CIS integration record during 1994 and early 1995 reflected this combination of assertiveness and cost-effective integration. In the economic sphere, the Belarus-Russian monetary union was abandoned, because it was considered too expensive and not capable of entirely satisfying Russia's economic interests. Instead, efforts were conducted to develop mutually advantageous economic relations among the CIS states. The signing of the agreement on a Free Trade Area (April 1994) and the Customs Union between Russia, Belarus and Kazakhstan (January 1995), aimed at a further liberalisation of trade between Russia and its CIS counterparts, were examples in this direction. In the military field, assertiveness seemed to dominate over caution. New emphasis was placed on the restoration of the unity of the CIS military-strategic space, to be achieved by the materialisation of the principle of collective security, the restoration of the air defence system, joint border protection, the legalisation of military bases in the CIS states, and the creation under Russia's aegis, of coalition and, in future, united CIS armed forces.³⁰⁴

³⁰⁰ *ibid.*

³⁰¹ 'Strategiya dlya Rossii (2)', *Nezavisimaya gazeta*, 27 May 1994, pp.4-5.

³⁰² *ibid.*

³⁰³ *ibid.* For similar views see also Aleksandr Vladislavlev, 'Vneshnyaya politika Rossii. Prioritetnoe napravlenie - strany SNG', *Nezavisimaya gazeta*, 6 May 1994, p.3.

³⁰⁴ Dmitrii Trenin, 'Kollektivnaya bezopasnost' i kollektivnaya oborona', *Nezavisimaya gazeta*, 4 November 1994, p.3. Support for CIS military integration also came from the Foreign Intelligence Service, headed by Evgenii Primakov. The FIS report, published in September 1994, considered CIS military integration 'a natural objective process' and argued that although changes in the world military-political situation had led to a decreasing of tensions at global

However, Russia rejected the far more ambitious integration projects proposed by the CIS Staff for Military Co-ordination which came close to a restoration of the old Soviet military infrastructure, and also tried to share the financial burden involved in joint operations with its neighbours.

During the rest of 1995 the main traits of Russia's policy orientation towards the CIS, as it developed throughout 1994, became crystallised. CIS integration remained a top priority of Russia's foreign policy and all efforts were devoted to bringing about a common economic space and a collective security system. However, the notion that integration should not harm Russia's interests and that economic benefits had to be obtained from integration remained a priority.³⁰⁵ Emphasis was put on the idea that Russia had to profit from free access to CIS markets and CIS resources, as well as from free transit through the CIS space.³⁰⁶ Moreover, CIS states were expected to reach a similar level of economic development for integration to proceed.³⁰⁷ However, the coming presidential and parliamentary elections resulted in an increased emphasis on CIS integration in late 1995-early 1996. The powerful challenges faced by Yeltsin and his supporters from parties and candidates supportive of CIS integration prompted the former to undertake several initiatives that had a direct bearing on the integration issue. Authoritative documents which defined Russia's CIS policy were published. Of particular relevance was the *Strategic Course of Russia Towards the Member States of the CIS* (September 1995) which amounted to the most comprehensive single presidential document on Russia's policy towards the CIS up to that date.³⁰⁸ The document spelled out in a systematic form the main objectives of Russia's CIS policy. Russia's main aim in the area was 'to create an economic and political integration of states, capable of occupying a fitting place in the world.'³⁰⁹ Integration was considered essential for the sake of containing centrifugal

level, potential security threats to Russia remained in the form of inter-ethnic conflicts, the expansion of Iranian and Turkish influence, Islamic extremism, and the modernisation and development of Western offensive armaments. Military integration was seen as the best way to counter these threats. ('Rossiya i SNG: Nuzhdaetsya li v korrektyrovke pozitsiya zapada?', *Rossiiskaya gazeta*, 22 September 1994, pp.1,6.)

³⁰⁵ 'Vystuplenie Prezidenta Rossiiskoi Federatsii Borisa El'tsina na zasedanii glav gosudarstv SNG', *Rossiiskie vesti*, 20 January 1996, p.4.

³⁰⁶ This point was raised by Foreign Minister Evgenii Primakov. See Stanislav Kondrashov, 'Rossiya ishchet novoe mesto v mire', *Izvestiya*, 6 March 1996, p.3.

³⁰⁷ 'Vystuplenie Prezidenta Rossiiskoi Federatsii Borisa El'tsina na zasedanii glav gosudarstv SNG', p.4.

³⁰⁸ Also relevant was the Memorandum on National Security presented by Yeltsin in June 1996. ('O natsional'noi bezopasnosti', *Nezavisimaya gazeta*, 14 June 1996, pp.7-8.)

³⁰⁹ *Strategicheskii Kurs Rossii s Gosudarstvami-Uchastnikami Sodruzhestva Nezavisimykh Gosudarstv*, (hereafter, *Strategicheskii Kurs*) 14 September 1995, p.1.

tendencies inside Russia and for ensuring lasting stability within the CIS states as well. However, CIS co-operation had to be conducted only if it did not impair Russia's national interest. Russian leaders considered that the most effective way to achieve this goal was to allow each country to choose its own mode of rapprochement. Bilateral ties, which would take into account the specific peculiarities of each states, were to be developed as a complement to multilateral forms of co-operation.³¹⁰ The emphasis on bilateralism was also complemented with the identification of an 'integrated core' within the CIS.

This new emphasis on assertive and selective integration, driven to a great extent by political expedience, resulted in the signing of fairly ambitious economic agreements - the Russian-Belarusian treaty on the creation of a Community of Sovereign States (April 1996) and the agreement on *Deepening Integration in the Economic and Humanitarian Fields among Russia, Belarus, Kazakhstan and Kyrgyzstan* (March 1996). In the military sphere, the CIS Collective Security Concept was approved in February 1995, and various agreements aimed at developing bilateral military co-operation among Russian and CIS armed forces, as well as joint CIS border protection and joint CIS air defence were reached during 1995-1996.³¹¹ However, the implementation of these agreements remained only partial. It can therefore be concluded that Russia's policy towards the CIS only partially reflected a neo-imperial design. Russia's CIS policy orientations underwent a significant evolution since the CIS's inception in December 1991. Whereas in the Autumn of 1991, the leadership of the RSFSR tended to view the centre as an obstacle to the pursuit of Russia's economic reform, once the Soviet Union collapsed Russian leaders tried to

³¹⁰ 'O deistvennosti gosudarstvennoi vlasti v Rossii', *Rossiiskaya gazeta*, 17 February 1995, p.1. (Yeltsin's speech to the Russian Federal Assembly on 16 February 1996); Boris Filipov and Mikhail Shchipanov, 'Our Strategy: Integration', *Rossiiskaya Gazeta*, 18 August 1995, p. 9, 11 in *FBIS-SOV-95-170-S*, 1 September 1995, p. 1. (Interview with Valery Serov, Russian Minister on Cooperation with the CIS States)

³¹¹ Establishing close economic, military and political co-operation with Belarus, Kazakhstan and Kyrgyzstan was strongly supported by the Council on Foreign and Defence Policy in its third report *Will the Union be Reborn?* published on 23 May 1996. The document stressed the importance of conducting an active policy in the near abroad, aimed exclusively at fulfilling Russia's economic and military interests. Russia should strive to obtain 'unimpeded access to resources that have strategic value, including transport arteries,' in the former Soviet space, as well as 'access to raw materials, labour and markets' and should 'use neighbouring state borders, territories and parts of their military infrastructure (air defence, early warning systems, etc.) to prevent military threats to Russia,' the authors noted. Moreover such policies had to be conducted at a low cost for Russia. The document however, made it clear that Russia had to remain the dominant economic and military power in the region, and refuse outside intervention in mediation and peacekeeping operations. In order to achieve such goals, however, Russia had first to conduct successful economic and democratic reforms at home. ('Vozrodit'sya li Soiuz? Budushchee Postsovestskogo Postranstva', *Nezavisimaya gazeta*, 23 May 1996, p.4.)

preserve some sort of unity within the post-Soviet space. However, the prevalence of strong 'anti-imperialist' feelings both within Russia and in the other CIS states during 1992, and Russia's emphasis on improving relations with the West, resulted in the adoption of a relatively passive CIS policy which argued in favour of CIS integration on a strictly voluntary basis. But further disintegration of the post-Soviet space and mounting pressure from the opposition prompted President Yeltsin and Foreign Minister Kozyrev to adopt a more assertive policy, especially at rhetoric level.

Russia's efforts at pursuing deeper integration during 1993-1994 were dovetailed by the CIS states' increasing desire to develop closer ties with Russia, a result of their bad economic performances and of the awareness that links with Russia were stronger and more difficult to destroy than initially envisaged. Russia's integration policies, however, were hindered by the reluctance of most CIS states to subordinate themselves to supranational organs where Russia was bound to play a dominant role in view of its heavy economic, military and political weight, as well as by Russia's own economic constraints. Russia, in turn, proved reluctant to develop the CIS into an supranational organisation, which would entail surrendering sovereignty into the hands of other CIS states. Consequently, during 1994-1995, the view started to develop among the Russian leadership that integration had to be aimed above all at fulfilling Russia's own vital interests and should be conducted at relative low cost. Although the goal of deep integration remained a top priority, policy-makers increasingly focused on bilateral relations and the identification of an 'integrated core' within the CIS, with which closer ties had to be developed. Russia's policy orientations reflected more an attempt to fulfil the state's legitimate interests rather than an coherent effort to pursue a neo-imperialist policy. Although nostalgia for the Soviet Union remained deeply embedded in Russian political thinking, especially among the opposition, and was reflected in most of the rhetoric after 1993, the actual policies of the government tended to be much more cautious. This was shown by the fact that many of the most ambitious integration projects were never implemented.

The CIS remained an amorphous organisation during 1992-1996 also because of the unwillingness and inability of Russia and the CIS states to develop political institutions and co-ordinating instruments at supranational level which would guarantee a more effective functioning of the organisation. Neither the founding documents nor the CIS Charter envisaged the creation of any supranational bodies enjoying the power to impose decisions

on member-states.³¹² The Charter clearly stated that the CIS was not a state, and that relations among its members were to be based on the respect of sovereignty, the right of self-determination, the inviolability of frontiers, the non-use or threat of force and non-interference in domestic and foreign affairs.³¹³ Moreover, the highest bodies of the CIS, the Council of Heads of State and the Council of Heads of Government, which enjoyed executive power, adopted all decisions by consensus. In addition, the Charter stated that 'any state could declare non interest in a given question, which should not be regarded as an obstacle to making a decision.'³¹⁴ This condition, which allowed a state to *opt out* of provisions with which it disagreed, and which was aimed at avoiding the veto, was extensively used by CIS members.³¹⁵ As a result, support for most of the CIS documents was far from unanimous, leading to a differentiated membership within the CIS. A first group of states, comprising Armenia, Belarus, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Russia, Tajikistan and initially Uzbekistan, usually favoured close co-operation within the CIS and signed most CIS agreements. A second group, consisting of Azerbaijan, Moldova, Turkmenistan, Ukraine, and after 1994 Uzbekistan, only signed a minority of CIS agreements, and either opposed the creation of co-ordinating structures or entered into them half-heartedly. A further obstacle to effective co-ordination within the CIS was the lack of any mechanism for enforcing compliance with the signed agreements. Decisions taken within the institutions of the Commonwealth were not legally binding even upon those members that had agreed to them. In such cases as the Inter-state Economic Committee, where executive functions were mooted, they were to little effect.³¹⁶ Some agreements did have a legal standing by virtue of being international treaties requiring ratification by national parliaments, such as the founding CIS agreements, the Collective Security Treaty and the Treaty on Economic Union. However, once signed by individual heads of state or government and subsequently ratified, there was no guarantee that their provisions would be carried out and no machinery for punishing non-fulfilment. The CIS states' leaders were in fact never able to agree on a mechanism on implementation of joint decisions.³¹⁷

³¹² *Charter of the Commonwealth of Independent States*, translated by RIA-Novosti, London, 22 January 1993, p.2; *Agreement on the Creation of the CIS*, p.1.

³¹³ *Charter of the Commonwealth of Independent States*, pp.2-3.

³¹⁴ *ibid.* p.12.

³¹⁵ The Tashkent summit of CIS Heads of State on 15 May 1992 adopted the formula of "consensus minus one", and simple majority voting for procedural issues, but still any state could declare that it was not interested in a particular decision and was thus exempted. (Richard Sakwa, *Russian Politics and Society*, London, 1993, p.325.)

³¹⁶ Mark Webber, *The International Politics of Russia and the Successor States*, Manchester and New York, 1996, pp.91-94.

³¹⁷ Pavel Shinkarenko, 'Sodruzhestvo vykhodit iz "pike"', *Rossiiskie vesti*, 18 May 1993, p.2.

Moreover, from the very beginning of the creation of the CIS, differences of opinion on the introduction and the pace of economic reform, as well as on the establishment of a common military-strategic space, resulted in violations of provisions previously signed leading to a total lack of co-ordination in economic and military policy. This inconsistent behaviour resulted from the contradictory visions of the various CIS states regarding the aims and purposes of the organisation. From the very beginning Ukraine made it clear that it viewed the CIS as an association of independent states, where decisions could not be imposed on its members.³¹⁸ Fearful of any attempt to resurrect the old Soviet centre in a new guise, Ukrainian leaders opposed the development of CIS executive structures and viewed the organisation simply as a transitional mechanism. Ukraine's sceptical view of the CIS was also shared by Azerbaijan, Moldova and Georgia, all of which were brought back into the organisation by either Russia's military pressure (Georgia and Azerbaijan) or economic pressure (Moldova) in late 1993-early 1994. The Central Asian states, with the exception of Turkmenistan, instead, became the most active supporters of close CIS integration, a result not only of their high level of economic dependence on Russia, but also of the presence of large Russian minorities in their territories, such as in Kazakhstan, or to internal political instability, such as in Tajikistan. Uzbekistan eventually adopted a more independent line in 1995-1996. The Central Asian republics were joined by Belarus and Armenia in their support for close integration.³¹⁹

Russia, in turn, also proved reluctant to accept the creation of supra-national organs which might have resulted in other CIS states dictating policies to Russia. Russian leaders, instead, preferred to develop bilateral forms of co-operation where they felt Russia's interests were best taken into account. This was particularly reflected in the broad net of military agreements which tied CIS's state security to Russia. In the economic field, agreements were less the result of attempts to create CIS economic dependence on Russia, and were mainly dictated by the logic of mutual economic profits. Moreover, Russian leaders accepted that other CIS states disagree over the CIS development and allowed for the cohabitation of very contrasting views within the organisation. This indicated that Russian leaders both lacked the willingness and the financial capabilities to create a neo-

³¹⁸ Aleksandra Lugovskaya, 'Leonid Kravchuk, ob Ukraini, Rossii i SNG', *Izvestiya*, 6 January 1993, p.3.

³¹⁹ Vitalii Portnikov, 'Ekonomicheskii soiuz mozhnet sostoyat'sya', *Nezavisimaya gazeta*, 18 May 1993, p.1; Aleksandr Gagua, 'V kritike vneshnei politiki Rossii my stalkivaemsa s opasnym neprofessionalizmom', *Nezavisimaya gazeta*, 30 July, 1992, p.5.

empire. It had become clear to Russian leaders that the only way to dominate supranational political CIS organs was through the setting up of a new state, something both Russian and other CIS leaders refused to contemplate.

IV. Economic and Monetary Integration Within the CIS Framework

The current section will examine Russia's policies towards the CIS in the area of economic integration, in an attempt to determine whether Russia's policies were aimed at creating an economic sphere of influence or informal empire through the preservation of an integrated economic space closely tied to Russia. The section will first look at Russia's economic policies in the trading sphere and then will analyse Russia's monetary policies towards the CIS states. Particular attention will be paid to the process of monetary integration with neighbouring Belarus.

1. Economic Integration

During the period under examination, Russia's economic policies towards the CIS states were largely determined by the legacies of the Soviet command economy: a high degree of economic interdependence among the former Soviet republics, Russia's economic predominance within the USSR, and the collapse of the Soviet economy which left all republics immersed in a deep crisis. The former Soviet republics were part of a highly integrated and centralised economic command system, where planning was largely carried out by sector. The emphasis on economies of scale through the operation of large enterprises, resulted in the concentration of production in a limited number of enterprises and high levels of republican specialisation. As a result, inter-republican trade remained extremely high, even when compared to other trading blocs. Seventy-five percent of the Soviet trade prior to independence was conducted at intra-republican level.³²⁰ Moreover, not only were the republics highly integrated, but they were all, to a great extent, dependent on trade with Russia, both in terms of exports as well as imports. Russia was, still in 1995, the largest destination of CIS states' exports, and in the majority of cases accounted for more than half of the individual republics' 'intra-Soviet' trade.³²¹ Russia was also the main

³²⁰ Benedicte Vibe Chirstensen, *The Russian Federation in Transition*, Occasional Paper 11, The International Monetary Fund (IMF), Washington D.C., February 1994, p.6.

³²¹ Alan Smith, *International Trade and Payments in the Former Soviet/CMEA Area: Reorientation or Reintegration?*, The Royal Institute of International Affairs, 1994, p.37.

industrial partner. In 1991, Russian industries produced two-thirds of the machinery and the preponderant share of the R&D and military potential.³²² This high level of integration argued in favour of a concerted effort to overcome the deep economic crisis. A steep decline in production, shortages of basic foods and plummeting capital investment had plagued all republics during 1991, while annual inflation reached 80 percent.³²³ But the last months of 1991 brought to light the huge disagreements that existed among the various republican leaders. The last attempt to agree on an economic union - the Economic Community Treaty signed by ten republics in October 1991 - failed to materialise as it became bogged down in intractable discussions.

a. 1991- 1992: The First Efforts to Keep a United Economic Space

The deep integration of all CIS economies, the heavy reliance of all new independent states on supplies from Russia, as well as the bad shape of all post-Soviet economies placed Russia in a very difficult position when the Soviet Union collapsed. Russian leaders could either conduct the urgently needed economic transformation in Russia first and forget about the CIS states, at least for a while, or instead, they could decide to support the preservation of an integrated economic space and promote economic reforms within the CIS states. The first alternative would allow for much more successful economic reforms, but would initially lead to a sharp decline in trade and a loss of CIS markets for Russian products. Moreover, such a policy involved the risk of a potential collapse of the neighbouring economies, which would lead to chaos, poverty and instability along Russia's borders. The second alternative, instead, would entail high economic cost for Russia, but would provide a temporary respite for Russian industry and, eventually, would probably lead to the creation of a big economic market tied to Russia. In view of the deep economic, human and psychological ties that existed among the former Soviet states, Russian leaders decided to opt for the preservation of an integrated economic space within the CIS framework, seen as the best way to manage the transition towards new and totally independent economies.

The CIS founding agreements stipulated for the preservation of a single economic space with the ruble as a common currency, co-ordinated foreign economic activities and customs

³²² Matthew Sagers, 'Review of Energy Industries in the Former USSR in 1991', *Post-Soviet Geography*, 33, 1992, 4, p.342.

³²³ *Economic Survey of Europe in 1991-1992*, United Nations, Economic Commission for Europe, New York, 1992, p.142.

policies, as well as free transit of goods.³²⁴ Russian leaders also pressed for the introduction of co-ordinated radical economic reforms in all other CIS states. The new Russian team of economic reformers, led by Prime Minister Yegor Gaidar, showed great determination to conduct radical economic reforms within Russia. But the sharing of a common currency, the transparency of CIS borders, and the high-degree of inter-dependence among post-Soviet economies, all called for a high level of economic co-ordination among CIS republics. Russia therefore agreed with the other CIS leaders to conduct co-ordinated radical economic reforms, to co-ordinate individual budget and fiscal policies, as well as to synchronise the liberalisation of prices. CIS leaders also decided to conclude an inter-bank agreement 'aimed at checking monetary issuing, ensuring effective control over money supply and creating a system of mutual settlements' in order to prevent an upsurge in inflation and sustain the value of their common currency.³²⁵ But, because of the absence of common decision-making or regulating institutions, which CIS countries, in particular Ukraine, refused to create, CIS states immediately started to conduct independent and totally uncoordinated economic and monetary policies. As a result, transition to a market economy proceeded at very different paces, Russia usually transforming more rapidly than the rest of the CIS states. This situation led to major disruptions in the distribution system, which resulted in a sharp fall of intra-CIS trade, and the eventual disintegration of the Soviet economic space.

i) Inter-state Trade Collapse

Between late 1991 and 1993 trade among the former Soviet states contracted quite significantly. In 1992 interstate exports fell by 32.6 percent and imports by 22.6 percent compared to 1991, and in 1993, trade declined even further. Exports fell by another 23.7 percent and imports by 25.3 percent. By the end of 1993, therefore, exports had declined by an overall 56.3 percent and imports by 47.9 percent.³²⁶ Although some reduction in inter-state trade was to be expected, since previous trade patterns among the Soviet republics had not been based on comparative cost or location advantage but on political expediency, the extent of the decline far exceeded expectations. Many factors explain this development. The dissolution of the central command system (Gosplan), which in the past

³²⁴ *Declaration of the Governments of the Republic of Belarus, Russian Federation and Ukraine, on Coordination of Economic Policies*, p.7.

³²⁵ *ibid.*

³²⁶ Constantine Michalopoulos, *Payments and Finance Problems in the CIS*, Policy Research Working Paper, The World Bank, 1587, April 1996, p.6.

had allocated resources and regulated intra-republican trade, and the absence of an efficient market mechanism to replace it, contributed to a great extent, to the significant declines in trade volumes. Decline in trade volumes led in turn to the disruption and fall in production, further aggravating the decrease in trade. Decline in trade was also the result of protectionist trading policies. During the first half of 1992, all CIS governments resorted to the widespread use of *export controls* and licensing requirements. These trade barriers were introduced because of the wide variation in the pace of price liberalisation among CIS countries, which resulted in significant price differences among the CIS republics for a number of products.³²⁷ In order to avoid the outflow of goods and ensure the supply of goods in the domestic market, restraints were placed on exports to prevent the price-controlled commodities from being exported to markets with higher prices within the ruble zone, or abroad. Export controls were also the result of rapid inflation and the lack of monetary co-ordination within the ruble zone, which meant that each country had a strong incentive to import goods and pay for them in rubles of declining value. Although Russia alone had retained control over the printing of cash rubles, all other central banks in the ruble zone created credit in non-cash rubles during the first half of 1992, which were used to purchase goods anywhere in the ruble area. Consequently, countries guarded against accumulating ruble assets in exchange for goods by imposing quantitative limits on exports.³²⁸ Some CIS countries, including Russia, imposed export restrictions to keep domestic prices of vital raw materials well below market prices.³²⁹

Finally, payment problems also became a serious impediment to inter-state CIS trade. The disintegration of the Soviet Union brought with it the dissolution of the unified banking and monetary systems. Fifteen independent central banks quickly emerged, and exporters no longer had the guarantee of the Soviet Central Bank for interstate payments. Consequently, a network of correspondent accounts was established in early 1992 among the central banks of the fifteen states, and all payment orders were cleared through these accounts. But the system became clogged, since it took up to two to three months to clear an interstate payments order. In the post-Soviet inflationary environment, these long delays implied huge costs for traders attempting to use the banking system. The payments situation deteriorated

³²⁷ Vldimir Konovalov, 'Russian Trade Policy', in *Trade in the New Independent States*, eds. Constantine Michalopoulos and David G. Tarr, Studies of Economies in Transformation, 13, The World Bank, Washington DC, 1994, pp. 34-35.

³²⁸ Constantine Michalopoulos, *Trade Issues in the New Independent States*, Studies of Economies in Transformation, The World Bank, Washington D.C., 1993, 7, p.6.

³²⁹ Benedicte Vibe Chirstensen, *The Russian Federation in Transition*, p.8.

even further after July 1992. With rising prices for energy products, Russia's main export commodity, Russia began to accumulate large surpluses on its bilateral trade balances with most of the former republics. In order to avoid unlimited financing of its trade surpluses, to control the amount of credit extended to other countries, and to stem the outflow of goods, Russia imposed credit limits on the central bank correspondent accounts in July 1992. When a CIS state exceeded its limits, the Central Bank of Russia (CBR) could refuse to clear the payment orders of enterprises in the debtor country, meaning that Russian exporters would not be paid for the goods they shipped to that country.³³⁰ This mechanism further contributed to the sharp decline in trade.

ii) Russia's Efforts to Avert a Total Collapse of the CIS Economic Space

The collapse of intra-CIS trade and the reluctance of most CIS republics to introduce painful radical economic reforms confronted Russian leaders with the dilemma of either subsidising trade among the CIS states, which involved very high costs, and promoting the latter's economic transformation, or abandoning the newly independent states to their own fate, with all the negative consequences involved for Russian industry, intra-CIS trade, and CIS states' economic development. Russia decided to support CIS trade, and adopted various 'ad hoc' measures aimed at preserving the flow of goods within the CIS: 'technical credits', cheap energy resources and bilateral state-to-state trade agreements. Most of these measures were not part of a coherent programme of economic integration. They represented a reaction to economic developments within the CIS space, which often remained beyond Russia's control, and a response to the growing political pressure exerted by the parliamentary opposition during the Spring of 1992. The dominant Civic Union faction within the Supreme Soviet increasingly spoke of the need to reverse the sharp decline in industrial production, in spite of the costs involved. In fact, many of the adopted policies entailed high economic costs, and hampered the difficult process of macro-economic stabilisation which the team of economic reformers in the Russian government was trying to carry out. Members of the new Russian 'coalition government', which was formed after the Sixth Congress of People's Deputies in May 1992, and which included three representatives from the industrial sector - Viktor Chernomyrdin, Vladimir Shumeiko, and Georgii Khizha - , as well as the new leadership of the CBR, had an interest in keeping

³³⁰ Constantine Michalopoulos and David G. Tarr, 'Summary and Overview: Developments since Independence', in *Trade in the New Independent States*, pp. 5-8; John Odling-Smee, *Financial Relations Among Countries of the Former Soviet Union*, (hereafter *Financial Relations*), IMF Economic Reviews, 1, Washington D.C., 1994, pp.6-7.

Russian industries operational, preserving the traditional markets for Russia's un-competitive goods, and avoiding the complete collapse of the CIS economies, despite the costs involved. Acting Prime Minister Yegor Gaidar decided to compromise and accept many of their un-orthodox economic solutions, as the best way to manage the transition towards the emergence of independent CIS economies.³³¹ The policies adopted were not really part of a clearly-devised strategy to create an informal empire over the CIS states. On the contrary, they were primarily intended to sustain Russian industry and to avoid a total collapse of the CIS economies. Moreover, policies were often conducted in an erratic and incoherent fashion, indicating the absence of a clearly defined strategy, a result of the presence within the same government of members with radically opposed views on economic reform, namely Gaidar on the one hand, and Chernomyrdin and Khizha on the other.

- Technical Credits

Russia's decision in July 1992 to impose credit limits on the CIS states' central bank correspondent accounts, however sensible it was, dealt another blow to Russian-CIS trade, given that most CIS states quite quickly exceeded their own limits. In order to avert a further decline in trade and promote national industry, the CBR proceeded to grant overdraft facilities, or 'technical' credits to the CIS states on very easy terms and without restrictions, so as to enable them to purchase Russian goods. These technical credits in fact amounted to Russian subsidies. Initially, the overall limit for facilitative credits to all the republics was set at 215 billion rubles for the second half of 1992. However, Viktor Gerashchenko, appointed head of the CBR in July 1992, provided facilitative credits to the CIS republics well exceeding the established limit of 215 billion rubles. According to Russian Economist Andrei Illarionov, over 1.5 trillion rubles or \$7 billion dollars were provided to the CIS republics in the form of 'technical credits' during 1992 mid-1993.³³² This amounted to 9.5 percent of the Russian GDP.³³³ In the period between 1 July and 1 September 1992 alone, Georgia was granted 20 billion rubles, Azerbaijan, 5 billion rubles, and Belarus 40 billion rubles, while the channel for emission by Ukraine remained wide

³³¹ Personal Interview with Vladimir Mau, formerly Economic Advisor of Prime Minister Egor Gaidar, Moscow, December 1996.

³³² Andrei Illarionov, 'Skol'ko stoit druzhba? kak tsentrobank finansiruet byvshie respublikii soiuza', *Izvestiya*, 16 September 1993, p.4.

³³³ John Odling-Smee, *Financial Relations*, p.10.

open.³³⁴ This huge financing of the CIS republics' trade deficits allowed for a preservation of Russian-CIS trade, but at a very high cost, given that the republics were unable to cover the credits and became highly indebted towards Russia. By the end of 1993, CIS states' debts to Russia amounted to US\$ 5.2 billion.³³⁵ Ukraine was the highest debtor with US\$ 2.5 billion, followed by Kazakhstan (US\$ 1.25 billion), Belarus (US\$ 385 million) and Uzbekistan (US\$ 418 million).³³⁶

- Low Prices for Russian Energy and Raw Materials

During 1992-1993, Russia abstained from totally liberalising the prices of energy and other raw materials, which it sold to the CIS states. Although the Russian government slowly raised the prices of oil and gas, it still continued to sell its energy well below world market prices. Russia's policies were determined by the nature of Soviet energy-intensive industry. With such energy- and material-intensive production techniques, a price rise for basic resources to world levels would have caused a dramatic increase in the costs and prices of all finished products, including foodstuffs, leading to a collapse of CIS production, to which Russian industries were tightly bound. Raising domestic prices for basic commodities to the world level would have required the reconstruction of the technical basis of the CIS states' industry and agriculture, so as to attain world standards of unit consumption of energy and raw materials.³³⁷ This required time and involved high economic costs, which the CIS states were unwilling to pay. But the lack of reform meant that, in spite of the lower prices, CIS state still accumulated large arrears with Russia, which were subsequently consolidated in state-to-state debts. By mid-1995, for example Ukraine's gas debt to Russia reached US\$ 2.277 billion, Belarus' debt US\$ 459 million, and Kyrgyzstan's debt US\$ 256 million.³³⁸

- Multilateral and Bilateral Trade Agreements

³³⁴ Ivan Zhagel, 'S Ukrainy v Rossiiu dengi perevesti trudno, a iz Rossii na Ukrainu perevodit' ikh prosto ne khotyat', *Izvestiya*, 25 December 1992 p.2; On Gaidar's opposition to the transfers see, Mikhail Berger, 'Egor Gaidar nameren prekratit' otstupleniya ot zhestkoi finansovoi politiki', *Izvestiya*, 21 September 1992 p.2.

³³⁵ Constantine Michalopoulos, *Payments and Finance Problems in the CIS*, p.20.

³³⁶ *ibid.*

³³⁷ Yury V. Shishkov and Vladimir R. Yevstigneyev, *Economic Relations Within the CIS: How Relevant is the Experience of Cooperation and Integration in Western Europe?*, London, Federal Trust for Education and Research, 1994, pp.20-21.

³³⁸ Constantine Michalopoulos, *Payments and Finance Problems in the CIS*, p.20.

Efforts were also conducted to establish a multilateral system of free trade within the CIS, which would bring down customs barriers. On 13 March 1992, Russia, Armenia, Belarus, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Moldova, Tajikistan, Turkmenistan and Uzbekistan signed an Agreement on the Principles of a Customs Policy and a Statute on a Customs Council. However, the subsequent course of events showed that most states were not ready for such a customs union. Some states began to repudiate the accord because they were unwilling to free exports, while others took measures that went against the logic of that union. For example countries such as Ukraine profited from the agreement to re-export Russia's cheap oil and fertilisers abroad.³³⁹ In view of the failure of multilateral arrangements, CIS states resorted to bilateral state-to-state agreements, to guarantee the supply of goods, at preferential prices. A network of massive inter-governmental barter agreements analogous to the system of state trading under CMEA countries slowly developed. Bilateral trade agreements, however, failed to maintain the level of inter-state trade. Deliveries were frequently less than half the contracted amount because price controls reduced incentives to export, and enterprises often failed to supply the agreed quantities or attempted to export on their own. Moreover, analogous to the CMEA problems, there was no agreement on how to settle imbalances in the agreed trade, i.e. no way to enforce agreement. Actual fulfilment of contracts varied considerably by country, from 7 percent for Azerbaijan, to 87 percent for Turkmenistan.³⁴⁰

Russia's efforts to keep trade flowing had partial success. Although trade contracted significantly during 1992 - exports fell by 32.6 percent and imports by 22.6 percent - it did not collapse entirely, and Russia succeeded in remaining the main trading partner of all CIS states. However, by the end of 1992, the nature of the CIS economic space had radically changed. Very little was left of the previous open trade regime. The borders between the CIS states lost their former openness, owing not only to the numerous quantitative and tariff restrictions but also to the widening divergencies among the national monetary, credit and fiscal systems, and to the exacerbation of the problem of non-payment. The CIS economic space therefore became an area where trade was conducted mainly at state level on a bilateral basis, and where Russian credits and subsidies, in the form of cheap energy and raw materials, as well as the common currency, allowed for the preservation of a significantly reduced, but still important, flow of goods. Although

³³⁹ Aleskandr Shokhin, 'My zainteresovany v inostrannykh investitsiyakh, no ne na liubnykh usloviyakh', *Nezavisimaya gazeta*, 31 October 1992 p.4.

³⁴⁰ Benedicte Vibe Chirstensen, *The Russian Federation in Transition*, pp.6-7.

Russia's efforts to subsidise CIS trade might be interpreted as neo-imperialist behaviour, the evidence seems to indicate that such policies reflected an effort to manage the transition towards the emergence of independent and market-oriented CIS economies, subsidise Russian industry, and avoid the total collapse of the CIS economies. Russia's policies during 1992 were not part of a well designed and properly implemented policy aimed at restoring an economic empire in the former Soviet states. There was no attempt to draw economic resources from the CIS neighbours nor to prevent them from diversifying trade with non-CIS states. Russia's policies therefore cannot be seen as fitting the neo-imperialist pattern.

b. 1993- 1995: A New Emphasis Towards Multilateral Forms of Trade

During 1993-1995 Russia's policies towards the CIS in the area of trade and economic integration underwent a significant change. On the one hand, Russia substantially reduced its credits to all CIS states, and although it continued to subsidise the sale of energy, its prices increasingly approached world market levels. On the other hand, it progressively liberalised its CIS trading regime and reached various CIS economic agreements aimed at bringing down trade barriers, setting up common customs tariffs, and increasing the level of economic policy co-ordination among CIS states. Although most of these agreements were only partially implemented, they indicated an attempt by Russia to create within the CIS a highly integrated economic-trading block, based on free-trade. Previous efforts to preserve, within the CIS, a Russian-subsidised trading-zone were replaced by efforts to create a more economically efficient and viable union, based on free market principles. The motivations behind such a policy were both political and economic. On the one hand, in late 1992 and early 1993, Russian leaders, under growing pressure from domestic opposition, adopted an increasingly assertive policy towards the former Soviet states, which involved efforts to achieve deeper CIS military, political and economic integration. All economic union projects were therefore part of a political effort to bring CIS countries closer to Russia. On the other hand, the economic union agreements reflected Russia's desire to create within the CIS a more integrated economic space based on free market principles, where Russia would find a market for its own products, would obtain free transit for its goods, and would be able to better control the trading activities of its own neighbours, and thus avoid illegal re-export of its own goods. The new projects, with their emphasis on free trade and absence of subsidies, indicated an effort to reach deeper

economic integration without paying too high a price. As such these projects did not reflect an attempt by Russia to set an informal economic empire in the CIS.

i) Russian Credits and Energy Exports

During the first half of 1993, the CBR continued to provide substantial ‘technical’ credits to the CIS economies, not only for the purchase of Russian goods but also for the provision of currency by Russia. Between January and June 1993, an additional US\$ 1.2 billion were extended, raising the total amount of credits to the CIS to US\$ 5.2 billion.³⁴¹ However, a major change of policy occurred in the summer of 1993. Under pressure from the Finance Ministry, in July 1993, Russia transformed these easy term credits into state-to-state credits, usually denominated in US\$ dollars at LIBOR linked interest rates and with a variety of maturities.³⁴² Although new state credits of this kind were still issued by Russia to all CIS states during 1993-1995, the amounts were significantly reduced (Table 1). Russia’s total credits to the CIS amounted to US\$ 702 million, compared to US\$ 5.2 billion during 1992 to mid -1993.³⁴³

Table 1: Russia’s Credits to CIS states

CIS state	1992- mid 1993 ‘technical credits’ (in US\$)	mid 1993- mid 1995 state credits (in US\$)
Belarus	385 million	81 million
Kazakhstan	1,250 million	68 million
Ukraine	2,500 million	204 million
Tajikistan	254 million	127 million
Total credits to the CIS	5,200 million	702 million

Source: Constantine Michalopoulos, *Payments and Finance Problems in the CIS*, The World Bank, April 1996, p.20.

³⁴¹ Constantine Michalopoulos, *Payments and Finance Problems in the CIS*, The World Bank, April 1996, p.19.

³⁴² *ibid.* pp.19-21. Personal Interview with Andrei Illarionov, Economist, Moscow, October 1995.

³⁴³ Constantine Michalopoulos, *Payments and Finance Problems in the CIS*, p.20.

Russia also continued to sell energy products to CIS states at prices lower than world levels, in spite of their accumulation of arrears.³⁴⁴ However, quantities were reduced, and prices were progressively raised, as they tended to approach world levels (Table 2). By 1995, the price of crude oil reached 66 percent of the world level, that of natural gas 63 percent, and that of coal 89 percent.

Table 2: Russia's Energy Prices to the CIS states as Percentages of World Prices

Energy product	CIS price in 1992	CIS price in 1993	CIS price in 1994	CIS price in 1995	CIS price in 1996
Crude oil	10.3%	50.3%	58.4%	66%	72%
natural gas	8.1%	38.1%	50.5%	63%	92%
coal	12.6%	32.7%	50.6%	89%	123%

Source: *Russian Economic Trends*, 1993-1996

These policies were a result of Russia's unwillingness and inability to continue subsidising the CIS economies, and its need to increase its own budget revenues from the sales of energy products, its main exporting commodity. The Russian government's tougher line was part of an attempt to achieve macro-economic stabilisation inside Russia. Although such a policy was never conducted effectively and coherently over a longer term period, it remained the main objective of the Russian government, which preferred to subsidise domestic Russian industry and agriculture rather than the CIS states' economies. Moreover, in 1993, Russia started to divert its trade outside of the former Soviet Union. Whereas in 1990, the other Soviet republics had accounted for the lion's share of Russia's total trade - 70 percent of Russia's exports and 47 percent of Russia's imports - by 1994, the CIS accounted for only 42 percent of Russia's exports and 46 percent of its imports.³⁴⁵ By 1995, the CIS share of Russia's trade was even smaller: only 17.6 percent of Russia's exports went to the CIS whereas 27 percent of its imports came from the CIS.³⁴⁶ This implied that Russia had a smaller stake than before in preserving Russian-CIS trade flowing.

³⁴⁴ By mid-1995 the overall CIS debts amounted to US\$ 3 billion. (ibid.)

³⁴⁵ *Russian Economic Trends*, (RET), 3, 1994, 4, p.82.

³⁴⁶ *Russia: Country Profile*, The Economist Intelligence Unit (EIU), 1995-1996, p.37.

ii) Multilateral Trade Agreements

Russia's decision to reduce its credits to the CIS and to increase the prices of its main trading commodities, such as energy products, indicated that the Russian government was no longer ready to pay whatever price was necessary for the preservation of a ill-functioning integrated economic space under its own influence. Instead, the Russian government decided to press ahead with more efficient integration projects, which would entail much lower costs for Russia. The implementation of such projects, however, required tight economic co-ordination and a similar level of economic development among CIS states, which in turn required substantial financial support, something only Russia could provide. Russia's unwillingness to subsidise the CIS states' economic transformation unless it managed to oversee the co-ordination of economic and financial policies, as well as the tendency of many CIS states not to abide to the terms of treaties already signed, explain why the integration projects either did not function properly or either failed to materialise altogether.

- Integration Projects

As part of the overall trend experienced by Russia's foreign policy in late 1992 and early 1993 towards a more assertive stance in the near abroad, the Russian government pursued an 'integrationist' agenda at CIS level, both in the economic and military fields. Economic factors, such as the development of trade, the access to transit routes and the control of re-exports, played an important part in Russia's attempts to create a highly integrated economic union. However, Russia's policies were also very much the result of the pressure exerted by influential factions within the Supreme Soviet, particularly the Civic Union, by high-ranking politicians such as Supreme Soviet Speaker Ruslan Khasbulatov and Vice-President Aleksandr Rutskoi, and by influential members of the political elite, such as Sergei Karaganov, Andranik Migranyan, and Sergei Stankevich, all of which called for deeper CIS economic and military integration. The Civic Union in particular, insisted that economic integration, even restricted to a smaller group of CIS states, namely Russia, Belarus, Kazakhstan, and the Central Asian republics, was essential. The existence of extremely close economic links among the CIS states, the desire to avoid the total collapse of Russian industry, the necessity to find markets for Russian and CIS un-competitive goods, the lack of viability of CIS national currencies, as well as the social and human ties

that linked CIS people together, all these elements argued in favour of keeping an integrated CIS space.³⁴⁷

Yevgenii Yasin, Civic Union's chief economist, favoured the creation of a single economic space with a restricted group of countries sharing a single currency. States would have to accept rather strict obligations in the areas of finance, taxes, banking, and trade, and agree to create powerful common co-ordinating bodies at CIS level, where Russia would play a dominant role.³⁴⁸ However, Yasin did not specify how such a system would function, nor how it would be set up. In fact, most supporters of economic integration were very vague when discussing the exact configuration of an economic union. It was never clear whether they supported a free market area or a regulated economic union. Not even the Communist Party (CPRF) specified whether it would favour a return to the old-style state regulated economic integration, or whether instead it would support a 'mixed economy-Russian subsidised' union. Orthodox liberals tended to be more precise. Andrei Zagorskii, Professor at the Moscow State Institute for International Relations (MGIMO), for example, called for a 'free trade-free market' area, resembling NAFTA or EFTA, but insisted that a union should only be reached when all states achieved a similar level of developed market reform.³⁴⁹

The Russian government, having undergone a major reshuffle in December 1992 when Chernomyrdin replaced Gaidar as Prime Minister, initially remained divided over the issue. Boris Fyodorov, the new liberal Finance Minister, insisted that integration should only be carried out if member states conducted strictly co-ordinated credit-and-monetary as well as budget-and-fiscal policies.³⁵⁰ Otherwise, Russia would end up subsidising the economies of the less reformed republics, to its own disadvantage. Chernomyrdin, instead, openly supported the economic re-integration of the CIS republics. 'Our sacred duty as leaders is to look for ways, solutions and methods for organising this alliance, primarily an economic

³⁴⁷ Evgenii Yasin, 'The Economic Space of the Former Soviet Union, Past and Present', in *Economic Consequences of Soviet Disintegration*, ed. John Williamson, Insitute for International Economics, Washington DC, 1993, pp.32-35.

³⁴⁸ *ibid.* p.34.

³⁴⁹ Andrei Zagorskii, 'SNG: Ot dezintegratskii k reintegratsii?', *Issledovanie Tsentra Mezhdunarodnykh Issledovaniy MGIMO*, Moscow, March 1994, pp.17-18.

³⁵⁰ Boris Fedorov, 'Comment', in *Economic Consequences of Soviet Disintegration*, pp.84-85; Boris Fedorov, 'Proigravshie v bor'be s inflyatsiei proigraut i vybory', *Izvestiya*, 16 October 1993, p.4.

one' he said on occasion of the CIS Meeting in Minsk on 28 April 1993.³⁵¹ Representing the interests of the energy complex, he was well aware of the close inter-linkage among the oil and gas enterprises throughout the former Soviet Union, both in terms of production and transportation.³⁵² He therefore had every interest in keeping trade flowing between the republics, and negotiated a series of both bilateral and multilateral economic and trade agreements with Russia's CIS partners. However, as Prime Minister, Chernomyrdin also became responsible for the overall performance of the Russian economy, and therefore refrained from implementing any integration project which might have implied big sacrifices for Russia in terms of subsidies and inflation. In fact, all multilateral trade and economic agreements signed followed the model of a free-trade and free-market area, and usually stipulated for the pursuit of co-ordinated fiscal-and-budget, monetary-and-credit policies. The Russian government wanted to avoid the creation of an economic area, be it a customs union or a monetary union, with states that were conducting very different economic policies and were at different stages of economic reform. Such a union would have resulted in serious trade disruptions with negative consequences for Russia. For example, differences in the value of currencies could deeply hurt national industries, since they would be faced with extremely cheap goods, or state-subsidised products could result in the practice of 'dumping.' In fact, for an economic union to function properly, a homogenous economic space had to be attained, and this implied serious modifications to the CIS's economic and social policies.³⁵³

The CIS republics themselves were also very interested in tightening their economic relations with Russia, but for slightly different reasons. On the one hand, their economies remained highly inter-linked, and they needed each other, especially Russia, for inputs and markets. On the other hand, their bad economic performance persuaded them to turn to Russia for help. As journalist Pavel Shinkarenko pointed out, whereas in 1992, the ideas of a customs and a currency union had been rejected out of hand, by early 1993, with the final bad economic figures for 1992 in hand, CIS leaders believed that they could be saved from disaster only by joining a union with Russia.³⁵⁴ CIS leaders in fact tended to interpret the creation of an Economic Union as access to cheap Russian energy resources and raw

³⁵¹ 'Soveshchanie v Minske bylo nedolгим, no poleznym', *Nezavisimaya gazeta*, 30 April 1993, p.3.

³⁵² Y. Perepletkin, 'Neftepromyshlenniki SNG ob"edinyaiutsya', *Izvestiya*, 7 February 1992, p.1.

³⁵³ Pavel Shinkarenko, 'Sodruzhestvo vykhodit iz "pike"', *Rossiiskie vesti*, 18 May 1993, p.2.

³⁵⁴ *ibid.* See also Petr Kozarzhevsky, 'Politicheskie i ekonomicheskie otnosheniya Rossii s drugimi postsovetскими gosudarstvami', in *Vtoroi God Ekonomicheskikh reform v Rossii*, eds. Marek Dombrovsky and Petr Kozarzhevsky, Warsaw, 1994, p.70.

materials, as well as preferential credits. They saw this kind of subsidised union as an alternative to deep, but painful economic reforms. In July 1993, Russia had stopped all technical credits with former Soviet republics and the granted credits were transformed into debts of the recipient states towards Russia. CIS leaders therefore hoped that in a new economic union, Russia would reverse its policy and again provide cheap credits.

- Integration Treaties

On 24 September 1993, nine CIS states signed the Treaty on the Economic Union, which envisaged the progressive creation of an economic union, based on the model of the European Union, in other words a highly economically homogenous, free-market space.³⁵⁵ First, a free trade association would be set up, whereby CIS states would gradually reduce and eliminate internal customs duties, taxes and other similar restrictions. Then, a customs union would be created, in which states would establish a common customs tariff with regard to third states, and co-ordinate their foreign trade policies. Third, a common market of goods, services, capital and manpower would be formed, leading to the establishment of a monetary union as the last step. The Economic Union would result in the free movement of goods, services, capital and manpower, and also 'co-ordinated monetary, budget, tax, prices, foreign trade, customs and foreign exchange policy.'³⁵⁶ As part of the implementation of the Treaty on an Economic Union, an agreement among all CIS states on the creation of a Free Trade Area was reached on 15 April 1994.³⁵⁷ Countries agreed to gradually abolish customs duties, taxes, fees and quantitative restrictions on mutual trade. They also pledged to create an effective system of mutual settlements and payments for trade and other operations, and agreed to co-ordinate their trade policy with respect to third countries. Free transit for goods within the area was guaranteed, and countries committed themselves not to allow the un-sanctioned re-export of commodities.³⁵⁸

In January 1995, Russia reached an agreement on a customs union with two of its major CIS trading partners, Belarus and Kazakhstan, both of which were the most ardent

³⁵⁵ *Treaty on the Formation of the Economic Union*, 24 September 1993, translated by RIA-Novosti, London, 1993. The treaty was signed by Russia, Belarus, Moldova, Armenia, Azerbaijan, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Uzbekistan and Tajikistan. Turkmenistan joined the union as a full member on 24 December 1993, and Ukraine became an associate member on 15 April 1994.

³⁵⁶ *ibid.*, p.3.

³⁵⁷ 'Soglashenie o sozdanii zony svobodnoi trgovli', *Ekonomika i Zhizn*, May 1994, 19, p.16.

³⁵⁸ *ibid.*

supporters of economic integration.³⁵⁹ The treaty envisaged, in an initial phase, the abolition of customs duties and quantitative restrictions on trade, and the introduction of common customs schedules with regard to third countries. In a second stage, the treaty stipulated for the shifting of control over the movement of goods within the boundaries of Russia, Belarus and Kazakhstan to the external borders of the customs union. Russia had a particular stake in such a union. On the one hand this treaty granted Russia duty free transit of its goods, especially natural gas shipments, through the territories of Belarus and Kazakhstan. On the other hand, Russia hoped that the treaty would allow it to better control the illegal re-export of Russian goods.³⁶⁰ Belarus and Kazakhstan in turn would benefit from the purchase of Russian goods, especially energy products, free of tax.³⁶¹ In order to ensure the successful function of the union, the treaty envisaged the 'co-ordination of the implementation of economic reforms and the creation of a uniform economic mechanism, based on market principles, for regulating the economy.'³⁶² Moreover, a memorandum was signed according to which foreign trade, customs, monetary and price laws in each country would be standardised.

- Treaty Implementation

The September 1993 Economic Union project failed to materialise in its entirety, given the different level of economic development of the CIS economies, the lack of substantial market transformation in most of them, and the unwillingness of the CIS states to partially surrender economic sovereignty for the sake of substantially improving the countries' economic performances. Russia and the CIS states failed to create a single market of goods, capital and services, and to share a single currency. As explained above, such an economic union required that the CIS states co-ordinate their states' economic and financial policies with those of Russia, something most states were reluctant to do.³⁶³ The development of an economic union entailed a fast transition towards a market economy, and this could only be achieved with massive external aid. Although Russia was the only country ready to provide such aid, its leaders were not willing to conduct massive expenses without any guarantees of success. In other words, any serious step towards deep economic

³⁵⁹ Sergei Rybak, 'Sozdan tamozhenny soiuz', *Nezavisimaya gazeta*, 31 January 1995, p.1.

³⁶⁰ *RET*, 3, 1994, 4, p.83.

³⁶¹ *ibid.*; *RET*, 4, 1995, 3, p.72.

³⁶² Sergei Rybak, 'Sozdan tamozhenny soiuz', p.1.

³⁶³ Aleksandr Bekker, 'Ekonomicheskii soiuz na politicheskikh podporkakh', *Segodnya*, 28 September 1993, p.2.

integration could only be obtained with Russian economic support, which would only be forthcoming, if the republics were ready to submit a substantial part of their sovereignty to CIS supranational bodies, controlled by Russia. CIS states, particularly Ukraine, were reluctant to accept such an option. The establishment of the Inter-state Economic Committee (IEC) in October 1994 created the hope that some sort of economic co-ordination would be achieved. The IEC was to be responsible for developing joint CIS economic programmes and monitoring the progress of economic reform.³⁶⁴ However, because the CIS states were allowed to decide exactly what powers they wanted to delegate to the IEC, the latter failed to develop into a truly effective structure, and simply remained an auxiliary agency.³⁶⁵

Some progress was made towards the implementation of the free trade area. During 1994-1995 some CIS states, particularly Russia, began to liberalise their trading regimes. In May 1994, the Russian government abolished export quotas on most products, except for fuels, metals, timber and chemicals, Russia's key trading commodities. A year later, in January-February 1995, export quotas were eliminated altogether. Moreover, between April and October 1995, Russia reduced export taxes on a number of exported commodities, including crude oil and petroleum products, and between late 1995 and April 1996, all export taxes were eliminated, except for crude oil.³⁶⁶ Russia's import policies however, moved in the opposite direction. In July 1994, Russia introduced a new system of tariffs on imported goods, and in January 1996 it imposed an excise tax on excisable goods imported from Ukraine and other CIS countries, leading to major disruptions in functioning of the CIS trade regime.³⁶⁷ The non-Russian CIS states, instead, conducted very little trade liberalisation except for Kyrgyzstan, Armenia, Georgia and Moldova, and then again in some cases the main exporting items remained subject to tariffs. Georgia banned the export of 14 food items and Moldova imposed quotas for exported grain. The record of implementation of the free trade area during the period under examination, therefore, remained mixed. As far as Russia is concerned, although its trade liberalisation corresponded with the nature of the free trade agreements signed with the CIS states, the

³⁶⁴ A wide range of IEC decisions would be adopted by an 80 percent majority, 50 percent of the votes belonging to Russia.

³⁶⁵ Vitalii Portnikov, 'Sozdan Mezghosudarstvennyi Ekonomicheskii Komitet', *Nezavisimaya gazeta*, 22 October 1994, p.1.

³⁶⁶ *RET*, 4, 1995, 4, pp.77-78; *RET*, 5, 1996, 1, pp.82-83; *RET*, 5, 1996, 2, pp.92-93.

³⁶⁷ Vadim Bardin and Konstantin Levin, 'Prime Ministers Try to Assemble a Matryoshka Doll', *Kommersant-daily*, 13 April 1996, p.2, in *CDPSP*, XLVIII, 1996, 15, p. 18; *RET*, 3, 1994, 1, p.62.

main motivation behind such policies was Russia's desire to join the World Trade Organisation and to comply with its requirements.

The more ambitious customs union signed by Russia, Belarus and Kazakhstan, also had a mixed record. The three states proved unwilling to co-ordinate their economic and financial policies, and this made implementation of the treaty quite difficult. In fact, the parties to the treaty were countries with striking differences in their economy and unlikely to adapt to each others models. Although some initial successes in trade policy were achieved - the customs borders between Russia and Belarus were eliminated in May 1995, the border with Kazakhstan was lifted during the first half of 1996, and in 1996 all three countries negotiated a common external tariff based on the Russian tariff - during 1996 all three members unilaterally introduced modifications to the external tariffs they applied.³⁶⁸ As a result, the so-called 'Belarussian corridor' opened as a lucrative channel for smuggling on a massive scale. Western and other CIS goods, were registered as Belarussian goods and imported into Russia with zero taxes.³⁶⁹

It can be concluded then that the different interpretations given to the economic union by Russia and the CIS states, the divergent performance of their economies, the unwillingness of Russia to provide substantial financial help to the CIS state to support their economic transformation, and the CIS states' unwillingness to co-ordinate their economic and financial policies with Russia, and finally, the regular violation of treaty provisions by all CIS states, all these factors determined the total absence of implementation of the most ambitious integration treaties reached by Russia and the CIS states and the partial success of the less ambitious projects. Russia failed to transform the CIS into an active and well-functioning trading area, as intra-CIS trade continued to decline during 1993-1995. Although a slight pick up in trade was registered in late 1995-early 1996, it resulted primarily from an increase of CIS imports to Russia. During 1993-1995, therefore, Russia did not manage to set up an economic neo-empire in the CIS, through a Russian-led CIS economic union. The various CIS integration agreements were never properly implemented as Russian leaders refused to pay the high price of an entirely subsidised union. Moreover, Russia reduced credit subsidies to CIS states and increased the price of its energy products.

³⁶⁸ *RET*, 5, 1996, 1, p.84; Constantine Michalopoulos and David Tarr, *The Economics of Customs Unions in the Commonwealth of Independent States*, Policy Research Working Paper, 1786, The World Bank, Washington DC, June 1997, p.3.

³⁶⁹ *ibid.*

It can therefore be argued that during 1993-1995, Russia did not really envisage the conduct of a neo-imperialist economic policy towards the CIS states.

c. Deeper Integration During the Last Months of Yeltsin's First Term Presidency

Economic integration received a major boost during the first half of 1996, in spite of the difficulties encountered by CIS states so far. The arrival at the Russian Foreign Ministry of Evgeny Primakov, an outspoken supporter of deep CIS military and economic integration, resulted in the signing of two highly ambitious integration treaties, which if implemented would have resulted in the creation of an economic block very much tied to Russia: The *Treaty on the Deepening of Integration in the Economic and Humanitarian Fields Among Russia, Belarus, Kazakhstan, and Kyrgyzstan* (Quadrilateral Agreement) signed on 29 March 1996, and the *Community of Sovereign States* created by Russia and Belarus on 2 April 1996. Although both agreements were largely aimed at deep economic integration they were driven primarily by political motivations. Mounting pressure from the nationalist and communist opposition in the newly elected Duma (in mid-March 1996 the Duma passed a resolution which repealed the December 1991 CIS Founding agreements, and called for deeper integration among the former Soviet states) and the coming Russian presidential elections in June 1996, put pressure on President Yeltsin and his government to gain the upper hand in terms of CIS integration.³⁷⁰

The Quadrilateral Agreement aimed at the creation, in the long run, of a 'community of integrated states' and envisaged the establishment of a single market, with a single currency and common energy and transport systems.³⁷¹ In order to achieve such a high level of integration, signatory states were expected to co-ordinate tightly their monetary-and-credit and currency-and-financial legislation, as well as their industrial and agrarian policies. Signatory states were expected to complete the customs union and create an efficient payments union in a first stage. The treaty was not limited to strictly economic integration. It also envisaged that parties would co-ordinate their foreign and security policy, as well as their social and education policies. Moreover signatory states agreed on the creation of joint administrative bodies to implement integration: an Inter-state Council, the supreme administrative body with capacity to adopt binding decisions; the Integration

³⁷⁰ 'Raspad Soiuza byl neizbezhen', *Rossiiskaya gazeta*, 16 March 1996, p.1 ; Gleb Cherkasov, 'Duma denonsirovala "Belovezhskie Soglasheniya"', *Segodnya*, 16 March 1996, p.1.

³⁷¹ Natalya Kalashnikova, 'Lukashenko is Named the Integrator of Four Republics', *Kommersant-daily*, 30 March 1996, p.1, in *CDPSP*, XLVIII, 1996, 14, p.1.

Committee, the permanent executive body; and an Inter-parliamentary committee, responsible for inter-parliamentary co-operation.³⁷² The treaty's objectives remained far too ambitious. The likelihood of achieving co-ordination in the pursuit of economic reforms, financial and monetary policies were extremely slight, as were the chances of introducing a single currency.

Similarly, the *Community of Sovereign States* signed by Belarus and Russia, was as difficult or even more difficult, to implement. Aimed at uniting 'the material and intellectual potentials of the two countries', it stipulated for even tighter economic and political integration than the Quadrilateral Agreement.³⁷³ The treaty envisaged the *synchronisation* of Russia's and Belarus' economic reforms, the creation of a uniform base of laws and regulations in order to remove all interstate barriers and restrictions, and to ensure equal opportunities for unrestricted economic activity. It also envisaged the completion of the customs union, the introduction of a standardised system of anti-monopoly legislation, taxes, state support for production, and rules of investment. The monetary, credit and budget systems were to become standardised by the end of 1997, and conditions for the introduction of a common currency were to be created. Joint structures were to be established to manage the integration process. As with previous less ambitious economic union treaties, the Belarussian-Russian union treaty proved difficult to implement because of the different levels of market reforms in both countries, the bad shape of the Belarussian economy compared to Russia's, and the latter's reluctance to subsidise Belarus' economic transformation. As *Izvestiya* journalist Otto Latsis pointed out, the treaty had more of a geopolitical significance than an economic long-term impact. It was a trade off between a reduction or cancellation of debts and the possibility to use military bases.³⁷⁴

d. Conclusion

This section has shown that Russia's policies in the field of economic integration went through several phases, a result not only of Russia's own economic performances, capabilities and domestic developments, but also of the behaviour of the various CIS

³⁷² *ibid.*

³⁷³ Pavel Shinkarenko, 'Sozdano SSG - Soobshchestvo suverennykh gosudarstv', *Rossiiskie vesti*, 3 April 1996, p.1.

³⁷⁴ Otto Latsis, 'Sverkhglubokaya integratsiya rozhdaet voprosy. Sravnivaya "Dogovor Dvukh" c "Dogovorom Chetyrekh"', *Izvestiya*, 3 April 1996, p.2.

states, which were reluctant to surrender part of their economic sovereignty to Russia and therefore missed a major opportunity to improve their economic situation with Russian assistance. Russia's support for the preservation of a single economic space with a single currency when the CIS was set up was largely determined by the legacies of the Soviet command economy which had tied the CIS states very closely together, and by the perception that economic co-operation was the best way for Russia to manage the transition towards the emergence of independent free-market based CIS economies. These same factors determined Russia's decision to provide substantial subsidies in the form of cheap energy, raw materials, and credits, when trade started to decline sharply during the course of 1992 due to the emergence of trade barriers and payment difficulties. However, by early 1993, the strains of this very costly policy started to be felt. Russia decided to reduce its subsidies to the CIS states and to pursue integration on a less expensive basis. In fact, the new economic integration projects attempted to create an economic union on the basis of tight economic co-ordination and a free trade regime. But the other CIS states tended to perceive CIS integration as a way of keeping the previous industrial ties and of receiving subsidies from Russia, during a transitional period until they would be able to develop independently. This contrasting view explains to a great extent why most of the CIS agreements failed to materialise. Highly dissimilar economic developments and Russia's unwillingness and, above all, inability to subsidise the costly CIS economic transformations made effective integration almost impossible. Russia therefore failed to transform the CIS into a highly integrated Russian-led single market.

Although Russia did not conduct an active neo-imperialist policy in order to restore a economic union, its economic predominance and the continued dependence of the CIS states on trade with Russia, as well as their high level of indebtedness towards Russia, created an area where Russia remained economically hegemonic. The CIS's dependence on Russia, however, was not only determined by the Soviet inheritance of high economic interdependence, but was above all by the lack of political will of the CIS leaderships to conduct radical economic reforms, preferring instead to rely on Russian financial assistance. Russia's policies in the area of CIS economic integration therefore cannot be seen as part of an effort to restore an informal economic empire in the CIS. Economic imperialism requires not only a coherent political 'project' of empire-building, which was certainly absent in this case, but also a conscious attempt to set up a one-way economic relationship, where the dominant economic power draws economic resources from its weaker neighbours and prevents them from diversifying. Such one-way relationship was

not present either. In this case, Russia's CIS economic integration projects were intended to benefit both sides, and often received the support of the non-Russian CIS states themselves. Russia's initial subsidising of Russian-CIS trade should be interpreted not only as a way to preserve markets for Russian goods, but also as a means of managing the transition of a highly integrated state-command economic space into an economic space formed by fifteen independent countries in transition to a market economy. This cannot be considered 'economic imperialism.' Russia's willingness to grant important subsidies to the CIS states, especially during 1992-1993, were primarily dictated by a desire to support Russian industry and to preserve stability in the former Soviet space.

2. Monetary Integration: The Ruble Zone

The current section will examine the functioning of the ruble zone, which was set up when the Soviet Union collapsed in December 1991 and lasted until November 1993, in order to determine whether Russia tried to keep the CIS states under its economic sphere of influence through the preservation of a Russian-controlled ruble zone. A final section will look into detail at the negotiations on the creation of the Russian-Belarusian monetary union, which eventually failed to materialise.

a. Russia and the CIS States Decide to Preserve the Ruble as Their Currency

When Soviet republican leaders created the CIS, they agreed to preserve the ruble as their common monetary unit. The main aim of this decision was to conduct a 'soft' transition towards the introduction of national currencies. In order for the common currency to remain strong and function properly, CIS leaders committed themselves to co-ordinate tightly their economic and monetary policies. They also pledged to conclude an inter-bank agreement aimed at controlling money issuing, ensuring effective control over monetary supply and establishing a system of mutual settlements.³⁷⁵ However, CIS states failed to reach agreement on the creation of a supra-national bank responsible for the regulation of cash issuing and for the determination and implementation of common credit and monetary policies - an essential instrument for the proper functioning of a monetary union. Instead, Russia dissolved the Soviet Central Bank (Gosbank) and transferred its facilities to the

³⁷⁵ *Declaration of the Governments of Belarus, the Russian Federation and Ukraine on Coordination of Economic Policies*, p.7.

Russian state.³⁷⁶ This move was dictated by Russia's desire to hold control over currency issuing within the ruble zone, the inability of CIS states to agree on the creation of a common inter-state bank, and the desire of some CIS states, in particular Ukraine, to introduce their own currencies.

Although during late 1991 and early 1992, Russia had pushed for the creation of an inter-state banking system, CIS leaders failed to agree on the bank's structure. Russia's condition that decisions should be adopted in accordance with the shares of capital invested, and not in accordance with the number of members in the banking union, became the main obstacle.³⁷⁷ CIS states refused to accept this condition because it automatically placed Russia in a dominant position, given that it was by far the major capital investor. The absence of a supranational banking agency resulted in a total lack of co-ordination among CIS states of their monetary and credit policies. This led to major disturbances in the functioning of the ruble zone and eventually contributed to its final collapse. On the one hand, Russia forced the CIS states to turn to the CBR for additional cash given that it alone controlled the former Soviet Central Bank. On the other hand, the CIS states, being unable to obtain cash under their own terms, relied on non-cash issuing (credit issuing) for the creation of money.³⁷⁸ In the absence of a supranational agency CIS states logically preferred to issue credit independently rather than obtain cash-credits from the CBR, and thereby have - to all intents and purposes - their budgets approved by Russia. This issuing of credits occurred without any supranational control and without any overall co-ordination, leading to the rapid devaluation of the ruble, the erection of inter-state trade barriers, and the end of the single economic space.

For Russia, this system of unchecked supply of credit had three major negative consequences. First, it permitted other CIS states to buy Russian goods, almost for free, since until July 1992 no limits had been placed on the deficit which republics were allowed to accumulate in their correspondent accounts with the CBR. As a result, goods were taken out of Russia as if by a vacuum cleaner. Second, CIS states accumulated huge debts towards Russia, which by early May 1992, reached 100 billion rubles, and by June 1992

³⁷⁶ Ivan Zhagel, 'V. Gerashchenko ushel v otstavky', *Izvestiya*, 26 December 1991, p.2.

³⁷⁷ A. Ulyukayev, *Komsomolskaya Pravda*, 26 March 1992, p.2.

³⁷⁸ Ivan Zhagel, 'Biudzhethnykh defitsitov mnogo, a inflyatsiya odna na vsekh', *Izvestiya*, 26 March 1992 p. 2; Brigitte Granville, *Farewell Ruble Zone*, Working Paper nr. 95, Stockholm Institute of East European Economics, November 1994.

amounted to 214.7 billion rubles.³⁷⁹ Third, the system resulted in very high levels of inflation in Russia - approximately 15 percent per month - and thwarted Russia's efforts to stabilise the foreign exchange value of the ruble.³⁸⁰ Inflation in Russia was exacerbated further by the decision of some CIS states to introduce provisional currencies in the form of coupons, which led to an overall increase in the money supply.³⁸¹ The ruble zone, therefore, became a very expensive experiment for Russia. Although the Russian government had managed to control cash issuing to a certain extent, non-cash issuing, which accounted for 90 percent of the rubles in circulation, was virtually out of its control. By the spring of 1992, it became clear that unless Russia managed to successfully co-ordinate monetary, financial and economic policies with the other CIS states, it would be forced to introduce its own currency and conduct economic reforms independently from the other FSS, in order to avoid total financial collapse.³⁸²

However, neither of these two alternatives were adopted and the Russian government instead attempted to establish some sort of control over the existing ruble zone. In July 1992, Russia imposed limits on the credits it provided to other CIS republics through their CBR correspondent accounts, in order to regain control over the money supply and curb inflation, as well as to limit the level of indebtedness of the CIS states towards Russia.³⁸³ When a country exceeded its limits, the CBR could refuse to clear the payments orders of enterprises in the debtor CIS country. As a result, CIS countries were forced to obtain rubles from Russia - either by selling their own goods to Russia, or by obtaining Russian credits - in order to buy Russian goods.³⁸⁴ This new procedure protected Russia's interest since it contributed to financial stabilisation in Russia and in theory allowed Russia to indirectly limit and regulate the issuing of money of the ruble zone countries.³⁸⁵ However, at the same time, it penalised Russian enterprises which depended on trade with the other ruble zone states. Frequently an enterprise could not receive money from a CIS customer

³⁷⁹ Ivan Zhagel, 'Rublevoe prostranstvo nachinaet szhimat'sya', *Izvestiya*, 9 July 1992, p.2.

³⁸⁰ Brigitte Granville, *Farewell, Ruble Zone*, p.10; P. Fillipov, V. Golubev, G.Tal, 'Gerashchenko prenebregaet interesami Rossii', *Izvestiya*, 17 September 1992, p.3.

³⁸¹ Ivan Zhagel, 'Biudzhethnykh defitsitov mnogo, a inflyatsiya odna na vsekh'; 'Belarus', *IMF Economic Review*, 1993, 11, p.17.

³⁸² A. Nekipelov, 'O rassorivshikhsya siamskikh bliznetsakh i ekonomicheskoi politike rossiiskogo pravitel'stva', *Izvestiya*, 4 February 1992, p.2.

³⁸³ P. Fillipov, V. Golubev, G.Tal, 'Gerashchenko prenebregaet interesami Rossii', *Izvestiya*, 17 September 1992, p.3.

³⁸⁴ Ivan Zhagel, 'Rublevoe prostranstvo nachinaet szhimat'sya', p.2.

³⁸⁵ Ivan Zhagel, 'Biudzhethnykh defitsitov mnogo, a inflyatsiya odna na vsekh', p.2.

for goods that had been delivered, merely because the limit on reciprocal payments between CIS states had been reached.

In view of this situation, Russian state enterprises increased their pressure on the CBR to raise the level of credit ceilings so as not to halt the flow of goods. Sensitive to the plights of Russian enterprises, in July 1992, the Central Bank of Russia proceeded to grant credits to foreign banks on exceptionally easy terms and without restrictions, the so-called 'technical credits'. Initially, the overall limit on credits was set at 215 billion rubles for the second half of 1992. However, soon after the introduction of the bilateral clearing system, Viktor Gerashchenko became head of the CBR, and during the summer and autumn of 1992 he provided facilitative credits to the CIS republics well exceeding the established limits. According to Andrei Illarionov, over 1.5 trillion rubles or 7 billion US dollars were provided to the CIS republics in the form of 'facilitative credits' in 1992 causing 25 percent of inflation in Russia.³⁸⁶ This huge financing of the CIS republics' trade deficit, totally nullified the effects of the July 1992 measure, since it increased Russian expenditures and augmented inflation in Russia, thus dealing a severe blow to all efforts aimed at macro-economic stabilisation carried out by reformers in the government. Such a policy brought to light the strong internal incoherences of Russia's economic policies towards the CIS, a result of the contradictory composition of the Russian government and of the struggle for power between the government and the Supreme Soviet. Gerashchenko, the Supreme Soviet, as well as members of the government with close ties with the industrial and agrarian lobbies were eager to conduct an extremely loose credit policy for the sake of sustaining Russia's industrial production. These views were in contradiction with the policies of reformers in the Russian government, such as Yegor Gaidar, who were concerned first and foremost with macro-economic stabilisation.

Why did the Russian government decide to preserve the ruble zone under these conditions? The preservation of a single currency allowed for a continued flow of goods both into Russia and out of Russia and, consequently, prevented a total fall in Russian industrial production. Second, the existence of a single currency controlled to a certain extent by Russia significantly favoured the purchase of Russian goods. Enterprises who depended on Russian inputs found it more convenient to buy them in Russia than abroad, due to their

³⁸⁶ Andrei Illarionov, 'Skol'ko stoit druzhba?', p.4.

shortage of hard currency.³⁸⁷ Once republics introduced their own currencies, trade was bound to be diverted to third countries.³⁸⁸ Third, there was a very high chance that the republics' new currencies would be weaker than the rouble and therefore, non-convertible and non-functional. The risk emerged of a reproduction of the old CMEA trading system, which resulted in endless multi-lateral clearing operations.³⁸⁹ The rouble was therefore preserved as a common currency during a transitional phase before the CIS states felt economically strong enough to introduce their own currencies. In fact, many of the CIS states themselves preferred to stay in the rouble zone instead of introducing their own currencies, because this allowed them to continue trading with Russia at preferential prices. Internal factors also very much determined the preservation of an uncontrolled and highly expensive rouble zone. Under increasing pressure from both the industrialist lobby, who favoured close economic links with the CIS, and the nationalist and communist opposition in the Supreme Soviet, which favoured the restoration of the old Union, the Russian government did not want to be seen responsible for bringing the rouble zone to an end. Above all, the Russian government was unable to control the activities of the CBR, the main entity responsible for the huge amount of credits extended to the CIS republics, because it remained under the control of the Supreme Soviet, which was very much in favour of subsidising Russian industry, through the preservation of a single CIS economic space and a single CIS currency. Last but not least, the International Monetary Fund supported the preservation of the rouble zone.

b. The Rouble Zone Questioned

By the Autumn of 1992, the viability of the rouble zone started to be questioned. Russian radical reformers seriously began to consider the possibility of bringing the existing rouble zone to an end and creating a new rouble zone under Russia's total control. Aleksandr Shokhin, vice-Chairman of the Russian government, made it clear that Russia's interests demanded that the CIS member states clearly define their position on whether they intended to remain in the rouble zone, or instead, preferred to introduce their own national

³⁸⁷ On concern over the potential introduction by Ukraine of its own currency and its impact on Russian economy see Mikhail Leontiev, 'Ukraina speshit vyiti iz rublevogo prostanstva', *Nezavisimaya gazeta*, 26 March 1992, p.1.

³⁸⁸ L. Levitsky, 'Bank Estonii ne menyaet politiku so smenoi prativel'stva', *Izvestiya*, 12 March 1993, p.4.

³⁸⁹ Y. Kolokoltseva, 'Bankovskaya sistema: zalozhnik politicheskikh ambitsii', *Nezavisimaya gazeta*, 13 February 1992, p.4.

currencies.³⁹⁰ In his view, those republics which decided to stay in the ruble zone had to agree to co-ordinate their monetary policies very closely with Russia, while those that preferred to introduce their own currencies had to leave the ruble zone in a civilised way, without detriment to Russia or other states.³⁹¹ Russia should then conclude with all members of the ruble zone bilateral agreements that defined the leading role of the CBR in regulating monetary circulation within the boundaries of the zone. The new ruble zone, therefore, was to be a Russian-controlled zone, where countries would use the Russian ruble and would follow Russian rules, instead of a zone where republics shared a supranational currency over which they could exert a certain degree of control. Although it might seem that such a policy amounted to economic neo-imperialism, in fact, it resulted in quite the opposite. Russia's attempts to totally control the sharing of its own currency made perfect economic sense, and the more stringent the demands for sharing the currency, the more likely CIS states would refuse to join, as was eventually shown. The ruble zone experiment had in fact exhausted itself. Russia's financial resources had reached a limit, and the CIS states, instead of following tight credit and monetary policies, continued to accumulate debts with Russia. However, most CIS states were reluctant to leave the ruble zone, except for Ukraine and Kyrgyzia, as well as the Baltic states, which were not in the CIS.³⁹² Some CIS states had not yet printed new money, others simply could not afford to have their own currency. Moreover, the use of the ruble avoided the introduction of painful measure aimed at macro-economic stabilisation, essential for the introduction of their own currencies, and also guaranteed cheap Russian energy resources and facilitative credits.³⁹³ Some countries viewed continued access to financing and subsidised energy imports from Russia as being dependent on the nature of their monetary arrangements.³⁹⁴

c. End of the 'Old-Type' Ruble Zone and Negotiations on a 'New-Type' Ruble Zone

³⁹⁰ Aleskandr Shokhin, 'My zainteresovany v inostrannykh investitsiyakh, no ne na liublykh usloviyakh', p.4.

³⁹¹ *ibid.*

³⁹² John Odling-Smee, *Financial Relations*, p.42. On the introduction of national currencies by Ukraine, Kyrgyzstan and the Baltic states see Ivan Zhagel, *Izvestiya*, 'Estonskaya krona vvedena, no spornye voprosy s Rossiei poka ne uregulirovany', 23 June 1992; Irina Litvinova, 'Latviiskii rubl' rasstaetsya s rossiiskim', *Izvestiya*, 7 July 1992, p.2; Vladimir Trofimov, 'Kirgizskii som - v avtonomnom plavanii', *Izvestiya*, 20 May 1993 p.2; Sergei Tsikora, 'Ukraina vvodit v obrashchenie karbovanets', *Izvestiya*, 13 November 1992, p.1.

³⁹³ Rustam Narzikulov, 'Novaya vspyshka liubvi k integratsii', *Segodnya*, 13 July 1993, p.2.

³⁹⁴ John Odling-Smee, *Financial Relations*, p.43.

The ruble zone was brought to an end quite abruptly on 24 July 1993, when the CBR announced that pre-1993 ruble bank notes would no longer be legal tender in Russia.³⁹⁵ The main impact of this measure was to 'Russify' the ruble and therefore de-link the cash component of the money supply of the other states in the ruble zone, from that in Russia.³⁹⁶ The CBR's decision on a compulsory exchange of money effectively forced republics to choose between the Russian ruble and the introduction of their own currencies, thereby putting an end to the ruble zone, as it had existed since 1992. Between July and November 1993, Moldova, Georgia, Azerbaijan and Turkmenistan proceeded with the introduction of their national currencies. At the same time, Kazakhstan, Uzbekistan, Tajikistan, Belarus and Armenia began long negotiations with Russia aimed at setting up a 'new-type' ruble zone, where rules were determined entirely by Russia.

Unlike previous negotiations, which envisaged the establishment of a supra-national banking agency that would regulate the ruble's circulation, negotiations on the creation of a 'new-type' ruble zone started from the premise that Russia would keep total control over the money supply. Moreover, until the parliaments of the other CIS countries approved the necessary agreements, Russia simply refused to give those countries cash rubles. It agreed to do so only on a commercial basis, within the framework of previous agreements on providing credits to other states.³⁹⁷ Strong pressure was therefore placed on those countries who wanted to join the Russian ruble zone. Although such policies buried, at least for the foreseeable future, the possibility of keeping the ruble as a common CIS currency, they were perfectly understandable from Russia's economic viewpoint. They showed that Russia was not ready to pay any price for the sake of keeping the CIS states within the ruble zone. Russia was only ready to share the ruble if it had total control over monetary circulation within the zone. In other words, Russia was willing to keep the CIS states within the ruble zone only if the costs were not exorbitant.

Preliminary agreements on the practical measures to create a new-type ruble zone were reached on 7 September 1993 with Armenia, Belarus, Kazakhstan, Tajikistan and Uzbekistan. The agreements tied the economic and financial policies of the signatory states very closely to Russia's. If implemented, these agreements would have resulted in the complete surrender of those countries' economic sovereignty to Russia, given that Russia

³⁹⁵ 'Soobshchenie Tsentral'nogo Banka Rossiiskoi Federatsii', *Rossiskaya gazeta*, 27 July 1993, p.1.

³⁹⁶ John Oldling-Smee, *Financial Relations*, p.44.

³⁹⁷ Ivan Zhagel, 'Prinimaya v rublevuiu zonu strany SNG', *Izvestiya*, 10 August 1993, p.2.

would totally control their macro-economic policies. The agreements, in fact, not only provided for the existence of a single money-issuing centre, the CBR, but they also stipulated that those countries wishing to share the Russian ruble were obliged to co-ordinate with Russia the basic parameters of their monetary, credit, financial, foreign-exchange and customs policies, as well as the amounts of their currency interventions in the markets, the size of the money supply on the territories of the states participating in the agreement, and the amounts of consolidated budget deficits.³⁹⁸ Again, although these measures might seem 'neo-imperialist' at first sight, they instead reflected the pursuit of legitimate economic interests. Russia's policies made perfect economic sense, since they reflected Russia's desire to control the currency it was ready to share with other states. Russia did not intend to economically exploit the CIS states nor to force them into the ruble zone. In fact, the CIS states were free to refuse to join the treaty, which eventually they did.

These agreements were the closest Russia ever arrived at restoring the monetary union on its own terms, since all the ruble zone states would have had their economic policies determined entirely by Russia. However, there was also a downside for Russia. Most probably, CIS states would prove unable to immediately fulfil all the economic criteria set up by Russia. Therefore, Russia run the risk of ending up financing their budgets, in order to sustain the value of ruble and avoid the financial bankruptcy of the states in the union. This primarily explains why eventually, under pressure from Russian reformers, the 'new type' ruble zone failed to see the light of day. However, efforts to put it in place were still carried out during the autumn of 1993.

During the course of September 1993 all five signatories of the framework agreement entered into bilateral agreements with Russia on the procedures of monetary co-ordination and unification. Many of these signatory states made major efforts to fulfil the stipulated conditions in order to eliminate the uncertainties associated with the interim situation. But eventually the whole deal collapsed in November 1993, when Russia asked countries to collateralise, with gold or foreign exchange, some 50 percent of any new bank notes delivered, with full compensation to be made if a country exceeded monetary ceilings. The conversion rate for national rubles to Russian rubles also became a matter of debate, with CIS states seeking a 1:1 currency conversion and the Russian authorities preferring rates closer to market levels. All these conditions proved unacceptable to Kazakhstan,

³⁹⁸ Elena Kolokol'tseva, 'Rubleвая зона нового типа', *Segodnya*, 9 September 1993, p.1.

Uzbekistan, and Armenia, which instead decided to introduce their own national currencies. On 15 November 1993, Kazakhstan introduced the *tenge* as its national currency, and Uzbekistan introduced *sum*-coupons to circulate in parallel with the ruble, to be followed by a permanent currency in the second quarter of 1994. Armenia introduced the *dram* at the end of November and the authorities of Belarus announced their intention to make the *rubel* sole legal tender in the near future. However in early January 1994, Belarus changed policies and began negotiations on monetary union with Russia. Tajikistan, the only state of the CIS that had not moved to differentiate its currency, reached a preliminary agreement on the provision of 100 billion new Russian rubles from the CBR.³⁹⁹ For almost a year and a half, Tajikistan lived both with old and new Russian rubles. But serious difficulties in keeping the adequate amounts of cash in circulation forced the Tajik authorities, under Russian pressure, to introduce Tajikistan's own currency in May 1995.⁴⁰⁰

Russia's stringent economic conditions brought to light Russia's reluctance to restore the ruble zone at any price. Russian leaders were not ready to share a common currency over which they had no total control, for the sake of keeping the CIS states in a monetary sphere of influence. Given that the economic costs far outweighed the economic advantages, Russia gave up its attempts to create a Russian-dominated ruble zone. CIS states were unwilling to agree with Russia their economic policies and proceeded to introduce their own currencies. Belarus for a while seemed to be the exception.

d. Russian-Belarusian Monetary Union

The monetary reform of July 1993, which 'Russified' the ruble forced Belarus to choose between adopting the Russian ruble as its currency, and consequently following Russia's macro-economic policies, or instead, introducing its own currency and pursuing independent policies. In the Summer of 1993, Belarus' economic policy was so precarious that its leaders seemed willing to give up a substantial part of the state's sovereignty for the sake of reaching an economic and monetary union with Russia. Belarus' decision in 1992 to pursue a gradual approach to structural change and to favour the maintenance of traditional economic management methods proved to have extremely negative consequences on the economy - the country became increasingly dependent on credits and cheap energy

³⁹⁹ John Odling-Smee, *Financial Relations*, p.44.

⁴⁰⁰ Andrei Grigorev, 'Tadzhikistan zamenil rubl' na rubl', *Segodnya*, 11 May 1995, p.4.

from Russia - and this eventually created serious doubts regarding its viability as an independent country.⁴⁰¹ The impact of the terms of trade shock, in particular Russia's selling of energy at world prices, meant that Belarus needed two to three times its current budget to cope with these higher energy expenses. In view of this situation, Belarus' leaders signed all the appropriate agreements aimed at merging Belarus' monetary system with Russia, in the autumn of 1993.⁴⁰² These agreements entailed a significant surrender of sovereignty, since they deprived Belarus of any possibility of conducting independent monetary and credit policies. They established common credit amounts, interest rates, taxation principles, and methods for regulating prices and the population's income, and provided for a common set of rules regulating foreign economic activity and trade procedures with third countries.⁴⁰³ Further agreements were reached in mid-January 1994, whereby the Belarussian and Russian authorities agreed to unite both countries' monetary systems in the near future.⁴⁰⁴

Negotiations on monetary union began in earnest once its main Russian adversaries, Yegor Gaidar and Boris Fyodorov, resigned from the Russian government in late 1993 - early 1994. The process was given additional acceleration after the removal of Stanislav Shushkevich as speaker of the Belarussian parliament in early 1994. During the first quarter of 1994, Russian-Belarussian negotiations centred on four main issues. First, the rate at which the Belarussian *rubel* would be exchanged to the Russian ruble. Belarus wanted a 1:1 exchange rate, but the National Bank of Belarus's rate in 1994 was 1 ruble for 5 *rubli*. Second, governments discussed the potential unification of both countries' budgets. Russia believed that consolidated budgets might allow it to better control the rate of inflation in both countries, whereas Belarus was not very keen on having its budget determined by Russia.⁴⁰⁵ Third, negotiations focused on whether the National Bank of Belarus would retain its currency issuing rights within limits established by the CBR. The National Bank of Belarus was particularly keen on retaining issuing rights, and its Chairman, Stanislav Bogdankevich, became the main opponent of surrendering such prerogatives, which would have transformed the Belarussian Bank into a mere commercial branch of the CBR, limiting its activities to the financing of Belarus' budget deficit within

⁴⁰¹ *Belarus*, IMF Economic Reviews, 1993, 11, p.2.

⁴⁰² Vitalii Tsigankov, 'Rossiya i Belarus' ob"edinyaiut dnezhnye sistemy', *Nezavisimaya gazeta*, 20 November 1993, p.3.

⁴⁰³ *ibid.*

⁴⁰⁴ Aleksandr Starikevich, 'Kebich's White Horse is Called 'Ruble'', *Novaya ezheдневnaya gazeta*, 13 January, 1994, p.1 in *CDPSP*, XLVI, 1994, 3, p.10.

⁴⁰⁵ Aleksandr Bekker, 'Belorussiya dobivaetsya rossiiskikh rublei', *Segodnya*, 1 March 1994, p.2.

the limits set by the Central Bank of Russia. Finally, both sides discussed the price of Russia's energy resources. Belarus insisted on paying Russian domestic energy prices, and demanded the lifting of export duties.⁴⁰⁶

It was clear that if Belarus accepted monetary integration on Russia's terms, especially as far as a consolidated budget and a single emission centre were concerned, it would partially surrender its economic sovereignty to Russia. On the other hand, if Russia agreed to monetary integration according to Belarus' wishes, the whole undertaking could turn out to be extremely expensive and risky, since Russia would not be able to control monetary and credit supply within the zone. This point was raised several times by opponents to the union, particularly by key liberal figures such as Yegor Gaidar and Boris Fyodorov, who claimed that even if a deal was reached according to Russia's demands, there was no real guarantee that it would work properly. Gaidar insisted that the implementation of the plan would place a heavy burden on the Russian budget and would also lead to a surge of inflation. He argued that Russia would end up financing the Belarussian budget and providing Belarus with additional cash.⁴⁰⁷ However, his position remained that of a minority. Most Duma deputies favoured bringing about economic union, even if this implied high costs for Russia. Sergei Glaziev, Chairman of the State Duma Committee on Economic Policy, insisted that integration of the two states' monetary systems would have many advantages for Russian enterprises and also promote the restoration of severed economic ties.⁴⁰⁸ It was becoming increasingly clear that merger of the two economic and monetary systems was no longer viewed only in terms of economic advantages, but mostly in terms of the eventual political and strategic benefits such a union would provide to Russia.

The draft treaty on Belarussian-Russian monetary union was finally signed on 12 April 1994. Some liberal analysts, such as *Izvestiya* journalist Mikhail Berger, viewed the agreement as a readiness by Belarus to relinquish part of its economic sovereignty in exchange for a more reliable currency and stronger economic ties with Russia. Russia, in turn seemed ready to sacrifice its incipient economic stability for the sake of certain

⁴⁰⁶ Stanislav Evgenev, 'Ekonomicheskii soiuz v ekstrennom ispolnenii?', *Moskovskie novosti biznes*, 9-16 January 1994, p.1; Aleksandr Bekker, 'Belorussiya dobivaetsya rossiiskikh rublei', p.2.

⁴⁰⁷ Elena Kolokol'tseva, 'Vkliuchenie Belorussii v rublevuiu zonu obsudili v Dume', *Segodnya*, 25 March 1994; Kirill Shevchenko, 'Soiuz s Belorussiei neobkhodim', *Nezavisimaya gazeta*, 6 April 1994, p.3.

⁴⁰⁸ *ibid.*

geopolitical advantages.⁴⁰⁹ However, the agreement provided significant advantages to Russia. It settled the issue of the status of the National Bank of Belarus in Russia's favour, since it stipulated that all credit and monetary policy within the new borders of the ruble space would be set by the CBR. Russia also obtained significant benefits in terms of free transit of its goods through Belarussian territory and free leasing of strategic military facilities on Belarussian territory.⁴¹⁰ The Belarussian side also obtained important benefits. All duties on Russian energy resources were to be removed, and the exchange rate of the 'cash-ruble' for the 'cash-rubel' was set at 1:1, a rate extremely advantageous for Belarus. It was also assumed that Belarus would be forgiven its debts arising from state credits. Moreover, Belarus was able to keep the hallmarks of conducting its own economic policy. Although the CBR remained the only issuing centre for the common system, Belarus retained its own budget. It was clear that the Belarussian budget deficit would be eventually financed by CBR and the Russian Ministry of Finance.⁴¹¹ The overall cost for Russia of monetary integration was therefore estimated at approximately \$2.5 billion.⁴¹² Although Russia obtained some economic and political advantages, it was also evident that Russian authorities were unable to hold total control over the Belarussian economy, and this placed Russia in an extremely vulnerable economic position. The ambiguity of the agreement, which allowed for one issuing centre and two budgets was bound to lead to disagreements and possible disputes, and most probably to Russia financing the Belarussian deficit.

Disagreements on the final exchange rate, the unwillingness of Belarus to adjust to Russia's financial, credit, customs and tax policies, and above all the reluctance of Chernomyrdin to carry on with integration, eventually buried all efforts to set up a Belarussian-Russian monetary union, and the project was abandoned in August 1994.⁴¹³ Despite the major negotiating efforts, Chernomyrdin eventually proved much more cautious than initially expected. Concerned with attaining macro-economic stability, he repeated several times that substantial differences in the pace of economic reform between the two countries made any attempt to unify the monetary systems impossible. 'Right now

⁴⁰⁹ Mikhail Berger, 'Belorussiya obmenyala chast' svoego suvereniteta na rossiiskie rubli', *Izvestiya*, 14 April 1994, p.1.

⁴¹⁰ *ibid.*

⁴¹¹ Grigorii Selyaninov and Konstantin Smirnov, 'Russia pays the maximum for geopolitics' *Kommersant-daily*, 15 April 1994 p. 1, in *CDPSP*, XLVI, 1994, 15 pp.1-2.

⁴¹² *ibid.*

⁴¹³ Valentin Zhdanko, 'Aleksandr Lukashenko poprosil u Borisa El'tsina novye krupnye kredity', *Segodnya*, 4 August 1994, p.1.

unification would mean that Russia would take on the additional burden of a neighbouring state's problems', he noted, and added, 'we cannot afford that.'⁴¹⁴ Chernomyrdin had succeeded, with great difficulty, in lowering the rate of inflation to 5 percent a month during the first half of 1994, and was therefore reluctant to make a move that was bound to worsen the economic situation of Russia, for the sake, 'of not so obvious dividends in one narrow segment of Russian foreign policy.'⁴¹⁵

The Russian-Belarusian monetary union represents a very indicative case of Russia's reluctance to conduct an active neo-imperialist policy. Belarus proved to be the country most eager to join Russia in a monetary union, and eventually in an economic union as was shown above, in a way that would have served Moscow's imperialist purposes, if it really had any. However, the Russian-Belarusian monetary union failed to materialise, primarily due to the unwillingness of Russian leaders to subsidise the Belorussian economy, and also due to the reluctance of certain Belorussian leaders, especially the head of the Central Bank, to hand in control over money issuing and the Belorussian budget to Russia. Russian leaders were unwilling to pay too high an economic price for the sake of bringing Belarus within a Russian ruble zone which would not be totally under its control. This showed that those Russian officials who were in charge of conducting Russia's economic policies, mainly Prime Minister Chernomyrdin and the various heads of the Finance and Economics Ministries, and which were reluctant to sacrifice macro-economic stabilisation and the potential successes of economic reform for the sake of economically absorbing a CIS state, managed to impose their views over those more favourable to integration. It can then be concluded that Russia's desire to restore a neo-empire in the former Soviet space remained rather limited and incoherent.

V. CIS Military Integration

The current section will examine the processes of CIS military integration from Russia's viewpoint, in order to determine whether Russia's policies were aimed at preserving the CIS states within a Russian military sphere of influence. The section will show that during the period under examination Russian leaders considered control over the entirety of the post-Soviet space essential for the fulfilment of Russia's own security, and therefore

⁴¹⁴ Valentin Zhdanko, 'Belorussiya ne voidet v rublevuiu zonu', *Segodnya*, 16 September 1994, p.5.

⁴¹⁵ Rustam Narzikulov, 'Konfidentsialnyi denezhnyi razvod', *Segodnya*, 4 August, 1994 p.1.

attempted to preserve, either through multilateral or bilateral agreements, this area under their own influence. However, Russian leaders proved unable to restore the old model of military organisation. On the one hand, Russian leaders proved unwilling and unable to counter the centrifugal tendencies of the CIS states and the latter's desire to create their own military infrastructures. On the other hand, Russia lacked the necessary financial resources to re-create highly integrated military structures. Moreover, the Russian military establishment proved unwilling to subordinate itself to military supranational institutions. All these factors account for the partial success of CIS military integration.

1. Russia's New Strategic Environment

The end of the Cold War and the transformation of the old rivalry between the Soviet Union and the Western powers into a new partnership based on trust and mutual co-operation significantly reduced the military challenge posed by the NATO alliance on Soviet territory, and allowed for a radical revision of the USSR's security strategy. But the unexpected collapse of the Soviet Union and the emergence, in its place, of fifteen newly independent states created an entirely new geopolitical situation for Russia. The new Russian state, although still representing a significant portion of the earth surface, lost an important part of its territory in the strategically vital areas of Eastern Europe and the Transcaucasus. During the Cold War, Soviet military planners had based the defence of the Russian heartland on the forward deployment of high-readiness units in the western and southern fringes of the Soviet territory, on an air-defence network located mostly in the non-Russian republics, and on the assumption that the nations neighbouring Russia would not align themselves against it.⁴¹⁶ The loss of Eastern Europe dealt a severe blow to the implementation of such a forward-based strategy. But the loss of the European and the Transcaucasian republics completed the evisceration of Russia's traditional defence strategy. Russian Defence Minister Pavel Grachev clearly expressed his disarray in view of Russia's new disadvantageous strategic position, 'We have found ourselves faced with a truly unprecedented situation. The Moscow military district has essentially become a frontier district.'⁴¹⁷ In fact, the Moscow military district had almost no combat worthy troops and the largest, best equipped, and best trained forces were along Russia's western borders, especially in Ukraine and Belarus.⁴¹⁸ Moreover, the collapse of the Soviet Union severely disrupted the existing air-defence and early-warning systems, significantly eroding the defensive capacity of the new state.⁴¹⁹

Although there were no potential aggressors on the horizon, Russian military strategists continued to reason in terms of a major threat against Russia coming from NATO. Russia's draft military doctrine, published in May 1992, stipulated that 'states (or a

⁴¹⁶ Richard A. Falkenrath, *Shaping Europe's Military Order: The Origins and Consequences of the CFE Treaty*, Centre for Science and International Affairs, Cambridge, Mass., 1995, p.177.

⁴¹⁷ Nikolai Burbyga and Albert Plutnik, 'Pavel Grachev: Rossiiskuiu Armiiu, po suti, nado sozdavat s nulya,' *Izvestiya*, 1 June 1992 p.1.

⁴¹⁸ Raymond Garthoff, *Russian Military Doctrine and Developments*, Russian Littoral Project, University of Maryland and John Hopkins University, July 1994, p.10.

⁴¹⁹ Personal Interview with Alexei Arbatov, Vice-Chairman of the Duma Defence Committee, Moscow, November 1995.

coalition of states) aspiring for world hegemony' represented a major threat to the country.⁴²⁰ In view of this threat, it was believed that the defence of Russia could best be achieved by developing a forward defence strategy which entailed keeping the countries of the former Soviet Union in a tight military alliance with Russia, and retaining control over Soviet military assets located in the new independent states.⁴²¹ Although during the second half of 1992, concern about a major Western or NATO attack on Russia started to dwindle, and seemed to have almost totally disappeared in 1993 - there was no mention of it in the November 1993 Russian Military Doctrine - Russian military strategists still considered the stationing of powerful armed formations near Russia's borders as a direct military threat to the country's security.⁴²² These concerns were tied to the worry that Soviet military assets located outside Russia might fall under the control of hostile states, such as Turkey and Iran, which might then use these assets against Russia, in alliance with the former Soviet states.⁴²³ In order to counter these potential threats, Russian strategists considered it essential to bring as many countries as possible into the CIS and the Collective Security Treaty, and to develop bilateral military links which would tie these countries closely to Russia. In addition, Russia tried to jointly patrol the external CIS borders and the CIS air space, to restore peace in areas of inter-ethnic conflict with Russian peace-keeping forces, and to keep a Russian military presence, even a small one in the form of military bases, in as many CIS countries as possible. Military bases would legalise Russia's military presence in the CIS countries and most probably deter the military involvement of other countries.⁴²⁴ However, the Russian Ministry of Defence was aware that its scarce financial resources would not allow it to cover the costs of restoring and maintaining the former Soviet defence system. Therefore it tried to achieve its objectives by sharing the expenses and costs with the other CIS states.

⁴²⁰ *Voennaya Mysl'*, special edition, May 1992. Russia's primary political goal in a war unleashed against it would be to defend the sovereignty and territorial integrity of Russia and the CIS allies.

⁴²¹ John Lloyd, 'Moscow sets terms for Defence' *Financial Times*, 2 June 1992, p.2. The May 1992 draft Russian Military Doctrine noted that 'Russia [proceeded] from the assumption that its security [was] inseparable from that of the other commonwealth states.' (*Voennaya Mysl'*, special edition, May 1992.)

⁴²² 'Osnovnye polozheniya voennoi doktriny Rossiiskoi Federatsii', (hereafter 'Osnovnye polozheniya'), *Izvestiya*, 18 November 1993, p. 3. Concern over NATO re-emerged in 1994-1995, when the Alliance began negotiations with Central European countries on enlargement.

⁴²³ Personal Interview with Alexei Arbatov, Moscow, November 1995.

⁴²⁴ Personal Interview with Andrei Zagorskii, Professor at the Moscow State Institute for International Relations (MGIMO), Moscow, November 1996.

2. Russia's Attempts to Preserve United Armed Forces (1991-May 1992)

Long before the end of the USSR, the Soviet military leadership had to contend with developments which represented a threat to the unity of the Soviet armed forces, namely the increasing desire and efforts by some of the Soviet republics to set up their own national armed forces. Ukraine, Belarus and Armenia proclaimed the right to create their own armies in July-August 1990, and national defence institutions were established in Lithuania, Latvia and Moldova. Legislation on the establishment of national forces was introduced in the Baltic republics, Georgia and Armenia during 1990-1991.⁴²⁵ After the failed August 1991 coup, all three Baltic republics demanded the withdrawal of Soviet forces from their territory and Moldova and Azerbaijan expressed their intention to 'nationalise' all military formations on their territory in order to create their own armed forces. Ukraine placed all troops stationed on its territory under the jurisdiction of its Supreme Soviet, and in September 1991, named Major General Konstantin Morozov as Defence Minister.⁴²⁶ Ukraine's position was crucial in the struggle over military forces as a result of its size, population (52 million), vast military potential, defence industrial base (13 percent of the USSR's total) and geo-strategic position between Russia and the rest of Europe.

These developments created great anxiety among the Soviet military command. Officers were concerned that the creation of national forces would endanger control over nuclear weapons, decrease the general combat capability of the armed forces, and divide the air defence and early warning structures, thus significantly eroding the USSR's defensive capabilities. The traditional concept that war would be conducted on a huge scale, requiring a united military structure, lay at the heart of Soviet and, subsequently CIS thinking.⁴²⁷ Consequently, the potential collapse of the entire Soviet military machine, prompted the Soviet High Command to devise new organisational structures which, while taking account of the new developments, still kept the great bulk of the armed forces united. Chief of the Soviet General Staff, Army General Vladimir Lobov, saw the development of 'national armies' as inevitable, but insisted on the setting up of a system of collective security centred around Moscow. Like the Warsaw Pact, each member state would contribute a national contingent in the interests of common security, which would be

⁴²⁵ Roy Allison, *Military Forces in the Soviet Successor States*, Adelphi Paper, 280, 1993, pp. 6-7.

⁴²⁶ Sergei Tsikora, 'Ukraina sozdaet vooruzhennye sily', *Izvestiya*, 23 October 1991, p.1.

⁴²⁷ Roy Allison, 'Military Forces in the Soviet Successor States', p.7.

controlled by the Council of Defence Ministers of the sovereign states.⁴²⁸ Soviet Defence Minister, Marshal Evgeny Shaposhnikov, proposed that the Soviet armed forces remain under single, unified command. He suggested that the Soviet forces stationed in the republics be operationally subordinate to the General Staff, and their status be regulated by treaties between the Union and the republics, which would legalise their presence in the republics, and thus prevent the division of the armed forces and the hasty 'privatisation' of its equipment. Small republican or national guards would be allowed to exist under the command of the republican president, but during wartime they would become part of the united armed forces.⁴²⁹ The draft Union treaty, which was negotiated by Soviet leader Mikhail Gorbachev and the republican leaders on 25 November 1991, granted the republics the right to create their own national armed formations, but still stipulated that the Union of Sovereign States would have integrated armed forces under centralised control.⁴³⁰ However, all these efforts aimed at keeping united armed forces proved ineffective once the Soviet Union collapsed and some of the newly independent states went ahead with setting up their own armed forces.

The founding CIS agreements signed on 8 December 1991 envisaged the preservation, under joint command, of a common military-strategic space, with single control over nuclear weapons.⁴³¹ However, as early as 12 December 1991, Ukrainian President Leonid Kravchuk named himself Commander in Chief of the Ukrainian armed forces and issued a decree on the creation of Ukrainian forces on the basis of the Kiev, Odessa and Carpathian military districts, and the forces of the Black Sea Fleet, with the exception of those troops that were part of the 'strategic forces.'⁴³² The behaviour of Ukraine, which mirrored the attitudes of Azerbaijan and Moldova, significantly hampered the chances of keeping a united army, and created major anxiety among the armed forces' senior command. Soviet officers were concerned about the loss of strategically vital areas in Europe and Transcaucasia, the weakening of the efficiency of the CIS armed forces, and the fate of servicemen serving throughout the Soviet Union.⁴³³ They therefore pressed hard for the

⁴²⁸ *Krasnaya zvezda*, 22 October 1991, cited by Richard Woff, 'Army General Vladimir Lobov-ex Chief of the Soviet General Staff', *Jane's Intelligence Review*, January 1992, p.5.

⁴²⁹ Viktor Litovkin, 'Marshal Shaposhnikov predlagaet svoiu kontseptsiiu', *Izvestiya*, 10 September 1991, p.1.

⁴³⁰ Ann Sheehy, 'The Union Treaty: A further Setback', *RFE/RL Research Report*, 6 December 1991, p. 1.

⁴³¹ *Agreement on the Creation of a Commonwealth of Independent States*, p.3.

⁴³² Sergei Tsikhora, 'President Ukraina L. Kravchuk uzdal svoi pervyie ukazy', *Izvestiya*, 13 December 1991, p.1.

⁴³³ 'Gorbachev diventera' capo delle Forze Armate', *La Repubblica*, 12 December 1991, p.3.

preservation of united armed forces at least during a three year transitional period.⁴³⁴ The Russian political leadership was also strongly in favour of keeping united armed forces under CIS control.⁴³⁵ CIS control actually meant Russian control, given that Russia would host the highest portion of the armed forces, would pay the highest share of the CIS defence budget, would become the main supplier of weapons, training and equipment, and would have the highest ratio of nationals serving as officers and in positions of high command in the CIS armed forces.

The Russian leadership attempted to persuade the CIS states to keep the Soviet army united, but with little success, except for the former Soviet nuclear forces. At the 31 December 1991 CIS Summit in Minsk Russia managed to convince all CIS states to put nuclear weapons under single control and to place the former Soviet 'strategic forces' under joint command. The strategic forces were sufficiently broadly defined so as to include the strategic missile forces, the air force, the navy, the air defence forces, the space forces and the paratroopers.⁴³⁶ However, at the CIS summit in Minsk on 14 February 1992, the previous definition was revised in view of the disagreements that emerged between the CIS states, and it was agreed that the list of 'strategic forces' was to be 'defined by each state on agreement with the Strategic Forces Command, to be approved by the Council of Heads of State.'⁴³⁷ This meant that their size would be much smaller than initially envisaged, given that the composition of the forces would be the result of negotiations. As far as the non-strategic forces were concerned, at the 31 December 1991 summit in Minsk, Russia succeeded in obtaining the support of Belarus, Armenia and the five Central Asian states to keep joint 'general-purpose forces' and joint border troops under joint CIS command.⁴³⁸ However, the CIS states were granted the right to create their

⁴³⁴ 'Obrashchenie k narodam, parlamentam, glavam pravitel'stv Sodruzhestva Nezavisimykh Gosudarstv i lichnomu sostavu vooruzhennykh sil', *Krasnaya zvezda*, 21 January 1992 p.1. The appeal urged parliaments and leaders of the CIS states 'to preserve the integrity of the state border, a single system of security, a single military-strategic space and a single system of command for the Armed Forces during a transitional period.'

⁴³⁵ Yeltsin's support for a united army during at transitional period 1992-1995: Yuri Lepsii and Aleksandr Potapov, 'Boris Yeltsin: "It is very difficult for us, but we will stand our ground"', *Trud*, 14 December 1991, p. 1-2 in *FBIS-SOV-91-241*, 1991, p.36; Radio Mayak and Interfax, 30 December 1991, in *FBIS-SOV-91-251*, 31 December 1991, p.15.

⁴³⁶ *Agreement between the Members of the Commonwealth of Independent States on Strategic Forces*, Tass, 31 December 1991, translated by RIA-Novosti, January 1992, p.21.

⁴³⁷ 'Soglasenie mezhdru gosudarstvami-uchastnikami SNG o statuse strategicheskikh sil', *Krasnaya Zvezda*, 19 February 1992, pp.1,5.

⁴³⁸ *Agreement between Commonwealth Heads of State on Armed Forces and Border Troops*, Tass, 31 December 1991, translated by RIA-Novosti, January 1992, p.24.

own armed forces, which opened the way to further disintegration.⁴³⁹ At the next CIS meeting in Kiev on 20 March 1992, support for CIS general-purpose forces significantly dwindled. Only four states signed the agreement: Russia, Armenia, Kazakhstan and Kyrgyzstan. Moreover, the national armed forces, which were part of the general-purpose forces, remained subordinated to the national Defence Ministries, which were allowed to participate, together with the CIS command, in the development of operational planning, combat duty, training and direct combat control.⁴⁴⁰ As far as border protection is concerned, Russia managed to get the five Central Asian states, Armenia and Belarus to agree to jointly protect the CIS borders at the Kiev CIS summit. However, the agreement which stipulated the status of the *common* CIS border troops, mustered only five signatures, those of Russia, Armenia, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan and Tajikistan. In an effort to share expenses for the maintenance of a united CIS army Russia managed to reach agreement with all CIS states, except for Azerbaijan and Ukraine, at the Minsk summit on 14 February 1992, on a single defence budget to be financed by all CIS states.⁴⁴¹ However, no mechanisms were established for the financing of current expenditures and as a result, the financial burden of most CIS forces fell on Russia.⁴⁴²

3. Russia Creates its Own Armed Forces (May 1992)

Unable to maintain the integrity of the armed forces under CIS command Russia decided to go ahead with the creation of its own armed forces on the basis of the senior echelons located on Russian territory, the former Soviet forces deployed outside the former USSR (Germany, Poland, Mongolia and Cuba), and those located in the Baltic states, Armenia, Georgia, Azerbaijan and Moldova. In May 1992, a Russian Ministry of Defence was set up, whose staff was largely recruited from officers serving in the CIS Supreme Command and the former Soviet Defence Ministry.⁴⁴³ Russia's decision to set up its own armed forces

⁴³⁹ 'Agreement on General Purpose Forces for the Transitional Period', *Rossiiskaya gazeta*, 21 February 1992, translated by RIA-Novosti, March 1992, p.30. The general-purpose forces would include those military formations, units and installations that did not belong to the 'strategic forces', as well as the individual armed forces of the CIS states, which were voluntarily subordinated to the General Command of the CIS Joint Armed Forces.

⁴⁴⁰ 'O statuse sil obshchego naznacheniya Ob"edinennykh Vooruzhennykh Sil na perekhodnyi period', 20 March 1992, *Sodruzhestvo, Informatsionnyi Vestnik Soveta Glav Gosudarstv i Soveta Glav Pravitelstv SNG*, (hereafter *Sodruzhestvo*), 1992, 4, pp.26-30.

⁴⁴¹ 'Soglasenie mezhdru Gosudarstvami-uchastnikami SNG o formirovani i edinogo oboronogo biudzheta i poryadke finansirovaniya Vooruzhennykh Sil Gosudarstv Sodruzhestva', *Krasnaya zvezda*, 20 February 1992, pp.1-3.

⁴⁴² Mark Webber, *CIS Integration Trends: Russia and the Former Soviet South*, The Royal Institute of International Affairs, London, 1997, p.37.

⁴⁴³ *ibid.* p. 37; 'Soglasenie nemalo, no rabotaiut oni poka slabo', *Krasnaya zvezda*, 6 May 1992, pp.1-2.

was determined by a series of factors. First, there was a growing perception that Russia's security interests would hardly be fulfilled by an undefined military organisation, whose composition, structure, subordination and allegiance remained extremely blurred. The establishment of national armies tied by a collective security pact, with joint force structures, was seen as a better option to satisfy Russia's interests and eliminate the concerns expressed by other CIS states that Russia would use the former Soviet army as an 'imperial tool' to restore power.⁴⁴⁴ Moreover, such an arrangement would ensure direct Russian control over the CIS armed forces. Second, there was growing concern among Russian political circles, that the army, deprived of a state and of civilian supervision, was getting out of control. Only by creating its own Defence Ministry and other military structures, could the Russian leadership ensure political control over the military.⁴⁴⁵ Third, army units located beyond Russia's borders were being dragged into conflicts, often against their own will, and attempts to privatise the army's military equipment were endangering the lives of Russian servicemen. Moreover, the question of loyalty among individual soldiers was becoming an increasingly complicated matter. Russia, however, decided to retain the CIS Joint Armed Forces (JAF), in order to ensure continued central control over the former Soviet nuclear arsenal based outside Russia. The Russian military and political leadership also viewed these CIS defence structures as useful instruments for promoting Moscow's security interests throughout the CIS. The new organisational structure of the Joint Armed Forces placed Russian officers at key positions, thus ensuring Russia's control over such key formations as the CIS air defence, air force and navy, which still remained under joint command.⁴⁴⁶

4. Collective Security Co-operation (May 1992-end of 1992)

The failure to create common CIS general-purpose forces and the establishment of Russia's own armed forces came hand in hand with Russia's decision to create a system of collective security. Signed in Tashkent on 15 May 1992 by the leaders of Armenia, Kazakhstan, Russia, Tajikistan, Kyrgyzstan and Uzbekistan, the Collective Security Treaty (CST) was seen by Russia as an instrument for maintaining a united military-

⁴⁴⁴ Sergei Rogov, 'Commonwealth Defence Arrangements and International Security', *CNA Occasional Paper*, Centre for Naval Analysis, June 1992, p.12.

⁴⁴⁵ These views were expressed by then Russia's Deputy Defence Minister Andrei Kokoshin, See Natalie Gross, 'Russia's Strategy: East or West?', *Jane's Intelligence Review*, June 1992, p.257.

⁴⁴⁶ 'Soglashenie ob organizatsii deyatelnosti Glavnogo Komandovaniya Ob"edinennykh Vooruzhennykh Sil Sodruzhestva Nezavisimykh Gosudarstv na perekhodnyi period', 6 July 1992, *Sodruzhestvo*, 1992, 6, pp.69-70.

strategic space through the preservation of joint armed forces, and as means of creating a defensive alliance with those states most prone to military co-operation.⁴⁴⁷ The CST was a reflection of Russia's military thinking at the time, which conceived Russia's security within the context of the CIS framework. The draft military doctrine published in May 1992, stressed the need for close military co-operation with the other CIS states to ensure reliable defence in case of aggression, and suggested that Russia's armed forces be committed partly or completely to the CIS Joint Armed Forces.⁴⁴⁸ The CST was also seen as a way of preserving under joint control those elements of the former Soviet army that had not been nationalised, or at least as a means of delaying the complete disintegration of the army. As Lt.-Gen. Leonid Ivashov, Secretary of the CIS Council of Defence Ministers, explained, 'the signing of the collective security treaty in Tashkent on 15 May 1992 was an attempt by the CIS Heads of State to put up a legal obstacle to the total collapse of the defence system of the USSR and to preserve a minimal level of security for their countries.'⁴⁴⁹ The Russian military envisaged that the former Soviet army, even if divided, would still function as a unified entity, as indicated in the May 1992 draft military doctrine, which foresaw the existence of national armed forces operationally subordinate to the High Command of the CIS Joint Armed Forces.⁴⁵⁰ The CST did not explicitly provide for the establishment of joint armed forces. However, article 7, which stipulated that 'the development and functioning of objects of the collective security system on the territory of party-states shall be regulated by special agreements', provided the legal foundation for further collective security co-operation and for the preservation of a united army.⁴⁵¹ Co-ordination of the joint actions of the signatory states was to be conducted by a Collective Security Council, composed of the leaders of the signatory states and the Commander-in-Chief of the CIS Joint Armed Forces.

The CST, however, failed to satisfy Russia's expectations. By the autumn of 1992, hopes of preserving a united army and creating an effective collective security system had almost

⁴⁴⁷ 'Treaty on Collective Security', *Military News Bulletin (MNB)*, May 1992, 5, pp.1-2. The CST created a defensive alliance among the signatory states. Aggression against one member-state was considered an aggression against them all. Participants were barred from joining other military alliances, or taking part in actions aimed against another member state (art.1). In the event of such an aggression occurring, all participating states were expected to render the necessary assistance including military aid (art. 4).

⁴⁴⁸ *Voennaya Mysl'*, special edition, May 1992.

⁴⁴⁹ Col. Nikolai Plotnikov, 'Ot dezintegratsii k ob"edineniiu', *Nezavisimaya gazeta*, 6 July 1994, p.1. See also Maj-Gen. Vasily Volkov, 'Kollektivnaya Bezopasnost' Sodruzhestva', *Nezavisimaya gazeta*, 20 August 1994, p.3.

⁴⁵⁰ *Voennaya Mysl'*, special edition, May 1992.

⁴⁵¹ 'Treaty on Collective Security', p.2.

disappeared. First, as the CIS states proceeded with the creation of their own armed forces, CIS agreements reflected the increasing trend towards a nationally-based CIS defence. The first *CIS Military Doctrine* adopted by the six CST signatory states on 9 October 1992 foresaw the fulfilment of CIS collective defence on the basis of both individual forces and the CIS Joint Armed Forces (JAF). The latter, however, were to be formed from contingents of troops belonging to the armed forces of the CIS states, which were *voluntarily* placed by each CIS state under the operational command of the JAF.⁴⁵² Although most CIS states initially placed all their armed forces under CIS command, such moves were considered transitional until individual countries set up their own armed forces and military institutions. Moreover, the High Command of the JAF was entrusted with assisting in the building of the armed forces of the CIS states.⁴⁵³ Second, very little was achieved in terms of the development of a collective security system. Although the October 1992 *CIS military doctrine* did provide the basis for the creation of an integrated military system of joint forces and joint operational planning - the JAF would be based on 'the collective guidance of the defences of the CIS states and a common operational control of the JAF of the CIS' - very little was achieved in practice.⁴⁵⁴ The Joint Armed Forces by this time amounted only to the nuclear forces which were located in Russia, Ukraine, Belarus and Kazakhstan, as CIS states proceeded to set up national armed forces. Furthermore, the CIS JAF High Command's tasks were reduced to providing co-ordination and assistance in the field of collective security.⁴⁵⁵ The Collective Security Council, which had been envisaged as a co-ordination body, was in turn entrusted with setting up another working body, also aimed at co-ordinating the actions of the CIS to ensure collective security.⁴⁵⁶ Collective security, therefore, remained very much in the early stages of policy co-ordination. Very little was achieved in terms of joint operational planning or development of integrated military structures. Third, the 6 July 1992 agreement on a united air defence system under CIS command failed to materialise.

The main reasons behind these developments were both the reluctance of most CIS states to subordinate themselves to supra-national organs, especially in the military field, where Russia was bound to play a dominant role, as well as the eagerness, even among those

⁴⁵² 'Concept of Military Security of the Member-States of the CIS', 9 October 1992, *MNB*, December 1992, pp.6-9.

⁴⁵³ 'Statute of the High Command of the Joint Armed Forces of the CIS', *MNB*, November 1992, p.6.

⁴⁵⁴ 'Concept of Military Security of the Member-States of the CIS', p.9.

⁴⁵⁵ 'Statute of the High Command of the Joint Armed Forces of the CIS', p.6.

⁴⁵⁶ 'Concept of Military Security of the Member-States of the CIS', p.9.

states that had signed the CST, to create their own armed forces and bring all military infrastructure in their territory under their own jurisdiction. Russian leaders at the time, proved unwilling to put too much pressure on the CIS states in order to preserve a united army and achieve deep military integration. Instead, by 1993, the Russian Ministry of Defence had given up efforts to create a united army and adopted a new approach in the area of CIS military integration.⁴⁵⁷ Although the goal of creating a Russian-dominated military-strategic space in the CIS was retained, the Russian military preferred to pursue military integration independently from the supra-national CIS structures. The Russian military began increasingly to focus on bilateral forms of military co-operation with each individual CIS states, and worked towards the creation of coalition forces no longer subordinated to the CIS High Command, but to Russia instead.⁴⁵⁸

5. Further Disintegration of the CIS Military Space at Multilateral Level (1993-mid 1994)

During 1992, Russian and CIS military institutions had worked in tandem to maintain Moscow's position as the focal point of an integrated security system on the territory of the former Soviet Union. But in early 1993, Russian military leaders found themselves increasingly at odds with both the CIS command and the majority of the CIS members that had signed the Collective Security Treaty, over the reorganisation of the CIS command structure, its subordination to political authorities, and the management of conventional forces. Russia along with Uzbekistan backed a proposal based on the old Warsaw Pact command structure that would have made the CIS commander a Russian deputy Defence Minister subordinate to the Russian Defence Minister.⁴⁵⁹ The other signatories to the CST, as well as the CIS command, opposed this structure, mainly because it would have meant subordination to the Russian Defence Ministry. They proposed instead a structure that would follow the NATO model, maintaining a permanent CIS command subordinated to a collective security council, whose membership would have included the Presidents and Prime Ministers of the six member states.⁴⁶⁰ The Commander in Chief of the Joint Armed

⁴⁵⁷ Boris Gromov noted in the Spring of 1993, that the CIS Joint Armed Forces needed to be reorganised because it would be impossible to set up joint armed forces in the near future. (Itar-tass, 15 June 1993, in *FBIS-SOV-93-113*, 15 June 1993, p.3).

⁴⁵⁸ Personal Interview with Andrei Zagorskii, Moscow, November 1996.

⁴⁵⁹ Interfax, 1 March 1993, in *FBIS-SOV-93-093*, 2 March 1993, p.6; and Oleg Falichev, 'Kollektivnaya bezopasnost' v SNG: po tipu NATO ili Varshavskogo Dogovora?', *Krasnaya zvezda*, 2 March 1993, p.1.

⁴⁶⁰ *ibid.*

Forces, Marshal Shaposhnikov, still hoped to transform the collective security system into a CIS military-political alliance, with common tenets which could be embodied in a 'coalition' military doctrine. The goal was to create mixed-troop formations of CIS national armies at regional level.⁴⁶¹ This idea however, run into open Russian opposition in the spring of 1993. In May 1993, the Russian Ministry of Defence openly rejected the creation of permanent unified CIS armed forces in the foreseeable future, and supported the formation of such forces only during wartime. Various reasons explain Russia's new stance. First, Defence Minister Pavel Grachev became increasingly reluctant to subordinate himself to a superior body - the CIS High Command. Second, the Russian Ministry of Defence was concerned that the transformation of the CIS Command into an independent decision-making centre would drag Russian military forces into some new resource-consuming operation.⁴⁶² Russia's proposal was in fact heading in the opposite direction, having all CIS structures subordinated to the Russian defence ministry. Finally, the Russian Defence Ministry was aware of the lack of funding available for the setting up of such a supranational structure. Russia was the only country funding the JAF, and its leaders wanted to make CIS countries responsible for covering the expenses of their own national armies.⁴⁶³

The situation was resolved with Russia's decision to abolish the CIS JAF Command in June 1993, and replace it with a co-ordinating body, the 'Staff for the Co-ordination of Military Co-operation' (SCMC). With the elimination of the CIS JAF Command, Russia dashed any hopes of setting up joint CIS forces in the foreseeable future. Instead, in August 1993, it brought forward a less ambitious collective security project, adopted by the CST signatory states in December 1993, which envisaged the defence of the CIS space on the basis of national armed forces of minimal strength.⁴⁶⁴ The project also foresaw the restoration of a joint air defence system and the joint protection of external CIS borders.⁴⁶⁵ By 1994, the CIS SCMC was in fact working on the assumption that no joint armed forces would be set up in the near future, and that collective security would be achieved 'with

⁴⁶¹ Aleksandr Zhilin, 'Plan Shaposhnikova eshche ne sdan v arkhiv', *Moskovskie novosti*, 30 May 1993, pp.8-9.

⁴⁶² Pavel Baev, *The Russian Army in a Time of Troubles*, PRIO, London, 1996, p.111.

⁴⁶³ Personal interview with Andrei Zagorskii, Moscow, November 1996. For Grachev's comments on the topic see Aleksandr Zhilin, 'Plan Shaposhnikova eshche ne sdan v arkhiv', p.8.

⁴⁶⁴ The Russian Military Doctrine adopted in November 1993 envisaged cooperation among CIS states 'in solving collective defence and security problems', but no reference was made to integration of CIS armed forces under joint command. ('Osnovnye polozheniya', p.3).

⁴⁶⁵ Viktor Litokvin, 'Ministry oborony likvidirovali dolzhnost' Galvkoma, no ob"edinenye sily sodruzhestvu potrebuitsya', *Izvestiya*, 26 August 1993, p.2.

[reduced] expenditures and with national forces of minimal strength.⁴⁶⁶ Boris Pyankov, First Deputy Chief of Staff of the SCMC envisaged that, under these circumstances, collective security would be achieved by co-ordinating operational plans in the event of an external threat, by co-ordinating the training of troops in peacetime, and by military-technical co-operation.⁴⁶⁷

6. Renewed Emphasis on Military Co-operation (Mid-1994-1996)

By mid-1994 Russia's policy in the field of military integration underwent a major readjustment. Although all CIS states were reluctant to restore highly centralised structures with supranational bodies, and were focusing their efforts on dividing the former Soviet armed forces and strengthening their national armies, CIS leaders were aware that a certain degree of co-operation was necessary.⁴⁶⁸ Most CIS states were experiencing enormous difficulties in setting up their own armed forces and needed Russia's financial support and technical expertise. Russia, in turn, was eager to keep the CIS states within a military-strategic alliance that would bind their security tightly to Russia. Although in 1993 emphasis had been placed on developing bilateral relations, support within Russia's political and military circles for deeper multilateral co-operation increasingly gained strength, as Russia succeeded in bringing three additional CIS states into the CST - Azerbaijan, Georgia and Belarus. Russia's new emphasis on integration reflected the broader evolution that was occurring at foreign policy level in support for a more assertive policy towards the former Soviet states. The successes of Zhirinovskiy's LDPR and of the Communist Party at the Duma elections in December 1993 only reinforced this trend, and prompted the Russian leadership to come out vociferously in support of increased military integration.⁴⁶⁹

Russia's emphasis on the formation of an integrated collective security system was also a result of the concern that Russia's neglect of military integration during 1993 had undermined the former Soviet integrated structures upon which Russian security was

⁴⁶⁶ Liana Minasyan, Igor Rotar and Vitalii Portnikov, 'My ne khotim pugat' mir. Voennoe sotrudnichestvo s tochki zreniya Koordinatsionnogo Shtaba', *Nezavisimaya Gazeta*, 4 June 1994, p.3.

⁴⁶⁷ *ibid.*

⁴⁶⁸ Maj.-Gen. Vasily Volkov, 'Kollektivnaya bezopasnost sodruzhestva', p.3.

⁴⁶⁹ Yeltsin's Speech at the conference of the Command Personnel of the Russian Federation Armed Forces on 14 November 1994. ('Armiya kak zerkalo Rossiiskoi zhizni', *Rossiiskaya gazeta*, 15 November 1994, pp.1-2); Grachev cited by Itar-tass, 21 July 1994, in *BBC SWB SU/2055 S1/1*, 23 July 1994.

based.⁴⁷⁰ In addition, the prospects of NATO enlargement increased support for deeper integration with the CIS states. The *Strategic Course for the CIS*, approved by Yeltsin in September 1995, put great emphasis on the need to create the right mechanisms for the implementation of a collective security system and the preservation of military infrastructure facilities in the CIS states on the basis of mutual agreements. The document also stressed the need to reach agreements that would regulate the status of military bases in the CIS states and the need to deepen co-operation in the protection of CIS outer borders. Support for CIS military integration also came from the Foreign Intelligence Service, headed by Evgeny Primakov. Primakov's report on the CIS, published in September 1994, saw CIS military integration as 'a natural objective process' and noted that although tension had decreased at global level, potential threats to Russia's security remained, in the form of inter-ethnic conflicts, the expansion of Iranian and Turkish influence, Islamic extremism, as well as the modernisation and development of Western offensive armaments.⁴⁷¹ Military integration was seen as the best way to counter these threats. During 1994-1995, therefore, Russia placed new emphasis on the restoration of the unity of the military-strategic space to be achieved by the materialisation of the principle of collective security, the restoration of the air defence system, joint border protection, the legalisation of military bases in the CIS states, and the creation under Russia's aegis, of coalition, and in future united CIS armed forces.⁴⁷² Bilateral ties were to complement developments at multilateral level.

a. Military Integration and Regional Coalition Forces

Russia's renewed support for CIS multilateral co-operation resulted in the adoption of a Collective Security Concept in February 1995. The concept represented a less ambitious version of the plans for military co-operation proposed by the CIS SCMC, which if implemented would have come close to restoring the old united Soviet armed forces within a single military-strategic space. The SCMC project, as presented by Lt.-Gen. Leonid Ivashov, Secretary of the CIS Defence Ministers' Council, envisaged in the short term, the creation of a 'military-political alliance', understood as a system of permanent political and military bodies, common or joint military structures, *joint armed forces*, and co-ordinated operational planning and training. In the longer term, the 'military-political alliance' would

⁴⁷⁰ Valery Mironov, 'Ot desintegratsii k ob"edineniiu', *Segodnya*, 20 July 1995, p.5.

⁴⁷¹ 'Rossiya i SNG: Nuzhdaetsya li v korrektyrovke pozitsiya zapada?', p.1.

⁴⁷² Dmitrii Trenin, 'Kollektivnaya bezopasnost' i kollektivnaya oborona', *Nezavisimaya Gazeta*, 4 November 1994, p.3.

develop into a highly integrated military structure, with supranational powers whose decisions would be binding on member states. States would share a common defence budget, in addition to the national defence budgets, as well as single armed forces under single command.⁴⁷³ Ivashov proposed that the future collective security system be based on highly integrated regional subsystems, each with their own coalition forces, subordinated to bodies with supranational powers.

The CST Collective Security Concept, instead, envisaged the creation of a collective security system based on *regional coalition forces* as well as on the armed forces of individual member states, a joint defence system and joint border protection.⁴⁷⁴ The Concept did not rule out the formation of joint armed forces, but left this development to a later stage. The collective security system was to be created in various stages. Initially, the formation of individual armed forces was envisaged, as well as the establishment of a legal basis for a future collective security system and the development of military-technical co-operation. In a second phase, coalition forces and a joint air defence system were to be set up, and the possibility of creating joint armed forces was to be examined. The last phase foresaw the completion of the collective security system. However, the Collective Security Concept envisaged no supranational bodies, and the main CST organ - the Collective Security Council - retained purely co-ordinating functions. This showed that although Russia was eager to deepen military integration, the Russian Ministry of Defence remained reluctant to create new military organs with supra-national functions. In turn, most of those CIS states which seemed willing to develop tight military co-operation with Russia were generally motivated in their decisions by the desire to obtain Russian economic support and technical expertise for their military development, rather than by the conviction that their country's security would best be safeguarded by co-operating with Russia.

The CIS Council of Defence Ministers of April 1995 saw the first attempts to set up a body responsible for joint military planning and operations. CST leaders agreed on the need to create a Committee of Chiefs of Staff of the CIS Armed Forces (CCC) under the SCMC, which would include the chief of the general staff of the national armies, and would be responsible for co-ordinating the armies' activities and for the joint operational

⁴⁷³ Col. Nikolai Plotnikov, 'Ot dezintegratsii k ob"edineniiu - kollektivnaya bezopasnost' sodruzhestva', *Nezavisimaya gazeta*, 6 July 1994, p.1.

⁴⁷⁴ 'Collective Security Concept of States, Parties to the Collective Security Treaty', *MNB*, March 1995, p.8.

planning and the elaboration of other measures to ensure CIS security.⁴⁷⁵ The Committee was to be headed, at least for the next year or two, by the Russian Chief of the General Staff. The CCC was set up at the March 1996 Council of Defence Ministers' meeting. Although the specific functions and the structure of the committee were not spelled out, Army General Viktor Samsonov, Chief of Staff for the Co-ordination of Military Co-operation, noted that the idea behind the committee's creation was to unite the potential of the general staffs, and to give the Chiefs of Staff a legal foundation for their work in the CIS context. Mikhail Kolesnikov, chief of the Russian General Staff, was appointed committee chairman. This meant that, under Russian leadership, the operational and combat training of national armies would be conducted particularly in the interests of Russia, as well as those of all CIS states.

However, in spite of these renewed efforts to develop collective security, regional coalition forces were never implemented during the period under examination. On the one hand, many CIS states were reluctant to subordinate their forces to supra-national structures which would be dominated by Russia, the major military power. On the other hand, the basis of the coalition concept - the prior formation of national armies - remained incomplete.⁴⁷⁶ One of the main reasons behind such developments was, again, the lack of funding.

b. Joint Border Protection

At the CIS summit in Kiev on 20 March 1992, Russia had succeeded in getting the support of the five Central Asian states, Armenia and Belarus to jointly protect the CIS external borders, both by common CIS border troops and by the national border forces of each CIS state.⁴⁷⁷ A Council of Border Troop Commanders, under the Chair of the Director of the Russian Federal Border Service, was set up in July 1992 to co-ordinate the operation of the border troops and implement the decisions taken by the CIS Council of Heads of State, the highest co-ordinating body for the protection of CIS borders.⁴⁷⁸ However, the initial

⁴⁷⁵ Ilya Bulavinov, 'Military Cooperation in the CIS: Nothing Unifies Like an External Threat', *Kommersant-daily*, 25 April 1995 p. 3, in *CDPSP*, XLVII, 1995, 17, p.20.

⁴⁷⁶ Mark Webber, *CIS Integration Trends*, p.40.

⁴⁷⁷ Ukraine and Azerbaijan signed the agreement with amendments, and Moldova let it be known that the protection of its borders would be regulated by bilateral agreements with the high command of the CIS frontier forces.

⁴⁷⁸ 'Soglashenie ob okhrane gosudarstvennykh granits i morskikh ekonomicheskikh zon gosudarstv-uchastnikov SNG', 20 March 1992, *Sodruzhestvo*, 1992, 4, pp.31-33, 'Provision on the Unified Forces Command', 20 April 1992, *MNB*, April 1992, 4, p.5.

attempts to jointly patrol the CIS external borders failed. The agreement on the status of the *common* CIS border troops which had been signed on 20 March 1992, mustered only the signatures of Russia, Armenia, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Russia and Tajikistan.⁴⁷⁹ Many CIS states decided to patrol their external border by themselves, such as Belarus, Azerbaijan, Ukraine, Kazakhstan, and in many cases they opened up their borders with their non-CIS neighbours, leaving Russia's borders totally unprotected and open to the influx of drugs, weapons, refugees, and un-taxed goods.⁴⁸⁰

In view of this situation, in June 1992, Russia went ahead with the creation of its own border troops, and established bilateral agreements with the various CIS states in order to jointly or individually patrol their external CIS borders. Bilateral agreements to this effect were reached with Georgia (February 1994), Armenia (March 1994), Kazakhstan (December 1994), Turkmenistan (July 1992 and December 1993), Kyrgyzstan (October 1992), Tajikistan (July 1992) and Belarus (February 1995). By 1996, Russia was jointly patrolling these external CIS borders. Although these agreements clearly satisfied Russia's own security interests, they also met the needs of the CIS states, which most often lacked the resources and expertise to establish efficient border protection regimes.⁴⁸¹ The possibility of creating a new border protection infrastructure along the perimeter of Russia's new borders had been examined during 1992 and 1993, but eventually, at a Russian Security Council meeting, held in September 1993, the Russian leadership decided to continue to defend the former Soviet border. The direct protection of Russia's new borders was considered too expensive, it would have taken a very long time to complete, and the border would have been shortened only by 2,000 km. Moreover, Russian leaders hoped that in the near future a politico-military union would be set up, rendering the new borders superfluous.⁴⁸² In May 1995, Russia managed to obtain the agreement of Armenia, Belarus, Georgia, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan and Tajikistan for the development of a multilateral joint border protection system. Ukraine, Moldova, Azerbaijan, Uzbekistan and Turkmenistan refused to sign the treaty, the latter preferring an agreement with Russia on bilateral border protection.⁴⁸³ However, hardly any co-operation on border protection

⁴⁷⁹ 'Soglashenie o statuse Pogranichnykh Voisk Sodruzhestva Nezavisimyykh Gosudarstv', 20 March 1992, *Sodruzhestvo*, 1992, 4, pp.36-39.

⁴⁸⁰ For Yeltsin's concern for the open borders see: 'Ya ne skryvaiu trudnostei i khochu, chtoby narod eto ponimal', *Komsomol'skaya Pravda*, 27 May 1992, p.2; 'What Russia's Borders look like', *MNB*, August 1992, p.1.

⁴⁸¹ Mark Webber, *CIS Integration Trends*, p.42.

⁴⁸² Pavel Felgengauer, 'Starye granitsy i "novye" bazi', *Segodnya*, 16 September 1993, p.3.

⁴⁸³ Vladimir Abarinov, 'Rossiya nachinaet vozrozhdat' soiuz na 'rynochnykh printsipakh', *Segodnya*, 30 May 1995 p. 3. *The Strategic Course of Russia towards the CIS member States*

developed at multilateral level; most joint border protection instead occurred at bilateral level between Russia and the individual CIS states.

c. Air Defence

The collapse of the Soviet Union dealt a severe blow to the existing air defence system, leaving the non-Russian CIS states without cover and opening up gaps in Russia's own air defences. Most radio-engineering troops, anti-aircraft and early-warning systems, as well as the best fighter planes were located beyond Russia's borders in the new independent states.⁴⁸⁴ This situation prompted the Russian leadership to negotiate an agreement in July 1992, with the leaders of most CIS states (Armenia, Belarus, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Tajikistan, Turkmenistan, Uzbekistan) on the preservation of a united air defence system, under the control of Russia's Air Defence Commander.⁴⁸⁵ All signatories, plus Ukraine, also agreed to keep missile-attack warning and space surveillance systems under joint command and central control. Russia managed to agree on sharing the burdens of finance between Russia and the various CIS states. The systems became the property of the states where they were located, and each state became responsible for their maintenance. Despite the efforts, a jointly operated air defence system failed to materialise. When the CIS JAF Supreme Command was abolished in June 1993, central control over the system was lost, and air defence assets located in the CIS states started to be run directly by each individual CIS state. In view of this situation, Russia conducted major efforts to restore a united system at bilateral level. Agreements on joint air defence operation were reached with Armenia (March 1994, October 1994 and December 1995), Georgia (April 1995), Azerbaijan (April 1995), Kazakhstan (December 1994, January 1995), Kyrgyzstan (July

envisaged a deepening of co-operation between CIS member states in the sphere of state border security. President Yeltsin considered it is necessary to proceed from the premise that the reliable protection of borders along the CIS perimeter corresponded with Russia's national interests and the common interests of CIS member states. Work had to be completed on settling a package of border questions with CIS member states and creating a treaty-legal basis for the stationing of Russian Federation border troops in these countries. The document envisaged studying the possibility of creating, in the future, regional command units of CIS member states border guard troops, and conducting efforts to create a uniform system for the protection of their borders. (*Strategicheskii Kurs*, p.4)

⁴⁸⁴ Col.Vladimir Simakov, 'Air Space Defence in CIS Common Space', *MNB*, July 1995, p.3; 'General Prudnikov outlines the status of air defences in the CIS', *Interfax*, 3 August 1995, in *FBIS-SOV-95-150*, 4 August 1995, p.1

⁴⁸⁵ 'Soglashenie o sisteme protivovozdushnoi oborony', 6 July 1992, *Sodruzhestvo*, 1992, 6, pp.66-67; 'Soglashenie ob organizatsii deyatel'nosti Glavnogo Komandirovaniya Ob"edinennykh Vooruzhennykh Sil SNG', 6 July 1992, *Sodruzhestvo*, 1992, 6, p.69.

1994), Tajikistan (July 1994), Turkmenistan (June 1992), Belarus (January 1995), and Ukraine (April 1996) on the joint use of their air defence capabilities.

In 1995, Russia resumed efforts aimed at reaching an agreement at multilateral level, which would slowly bring all CIS air defence components under Russia's control. At the February 1995 CIS summit, all CIS states except for Azerbaijan and Moldova adopted an agreement on a unified air defence system. The agreement foresaw the formation of a joint air defence system on the basis of the forces and installations of individual CIS states, involved in joint monitoring, early warning, and attack repelling.⁴⁸⁶ The forces would be controlled by individual states, but their actions would be co-ordinated from the Central Command Post of the Air Defence Forces of Russia.⁴⁸⁷ A CIS Co-ordinating Committee for Air Defence, under General Viktor Prudnikov, Commander-in-Chief of Russian Air Defence Troops, was immediately set up. It became responsible for co-ordinating the actions of all air defence forces, and for creating and upgrading the joint air defence system. Moreover, Russia started in April 1995 a programme aimed at restoring the air defence systems of Georgia, Kyrgyzstan and Tajikistan, and repairing the systems of Armenia, Kazakhstan and Uzbekistan with the final objective to merge the various systems under Russia's control.⁴⁸⁸

Russian leaders therefore managed to partially restore a unified air defence command, and succeeded in implementing some of the signed bilateral air defence agreements. During the Spring of 1996, Russia started undertaking joint patrols with Kazakhstan, Georgia and Belarus, and merged its air defence efforts with Armenia.⁴⁸⁹ However, Azerbaijan's objection to participating in the air defence system, even at bilateral level, and its refusal to

⁴⁸⁶ Mark Webber, *CIS Integration Trends*, p.41.

⁴⁸⁷ 'Agreement on the Creation of a Joint Air Defence System of the CIS', 10 February 1995, *MNB*, May 1995, 5, pp.6-7. The operations of early-warning facilities deployed beyond Russia's borders were supervised by the Russian MOD through the office of the Air Defence Forces of the Russian Federation. (Igor Korotchenko, 'Protess voennoi integratsii v SNG nabiraet silu', *Nezavisimoe voennoe obozrenie-Nezavisimaya gazeta*, 13 January 1996, p.4.)

⁴⁸⁸ An agreement reached in November 1995 stipulated that the rehabilitation of the system was to be overseen and funded by an inter-state financial-industrial group centred on Russia's Granit state concern. (Yury Golotiuk, 'Rossiya i Belorussiya nachali sovместno zashchishchat' obshchee nebo', *Segodnya*, 2 April 1996 p. 2; Russian Television, 2 November 1995, *FBIS-SOV-95-213*, 3 November 1995 p.12. 'Decision on Progress in the Implementation of the Agreement on the Creation of a Joint Air Defence System of the CIS of 10 February 1995', *MNB*, July 1995, p. 4; 'Decision on the Provisions of Assistance in the Creation and Improvement of a Joint Air Defence System of Members of the CIS', *MNB*, December 1995, p.9; Interfax, 3 August 1995, in *FBIS-SOV-95-150*, 4 August 1995, p.1.)

⁴⁸⁹ Mark Webber, *CIS Integration Trends*, p.41.

agree to a Russian lease of its early-warning radar station at Gabala, created a real problem for Russia, for as long as Azerbaijan remained out of the air defence system, the skies over the Transcaucasian region remained unprotected.⁴⁹⁰

d. Bilateral Military Co-operation Between Russia and the CIS States

Besides the dense network of bilateral co-operation set up by Russia with most CIS states in the areas of air defence and border protection, Russia reached various bilateral agreements on military co-operation among individual armed forces with Belarus (December 1995 and May 1996), Kazakhstan (May 1992, March 1994, January 1995), Tajikistan (May 1993), Uzbekistan (May 1992 and March 1994), Kyrgyzstan (July 1994), Georgia (February 1994) and Armenia (August 1992).⁴⁹¹ Most of these agreements envisaged Russia's assistance in the formation of individual armed forces, both in terms of training, equipment and military expertise. Of particular relevance were the December 1995 and May 1996 agreements with Belarus, which envisaged joint defence policy planning and the development of Russian and Belarussian armed forces on the basis of common principles. The 28 March 1994 agreement with Kazakhstan was also quite significant, given that it envisaged the formation of integrated military units, which would operate under joint command, and would be assigned to joint defensive missions. A subsequent agreement reached with Kazakhstan on 20 January 1995 expanded co-operation further. Russia and Kazakhstan agreed to work towards the formation of united armed forces on the principles of joint planning and training, and to use military installations located on the territory of the other side in the interest of mutual security. Although military facilities were used jointly, joint Russian-Kazakh units were never set up during the period under examination.⁴⁹² Various agreements were also signed on military-technical co-operation and co-operation in the field of defence production, with Belarus, Kazakhstan, Turkmenistan, Georgia, Ukraine and Moldova. Although deep bilateral military co-operation developed between Russia and most CIS states, the most far-reaching agreements, in particular those signed with Belarus and Kazakhstan, were never

⁴⁹⁰ Ilya Bulavinov, 'CIS Decides to Wait a While on Unifying against NATO', *Kommersant-daily*, 3 November 1995, p. 3, in *CDPSP*, XLVII, 45, 1995, p.21.

⁴⁹¹ Alexander A. Sergounin, *On the Way to Integration: Military Technical Cooperation between the CIS member-states*, Nizhnii Novogorod, 1996, pp.25-37; Vladimir Kuleshov, 'Sozdaiutsya sovместnye voiska Turkmenistana i Rossii', *Izvestiya*, 9 June 1992, p.1; 'Dogovor mezhdru Rossiiskoi Federatsiei i Respublikoi Gruzii o druzhbe, dobrososedsvte i sotrudnichestve', *Svobodnaya Gruzii*, 4 February 1994, p.1.

⁴⁹² 'Stages of Military Cooperation', *MNB*, February 1995, 2, p. 6.

implemented.⁴⁹³ Moreover, strategically vital countries such as Ukraine, Azerbaijan, as well as Uzbekistan and Moldova refused to develop tight military co-operation with Russia. Nevertheless, Russia managed to keep an important military presence in these last two countries. Russia delayed almost indefinitely the withdrawal of the 14th Army located in Transnistria, and succeeded in keeping its share of the Black Sea Fleet stationed in Ukraine.⁴⁹⁴ In addition, it retained two military bases in Armenia, at Gyumri and Yerevan, and three military bases in Georgia at Batumi, Alkhalkalaki and Viziani, as well as the naval bases of Poti and Ochamchira.⁴⁹⁵ The record of bilateral military co-operation therefore, remains mixed.

7. Conclusion

During 1992-1996 Russian leaders attempted, to a great extent, to preserve the CIS states under Russia's military sphere of influence. These efforts resulted from a concept of security, well-embedded in Russia's strategic thinking, which viewed the entire post-Soviet space as essential for Russia's security, as a sort of buffer zone dividing Russia from the 'traditional' abroad. To this had to be added the presence of valuable military assets, which were coveted by Russia, and which were located in the former Soviet states. However Russia was faced in its enterprise with a radically different geo-political environment, reflected in the presence of fourteen new independent states eager to distance themselves from Russia, the former 'imperial centre', and avid to create their own armed forces, seen as an essential attribute of their newly acquired sovereignty. Unable to persuade the CIS states to preserve a united military strategic space, and forced by its own financial difficulties to substantially reduce its military presence in the former Soviet states, Russia had to face the disintegration of the post-Soviet military space during 1992-1993. These developments significantly reduced the effectiveness and combat-capability of Russia's military machine, and prompted the Russian Defence Ministry to conduct efforts during 1994-1996 aimed at re-establishing a united military-strategic space, through a network of bilateral and multilateral agreements.

⁴⁹³ *ibid.*

⁴⁹⁴ Final agreement on the fate of the Black Sea Fleet vessels, infrastructure and basing facilities was only reached in May 1997.

⁴⁹⁵ 'Dogovor mezhdu Rossiiskoi Federatsiei i Respublikoi Gruzii o družbe, dobrososedstve i sotrudnichestve', p.1; Ilya Bulavinov, 'Results of Pavel Grachev's Visit to Transcaucasia', *Kommersant-daily*, 25 March 1995 p. 4, in *CDPSP*, XLVII, 1995, 12, p.22; Ilya Bulavinov, 'Russian-Armenian Military Treaty: Russia Increases its Military Presence in the Transcaucasus', *Kommersant-daily*, 17 March 1995, p. 1, in *CDPSP*, XLVII, 1995, 11, p.22.

By early 1996, Russian leaders had managed, on the one hand, to give new emphasis to collective security through the adoption of a Collective Security Concept which envisaged the creation of regional coalition forces. On the other hand, they managed to provide substantial military assistance to the CIS states for the formation of their own armed forces, to partially restore the former Soviet air defence system, to patrol most of the external CIS borders with Russian troops, to preserve military bases in Georgia and Armenia, and to keep the peace in most of the 'hot spots' of the former Soviet Union. In other words, it seemed as though Russia had been able to re-create a military sphere of influence within the CIS space. However, Russia's 'informal empire building' remained only partially successful. Many of the multilateral agreements remained un-implemented, especially those regarding the creation of regional forces under joint operational control. Moreover, strategically vital countries - Ukraine, Azerbaijan, the Baltic states, and Moldova - remained outside of Russia's reach. The Baltic states were not members of the CIS and had signed no military agreements with Russia, except for Latvia, which in 1994 agreed to a four-year Russian lease of the Skrunda radar station. Ukraine and Moldova were not members of the Collective Security Treaty, refused to allow the presence of Russian troops patrolling their borders, and opposed Russia's military bases - the presence of the 14th Army and the Black Sea Fleet remained, at least in theory, temporary. Azerbaijan had signed the CST but remained adamant in its opposition to any Russian military presence in the country and refused to have Russian forces patrolling its external CIS borders. Of all these countries, only Ukraine agreed on the joint use of its air defence capabilities with Russia. The conclusion can therefore be drawn that Russia managed to restore only an imperfect military neo-empire in the CIS.

VI. General Conclusion

During the period under examination (January 1992 - July 1996), the CIS did not develop into a robust and performing organisation, similar to the European Union, NATO or the former Warsaw Treaty Organisation. Russian leaders did not succeed in establishing an effective inter-state association with co-ordinating bodies, a single economic space, a single currency, a single strategy for market reforms, a co-ordinated tax and customs policy, common citizenship, joint armed forces, easily crossed internal borders, and joint control over external frontiers. A vast amount of agreements - over 500 - were signed, but only

very few were ever implemented in a practical way. Countless efforts were made to provide the CIS with enforcement mechanisms which would ensure that agreements would be respected, but with little success. However, this does not mean that Russian leaders relinquished efforts aimed at deepening political, military and economic integration among the CIS states. In the military sphere, Russia managed to develop very tight co-operation with the CIS states, especially at bilateral level, it provided significant assistance to CIS states for the formation of their own armed forces, and succeeded in jointly patrolling most of the external CIS borders. Russia was also able to partially restore the old air defence system, and to impose the peace in most of the 'hot-spots' of the former Soviet space with its own troops. In the economic sphere, Russia conducted major efforts aimed at developing trade among the CIS states and preserving a single currency during 1992-1993. Although the single market eventually disintegrated and the ruble zone collapsed in the Autumn of 1993, Russia managed to set up a customs union with a restricted group of CIS states in January 1995 (Belarus and Kazakhstan, later joined by Kyrgyzstan). Very ambitious integration projects were signed with Belarus, and the other partners of the customs union in the Spring of 1996, but diverse economic developments and reduced financial resources made their proper implementation almost impossible. Russia's dominant economic position as the main trading partner, however, allowed it to keep these states dependent on Russia.

Although this record might suggest that Russia attempted and managed, to a certain extent, to restore a 'sphere of influence' or 'informal empire' in the CIS, a close examination of the topic reveals a different picture. First, Russian leaders did not pursue a coherent and co-ordinated strategy of empire-building in the CIS, although their rhetoric might at times suggest such a policy. On the contrary, Russia's CIS policies varied throughout the period under examination, depending on domestic political developments and Russia's financial capabilities. Whereas in 1991-1992 disintegration tendencies predominated, by 1993 efforts were again conducted by both Russia and some of the other CIS states to reintegrate. Second, Russia's policies were much more restrained than is frequently assumed, especially in the economic sphere, and often reflected Russia's legitimate concern of managing the transition towards the development of truly independent states within the post-Soviet space. Third, major co-operation and integration agreements were reached in the military sphere, particularly at bilateral level, which resulted in Russia partially restoring its military influence over the CIS states. However, Russia's successes were often offset by lack of implementation. Furthermore, Russia's policies were often limited

by the CIS states themselves, and by Russia's inability and unwillingness to impose its will and prevent the CIS states' diversification. Moreover, Russia did not want to pay the financial cost of military integration, and the Russian Defence Ministry feared supranational control.

Fourth, Russia's successes in the sphere of economic integration were much less significant than in the military field. Although important agreements were signed (Economic Union, Customs Union, Free Trade Area, Quadrilateral Agreement, Community of Sovereign States) a single economic space never materialised, and intra-CIS trade never recovered, remaining far behind the pre-1991 figures. This is to be explained by the reluctance of Russia to provide the necessary financial investments required, by the reticence of CIS states to have their economic policies determined by Russia, and 'last but not least' by the unwillingness of those responsible for economic policies in Russia to sacrifice macro-economic stabilisation and the benefits of economic reform for the sake of restoring an economic sphere of influence. As opposed to the Ministry of Defence, which saw the CIS as essential for the fulfilment of Russia's own security interests, the Prime Minister and the Russian Finance and Economics Ministries, in charge of economic policies, did not necessarily see Russia's economic success through CIS economic integration. They tended to give priority to economic reform in Russia first. Only after Russia succeeded in implementing economic reforms at home could deeper CIS integration proceed. The support provided for a ruble zone and for a single economic space during 1991-1992, was mainly determined by a decision to manage the transition to the creation of independently economic states. The CIS therefore did not become an area where Russia tried to re-create an informal economic empire, in spite of the fact that most CIS states remained dependent on trade from Russia. Russia itself increasingly diversified its trade relations outside the CIS, giving priority to trade with West, and focused its efforts in obtaining access to markets and resources in the CIS area. However it did not prevent the diversification of those states outside of Russia.

The CIS also proved to be quite unsuccessful as a channel for Russia's influence in the political sphere. Many common political bodies were set up, but none was granted supra-national powers and therefore very little was achieved in terms of transforming the CIS into a robust political organisation where Russia would be able to play a dominant role. Moreover, doubts remained as to Russia's real desire to actually transform the CIS into a supra-national organisation. Russian leaders remained deeply concerned that supra-

bases, joint border-protection, or within the context of peacekeeping operations, and thus restore an informal empire in those countries; or whether, instead, Russia's operations resulted from a reaction to events on the ground, and followed primarily the objective of putting an end to violence. The weak and fragmented character of the Russian state and the fragility of the country's new political system, however, might have allowed for incoherence and confusion, and the absence of a clear pattern of behaviour, as far as involvement in the conflict-ridden areas is concerned.⁴⁹⁷ The chapter will address this issue in order to determine whether there is enough evidence to sustain the neo-imperialist argument completely.

The chapter will also examine Russia's involvement in the negotiating process, in order to determine whether Russia tried to reach a settlement which would suit its own interests at the expense of those of the belligerent parties, or whether instead Russia was mainly concerned with bringing the parties closer to a settlement. In other words, it will examine whether Russia tried to use the negotiations as a means of perpetuating its influence over the regions affected by war, or whether, instead, Russia was primarily interested in bringing about a peaceful settlement of the conflicts. This chapter will also ask whether Russia proved willing to integrate foreign actors into the negotiations and the peacekeeping activities; or whether, instead, Russia tried to displace regional or international actors from the negotiations, opposed the sending of non-CIS peacekeepers, and instead, pressed for the introduction of Russian-dominated peacekeeping forces. Opposition to the participation of international organisations and regional players in the negotiations and in peacekeeping

⁴⁹⁷ Several authors have highlighted the inconsistent and ambivalent character of Russia's policies in the Abkhaz and Nagorno-Karabagh conflicts in particular, and in Transcaucasia in general, namely Pavel Baev, Edward Ozhiganov, Edmund Herzig, Alexei Zverev, Dmitri Danilov and Dmitri Trenin. (Pavel Baev, *Russia's Policies in the Caucasus*, p.4; Edward Ozhiganov, 'The Republic of Georgia: Conflict in Abkhazia and South Ossetia', in *Managing Conflict in the Former Soviet Union*, p.390-392; Edmund Herzig, *The New Caucasus: Armenia, Azerbaijan and Georgia*, The Royal Institute of International Affairs, London, 1999, p.106; Alexei Zverev, 'Ethnic conflicts in the Caucasus. 1988-1994', Dmitri Trenin, 'Russia's Security Interests and Policies in the Caucasus Region', and Dmitri Danilov, 'Russia's search for an International Mandate in Transcaucasia', in *Contested Borders in the Caucasus*, ed. Bruno Coppieters, Brussels, 1996, pp.51, 98-101, 141). Zverev stressed the confrontation between the Russian MOD and MFA in policy-making in Abkhazia, whereas Ozhiganov argued that the attitude of the Russian Federation toward the Georgian-Abkhazian conflict reflected the fluctuations of internal policy struggles and the complex mix of actors on the Russian political scene. Dmitri Danilov, in turn, argued that the inconsistencies of Russia's policies in Transcaucasia reflected a confrontation between two different political currents in Russia itself. One current favoured the restoration of Russia's influence over the near abroad by all possible means, including force, whereas the other argued in favour of a retreat from the region. Russia's policies in Transcaucasia fell between these two lines.

operations would strongly imply neo-imperialist behaviour, and is worth looking at as an important indicator. But it can be no more than an indication, however, since, readiness to involve foreign actors in the negotiations or peace operations does not necessarily indicate the absence of a neo-imperialist strategy. The presence of international mediation could actually provide a cover to Russia's own more assertive behaviour. Similarly, a willingness to accept international monitoring and approval of peacekeeping operations in the FSS does not necessarily reflect a non-imperialist policy. Although institutional backing and international monitoring of peacekeeping operations can certainly provide a constraint to imperialist behaviour, they might also grant additional legitimacy to a neo-imperialist presence, thus making it more effective. Russia's efforts to obtain an international mandate for its operations can be interpreted under this light. Likewise, the conduct of peacekeeping operations not in accordance with the standard principles of international law might attest to neo-imperialist behaviour, especially if such operations involve enforcement actions and a high level of force, and if there is a lack of impartiality and dubious consent from the warring parties. However, a more reliable indication in attempts to determine neo-imperialist behaviour is the question of intent. Where this can be clearly demonstrated, the hypothesis is strong. What is most important, in other words, is to determine whether the operations are seen as fulfilling a major strategic role and thus enhancing Russia's influence in the region, or whether they are mainly intended as an instrument for preventing a resumption of violence.

I. Russia's Policy Orientations Towards Conflicts in the Former Soviet Space

During the winter of 1991-1992, the Russian Foreign Ministry (MFA) devoted very little attention to the violent ethnic conflicts that erupted in the republics of the former Soviet Union, except for the short and unsuccessful mediation efforts conducted by Foreign Minister Kozyrev to solve the dispute over Nagorno-Karabagh in mid-February 1992. Russian foreign policy priorities were focused on developing relations with Western countries and transforming the previous confrontation into real partnership. Although at this early stage, relations with the FSS were certainly not neglected, as is often asserted, most of Russia's foreign policy activity towards the FSS was centred on preserving a common economic and military space, and dividing the former Soviet assets. But as conflicts in the near abroad escalated and violence intensified in the spring of 1992, especially in South Ossetia, Moldova and Nagorno-Karabagh, the Russian Foreign

Ministry turned its attention to the affected regions, and offered its mediation services. Endowed with a strong 'anti-imperialist' view, the Foreign Ministry favoured the resolution of these conflicts through peaceful negotiations, and vehemently opposed the use of force to restore peace. Russian officials in the Foreign Ministry, as well as high-ranking CIS military officers, including CIS Commander-in-Chief Marshal Evgeny Shaposhnikov, sought to disengage CIS troops from the zones of tension.⁴⁹⁸ 'The resolution of these conflicts is complex, slow and should not be carried out by forceful means, as some in Russia would like,' Kozyrev remarked in an interview with *Nezavisimaya gazeta*, on 1 April 1992,⁴⁹⁹ and categorically ruled out the change of international borders by force. 'If Russia admits this right to itself, then other countries will insist on doing likewise,' he noted.⁵⁰⁰ However, many Russian nationalists such as Vice-President Aleksandr Rutskoi and Supreme Soviet Chairman Ruslan Khasbulatov believed instead that Russia had the duty to defend the rights of the Russian-speaking population living abroad, if necessary by force, especially when Russians found themselves entangled in ethnic conflicts. But Kozyrev insisted that force had to be used only in accordance with international law, in other words, within the framework of UN peacekeeping operations, and with the support of the UN Security Council.⁵⁰¹ Kozyrev's views reflected those of President Yeltsin, who in an interview with *Komsomol'skaya pravda*, on 27 May 1992, strictly ruled out the 'violent use of troops' to protect ethnic Russians and to solve ethnic conflicts. He made it clear that Russia should avoid interfering in the internal affairs of another state.⁵⁰²

These views were not shared by the Russian Defence Ministry. As conflicts escalated in the FSS in the Spring of 1992, and local Russian armed forces found themselves involved in the conflict, often against their own will, the Russian Defence Ministry increasingly supported the intervention of Russian forces to bring violence to an end. The Russian military did not intend to perpetuate its presence in the former Soviet space for ever, Grachev argued. However, Russia could not just stand idly by while fighting erupted along its borders.⁵⁰³ Russia's participation, according to Grachev, followed the legitimate state

⁴⁹⁸ Radio Moscow, 25 February 1992, in *FBIS-SOV-92-038*, 26 February 1992, p.17.

⁴⁹⁹ Andrei Kozyrev, 'Soiuz ostavil Rossii plokhoe vneshnepoliticheskoe nasledstvo', *Nezavisimaya gazeta*, 1 April 1992, p.3.

⁵⁰⁰ *ibid.*

⁵⁰¹ *ibid.* Similar views expressed by Kozyrev in an interview with *Izvestiya*, 'Andrei Kozyrev: "Partiya voyny nastupaet - i v Moldove, i v Gruzii, i v Rossii"', *Izvestiya*, 30 June 1992, p.2.

⁵⁰² Interview with Yeltsin: 'Ya ne skryvaiu trudnostei i khochu, chtoby narod eto ponimal', *Komsomol'skaya pravda*, 27 May 1992, p.2.

⁵⁰³ Nikolai Burbyga and Albert Plutnik, 'Pavel Grachev: Rossiiskuiu armiiu, po suti, nado sozdavat' s nulya', *Izvestiya*, 1 June 1992, p.1.

interest of countering instability along Russia's southern borders. Grachev's views coincided with those of the former Soviet General Staff, as reflected in the draft Military Doctrine published in May 1992. The Doctrine identified territorial, religious and ethnic disputes as the new threats to Russia's security and called for active military intervention if Russian mediation efforts failed.⁵⁰⁴ The document expressed the fear that 'disputes might give rise to armed conflicts and wars directly touching upon Russia's security interests.'⁵⁰⁵ However, the Doctrine made no reference to the need to act in accordance with international law and on the basis of a UN or CIS mandate. Moreover, CIS Commander in Chief Shaposhnikov and Russian first deputy chief of the General Staff, Mikhail Kolesnikov openly expressed their opposition to the involvement of foreign, in particular NATO troops, even under UN mandate, as peacekeepers in the CIS, thus attesting to a clear neo-imperialist posture. Kolesnikov was particularly concerned that NATO might intervene in the former Soviet space, 'under the pretext of guaranteeing 'international control' over the nuclear potential of the former USSR.'⁵⁰⁶ Shaposhnikov rejected the introduction of UN peacekeeping forces in the CIS on the grounds that the CIS was an area where disputes were resolved 'internally'. 'I am categorically opposed. I think the CIS is quite capable of dealing with all issues that arise within the CIS. Are we to allow foreign peacemakers make peace between us?' Shaposhnikov replied to a journalist when asked whether the UN would be requested to participate in settling the Transdnierster and Karabagh conflicts.⁵⁰⁷ These views very much reflected the overall position of the military which tended to regard the CIS as an area of exclusive Russian military influence, and as essential for Russia's security.⁵⁰⁸ It can therefore be concluded that although the CIS and Russian military were acting according to what they considered were Russia's legitimate state interests, they also adopted a neo-imperialist attitude.

The Defence Ministry's active involvement in stopping the violence, as well as the controversial participation of local officers in support for secessionist movements, brought the military into direct confrontation with the Foreign Ministry. Kozyrev talked openly about the existence of a 'party of war', eager to support secessionist movements and ready

⁵⁰⁴ *Voennaya Mysl'*, Special Edition, May 1992.

⁵⁰⁵ *ibid.*

⁵⁰⁶ Pavel Felgengauer, 'Voennye ozhidaiut vmeshatel'stva zapada', *Nezavisimaya gazeta*, 1 August, 1992, p.1.

⁵⁰⁷ 'Russia' TV Channel, 11 July 1992, in *BBC SWB* SU/1431 C4/1, 13 July 1993. Although Shaposhnikov was speaking in a CIS capacity, his views coincided with those of the Russian general staff.

⁵⁰⁸ See Chapter 2.

to use force to solve ethnic conflicts, before diplomatic channels were exhausted. However, Kozyrev's diplomatic efforts failed to settle the conflicts peacefully. As conflicts in South Ossetia and Transdniestria turned into bloody fighting in the Summer of 1992, provoking victims also among the local ethnic Russian population, the Foreign Ministry's diplomatic approach became the subject of strong criticism from both nationalists and previous allies in the democratic camp.⁵⁰⁹ In August 1992, the Council for Defence and Foreign Policy, in its document *A Strategy for Russia*, identified inter-ethnic conflicts in the periphery of the Russian Federation as a major threat to Russia's security, and called for an active policy, which should envisage the use of force, to bring violence to an end. The document expressed concern over the potential escalation of 'low-intensity conflicts', leading to local wars involving Russia. Russia should not exclude the use of force in order to stop the violence, even if such actions were not sanctioned by the international community, the authors argued. Russia carried a special responsibility for handling developments in the former Soviet space, and this justified its intervention.⁵¹⁰ Similar views were expressed by Political Scientist Andranik Migranyan and Supreme Soviet member Evgenii Ambartsumov, who insisted that Russia should strive to achieve recognition from the world community for its role as the political and military guarantor of stability in the former Soviet space.⁵¹¹

In view of these attacks and confronted with a growing escalation of violence beyond Russia's borders, the Foreign Ministry and the Russian President himself began conducting more assertive mediation efforts which, together with the increased military involvement of the Russian military, eventually resulted in a cessation of violence and the introduction of Russian peacekeepers in Transdniestria and South Ossetia. The Foreign Ministry's growing support for a pro-active policy was reflected in Kozyrev's *Draft Foreign Policy Guidelines*, presented to the Russian parliament in December 1992.⁵¹² The document envisaged the 'carefully considered application of economic and military force' to protect the lives of Russians threatened by ethnic conflicts in the near abroad. However, according to the Foreign Minister, these practices had to be carried out 'not in the Yugoslav version,

⁵⁰⁹ Sergei Stankevich, 'Yavlenie derzhavy', *Rossiiskaya gazeta*, 23 June 1992, p.1.

⁵¹⁰ 'Strategiya dlya Rossii: Tezisy Soveta po Vneshnei i Oboronnoi Politike', (hereafter, 'Strategiya dlya Rossii'), *Nezavisimaya gazeta*, 19 August 1992, p. 4. For more details on the document see Chapter 1.

⁵¹¹ Andranik Migranyan, 'Podlinnye i mnimiye orientiry vo vneshnei politike', *Rossiiskaya gazeta*, 4 August 1992 p.4, Evgenii Ambartsumov, 'Sami sebya sagnali v ugol, samim iz nego i vykhodit', *Rossiiskaya gazeta*, 13 April 1992, p.7.

⁵¹² For details of the document see Chapter 1.

but within the framework of international law.⁵¹³ The CIS was regarded as the only institution capable of settling and preventing conflicts in the CIS space. However, the Foreign Ministry showed a readiness to involve the UN and the CSCE in mediation activities in the FSS, the former being actively involved in Abkhazia and the latter in Nagorno-Karabagh, attesting in this case to the absence of a clearly designed neo-imperialist policy.

In late February 1993, a major turning point in Russian foreign policy occurred when, speaking at the Civic Union Forum, President Yeltsin made clear Russia's special responsibility in putting an end to violence in the former Soviet space, and demanded that the UN grant Russia special powers to become the guarantor of peace and stability in the regions of the former USSR.⁵¹⁴ Although such assertive language was primarily motivated by Yeltsin's desire to win the support of centrist deputies in the forthcoming VIII Congress of People's Deputies, it indicated a change of policy within the Russian leadership. In the Spring of 1993, the Russian military became directly involved in Abkhazia, Russia developed close military ties with the Rakhmonov regime in Tajikistan, and in the Summer of 1993, the MFA conducted active diplomatic efforts to bring about a settlement in Nagorno-Karabagh, by appointing Vladimir Kazimirov as special envoy to the region. Moreover, Russia also tried to create an effective peacekeeping force within the CIS and to obtain UN and CSCE mandate for its operations.⁵¹⁵ The *Basic Provisions of the Russian Federation's Foreign Policy Concept*, which was approved in April 1993, and which identified armed conflicts in states adjacent to the Russian Federation as a major threat to Russia's security, attached particular importance to the development and improvement of a peacekeeping mechanism within the CIS framework.⁵¹⁶ The Russian Foreign Ministry also engaged in active diplomatic efforts aimed at obtaining UN and CSCE mandates for Russian peacekeeping operations in the CIS. In March 1993, the Russian government presented a document to the UN which discussed Moscow's role in peacekeeping operations in the former Soviet Union, as well as a draft declaration which claimed that the UN should use regional organisations such as the CIS to manage peacekeeping operations.

⁵¹³ 'Vneshnyaya politika Rossii: MID predlagaet i otstaivaet', *Rossiiskie vesti*, 3 December 1992, p.2.

⁵¹⁴ Russian Television, 28 February, 1993, in *FBIS-SOV-93-038*, 1 March 1993, p.21.

⁵¹⁵ In mid March 1993, in an appeal to CIS leaders, Yeltsin expressed the need to create effective instruments, within the CIS framework, capable of eliminating existing and potential 'hot spots' in the CIS. ('El'tsin obratilsya k lideram SNG', *Nezavisimaya gazeta*, 18 March 1993, p.1).

⁵¹⁶ Vladislav Chernov, 'Natsional'nye interesy Rossii i ugrozy dlya ee bezopasnosti', *Nezavisimaya gazeta*, 29 April 1993, p.1,3.

Russia also tried to have the CIS recognised internationally as the authoritative organisation responsible for carrying out peacekeeping operations on CIS territory.⁵¹⁷ Furthermore, in the summer of 1993, Kozyrev asked the CSCE to grant Russian forces CSCE status.⁵¹⁸ However, Russian diplomats failed both to obtain either a UN or CSCE mandate for Russia's peacekeeping operations in the CIS, and to have the CIS recognised as the sole organisation responsible for CIS peacekeeping. In view of these results, the Russian Foreign and Defence Ministries began focusing primarily on obtaining UN financial support for Russia's peacekeeping operations, and tried to downplay the importance of an international mandate. They insisted that they regarded the UN or CSCE mandate as adding to the efficiency of Russian operations rather than to their legitimacy.⁵¹⁹ Russian diplomats insisted that Russia did not need international legitimacy because its peacekeeping operations were being conducted both at the request of the parties and with a CIS mandate, on the basis of Chapter VIII of the UN Charter which proclaimed the legitimacy of the regional organisations to maintain peace and stability in their areas.⁵²⁰ However, only the Tajik and Abkhaz operations had a CIS mandate.

The Summer of 1993 saw a substantial escalation of military violence in former Soviet space. This led to the increased involvement of Russian peacekeeping forces in Tajikistan and the intensification of mediation efforts in Abkhazia and Nagorno-Karabagh. By the Autumn of 1993 keeping the peace in the hot-spots of the former Soviet Union had become the first priority of Russia's foreign policy. In his speech to the UN General Assembly, Kozyrev expressed concern over the eruption of bloody conflicts in the former Soviet Union and stated clearly Russia's particular responsibility for maintaining peace in the area.⁵²¹ Conducting peacekeeping operations in the near abroad not only became the necessary response to solve conflicts in the near abroad, it also developed into the exclusive

⁵¹⁷ Lena Jonson, 'In Search of a Doctrine: Russian Interventionism in Conflicts in Its "Near Abroad"', *Low Intensity Conflict and Law Enforcement*, 5, Winter 1996, 3, p.448; Suzanne Crow, 'Russia Seeks Leadership in Regional Peacekeeping', *RFE/Research Report*, 9 April 1993, 15, p.29.

⁵¹⁸ Roy Allison, 'The Military Background and Context to Russian Peacekeeping', in *Peacekeeping and the Role of Russia in Eurasia*, eds. Lena Jonson and Clive Archer, Boulder, Co. and Oxford, 1996, p.10.

⁵¹⁹ 'Joint Statement by the Russian Foreign Ministry and Defence Ministry: Actions not Declarations are What is Needed', *Rossiiskie vesti*, 5 April 1994, p. 3, in *FBIS-SOV-94-065*, 5 April 1994, p.1.

⁵²⁰ Therese Raphael, Claudia Rosett, and Suzanne Crow, 'An Interview with Russian Foreign Minister Andrei Kozyrev', *RFE/RL Research Report*, 15 July 1994, p. 40; Vladimir Abarinov, 'Sergei Lavrov: "My budem dobivat'sya mezhdunarodnoi podderzhki nashikh mirotvorcheskikh operatsii"', *Segodnya*, 16 September 1993, p.1.

⁵²¹ ITAR-TASS News agency, 28 September 1993, in *BBC SWB SU/1807 B/3*, 1993.

prerogative of the Russian state. Writing in *Nezavisimaya gazeta* on 22 September 1993, Kozyrev mentioned Russia's historical duty to provide stability to the areas of the former Soviet Union. 'This is not a 'neo-imperialistic' space, he wrote, but a unique geopolitical one in which no one is going to keep the peace for Russia,' and added that 'owing to the close historical, political and cultural ties that bound the CIS countries together, Russia could not, nor did it have the moral right, to remain indifferent to their requests for help in ensuring peace.'⁵²² In a subsequent article in *Nezavisimaya gazeta*, on 13 October 1993, Kozyrev again expressed Russia's special responsibility for preserving the peace in the FSS, and noted that peacekeeping operations were aimed not only at stopping the violence but also at keeping Russia's influence in those areas, and at making sure that the vacuum created by the wars was not filled by 'hostile' powers.'⁵²³ Kozyrev recognised the important role played by the UN and the CSCE in resolution of these conflicts, but emphasised the leading role of Russia. 'It would be a mistake to ignore the role of the UN and the CSCE [in this sphere], but the other extreme would be to totally hand in this sphere into the hands of these organisations. This is an area of Russian interests. Moreover, the UN and the CSCE do not have today, either the strength, or the means to carry out these operations.'⁵²⁴

Russia's efforts to lead the peacekeeping operations were primarily intended to avoid Western, Turkish, or Iranian military intervention in the FSS, under the guise of peacekeeping.⁵²⁵ Russian peacekeeping operations, particularly in the Transcaucasus region, were increasingly conceived by Russian leaders, particularly by the Russian Defence Ministry, as fulfilling military-strategic aims and allowing for the preservation of a sphere of influence over the FSS. However, Russian peacekeeping efforts also reflected a genuine desire by the Russian government to bring peace to the unstable areas, and thus to protect Russia's own security interests, as well as an awareness that Russia alone was willing and capable of conducting such operations. As noted by President Yeltsin in his

⁵²² Andrei Kozyrev, 'Rossiya fakticheski v odnochku neset bremya real'nogo mirotvorchestva v konfliktakh po perimetru svoikh granits', *Nezavisimaya gazeta*, 22 September 1993, p.1.

⁵²³ Andrei Kozyrev, 'Demokratiya i mirotvorchestvo - dve storony odnoi medali', *Nezavisimaya gazeta*, 13 October 1993, p.1; Similar views were expressed by Andrei Kozyrev in an interview with *Izvestiya*: Maksim Yusin, 'Polgoda nazad Rutskoj skazal mne: "ya ikh nenavizhu, etikh krasno-korichnevykh"', *Izvestiya*, 8 October 1993, p.3.

⁵²⁴ Igor Rotar, 'Voennye dolzhny obladet' iskusstvom mirotvorchestva', *Nezavisimaya gazeta*, 24 November 1993, p.1-2.

⁵²⁵ Pavel Felgengauer, 'Voennye ozhidaiut vmeshatel'stva zapada', *Nezavisimaya gazeta*, 1 August, 1992, p.1; 'Speech by Shaposhnikov', Russia's Radio, 11 December 1992, in *BBC SWB*, SU/1563 C2/3, 14 December 1992.

speech to the Federation Council in February 1994, conflicts in the near abroad 'are a real threat to Russia's security, and no one, except Russia, is ready to carry the burden of peacemaking in the territory of the Former Soviet Union.'⁵²⁶ These views reflected the position of the Ministry of Defence (MOD), which had regularly advocated an active role in solving inter-ethnic conflicts. The *Basic Provisions of the Military Doctrine*, which were published in November 1993, identified local wars and armed conflicts in the direct proximity of the Russian borders as one of the main threats posed to Russian Federation. The doctrine foresaw the intervention of Russian armed forces 'to stop the hostilities at the earliest possible stage, in order to create the conditions for a peaceful settlement of the conflict, which would suit the interests of the Russian Federation.'⁵²⁷ However, reduced financial resources and the impact of the unsuccessful Chechen campaign, undermined the sustainability of ongoing operations during 1994-1996.⁵²⁸

Russia's active mediation efforts coupled with its assertive peacekeeping operations resulted in the introduction of extremely fragile, but nevertheless enduring, cease-fires in all ethnic conflicts in the FSS, except for Tajikistan. Russia's involvement, although initially most probably not intended to create a neo-empire over the FSS, eventually resulted in Russia partially restoring a sphere of influence over those FSS affected by war. The ambiguous character of Russian peacekeeping operations resulted from the modalities of such operations, and their dissimilarity with both traditional and 'second generation' UN peacekeeping operations, such as the United Nations Protection Force in Yugoslavia (UNPROFOR) and the second United Nations Operation in Somalia (UNOSOM II).⁵²⁹ The initial Foreign Ministry concept of peacekeeping, and the first CIS peacekeeping

⁵²⁶ 'Strategicheskaya tsel' - sozdat' protsvetaiushchiiu stranu', *Rossiiskaya gazeta*, 25 February 1994, p.5

⁵²⁷ 'Osnovnye polozheniya voennoi doktriny Rossiiskoi Federatsii', *Izvestiya*, 18 November 1993, p.3.

⁵²⁸ Pavel Baev, *The Russian Army in a Time of Troubles*, PRIO, London, 1996, p.109.

⁵²⁹ Although UNOSOM II was entrusted with enforcement powers under Chapter VII to ensure that the process of disarmament was 'continuous and irreversible' - the mandate permitted 'forceful action' to protect UN facilities, disarm organised factions, seize small arms and assume control of all heavy weapons - its operations were carefully monitored by the UN. Similarly, although UNPROFOR was entrusted in February 1992 with the use of force, in order to 'create the conditions of peace and security required for the negotiation of an overall settlement of the Yugoslav crisis', and its mandate was further expanded to include such aspects as delivering humanitarian assistance and protecting Sarajevo airport, its actions were still not as assertive as envisaged by the mandate, at least not until 1995, when the rapid reaction force was introduced as part of UNPROFOR. (Spyros Economides and Paul Taylor, 'Former Yugoslavia', Ioan Lewis and James Mayall, 'Somalia', in *The New Interventionism 1991-1994*, ed. James Mayall, Cambridge, 1996, pp. 66-78 and 106-116 ; Mats R. Berdal, *Whither UN Peacekeeping?*, Adelphi Paper, no. 281, 1993, pp.21-39.)

documents adopted in March and July 1992, presented peacekeeping operations in terms very similar to international practice. Forces were to be established for a limited period of time upon request of the belligerent parties. Peacekeepers were to be deployed only after a cease-fire agreement was reached and they were not permitted to participate in combat operations. Force could only be used for self-defence, and peacekeepers were required to stay impartial and neutral. However, events on the ground, particularly in Tajikistan, led to a much more assertive behaviour, which was reflected in a much broader mandate granted to peacekeepers. The *Agreement on Collective Peacekeeping forces* of 24 September 1993, which was designed for the Tajik operation, although no reference to a particular conflict was made in the document, envisaged that the peacekeeping forces commander would implement the CIS heads of states' decisions on the use of force, conduct negotiations with the belligerent parties and independently take decisions on the conduct of extraordinary situations. The possible use of force, without prior authorisation was implied in an extraordinary situation. In other words, the mandate and the rules of engagement were significantly broad.

The 1996 CIS documents, however, indicated again a certain restraint in the operations. They did not imply a return to traditional UN peacekeeping, but instead very much resembled 'second generation' UN peacekeeping. Peacekeeping operations were referred to as 'operatsii po podderzhaniiu mira', and were expected to take place after a cease-fire was reached. It was clearly noted that operations would cover a limited time period and would be neutral and unbiased. Forces would not take part in the hostilities but would use above all peaceful means to assist in the creation of conditions for the holding of negotiations. Enforced action required UN approval. However, military means to settle disputes were envisaged and the use of force was also considered, primarily within the sphere of self-defence. Nevertheless, the documents contained many ambiguities, and did not really reflect the conduct of operations on the ground, especially if the Tajik case is considered. Consequently, Russia's more assertive peacekeeping operations, usually referred to as '*mirotvorchie operatsii*' (peace-creation) instead of '*operatsii po podderzhaniiu mira*' (operations in support of peace), often resembled low-intensity conflicts, rather than traditional peacekeeping operations.⁵³⁰ Russian 'peacekeepers' were ready forcefully to

⁵³⁰ 'Kontseptsiya predotvrashcheniya i uregulirovaniya konfliktov na territorii gosudarstv-uchastnikov SNG', (hereafter, 'Kontseptsiya') and 'Polozhenie o Kollektivnykh silakh po podderzhaniiu mira v SNG' (hereafter 'Polozhenie'), *Diplomaticheskii vestnik*, February 1996, 2, pp.38-42 and 47-52; 'Soglashenie o Gruppakh voennykh nabludatelei i Kollektivnykh silakh po podderzhaniiu mira v SNG', 20 March 1992, in *Sodruzhestvo, Informatsionnyi Vestnik Soveta*

intervene in a conflict and separate the opposing sides before a cease-fire had come into effect. Consequently, peacekeeping operations were characterised by the potential use of a high level of forces, the pre-eminence of Russian forces within multinational operations, the lack of impartiality, and the absence of any constraints besides the means available and the resolve of the command in Moscow.⁵³¹

The almost total absence of political control over the operations resulted in military goals - putting an end to violence - taking precedence over political aims - reaching a negotiated settlement. Peace-keeping operations often froze the situation in the ground, allowing secessionist regions to almost totally fulfil their goals. As a result, operations lost impartiality, given that they could easily lead to a 'legalised' form of intervention or occupation, especially given the dubious consent of the parties to the introduction of peacekeepers.⁵³² Most peacekeeping operations, Abkhazia probably being the only exception, were conducted in the absence of a clearly specified mandate from the international community, thus raising the issue of their legitimacy. The CIS, therefore, was seen as instrumental in legalising at least some of Russia's interventions, in Abkhazia and in Tajikistan. Yeltsin's *Strategic Course of Russia towards the CIS*, approved in September 1995, made it clear that efforts had to be directed towards ensuring that peacekeeping activity became the fruit of collective efforts by CIS member states.⁵³³ The January 1996 CIS peacekeeping documents *Concept on the Prevention and Settlement of Conflicts in the Territory of the CIS Member States* and the *Status of the CIS Collective Peacekeeping Forces* were aimed at developing a legitimate basis for CIS peacekeeping, and at the same time, keep as much power as possible in the CIS. The documents gave the CIS responsibility and authority for maintaining peace on the CIS territory by referring to Chapter VIII of the UN Charter on regional organisations.⁵³⁴ 'Peace enforcement operations' - those with no consent by the parties - however were left to the domain of the

Glav Gosudarstv i Soveta Glav Pravitelstv SNG (hereafter *Sodruzhestvo*), 1992, 4, pp.9-10; 'Soglasenie o Kollektivnykh mirotvorcheskikh silakh i sovmetnykh merakh po ikh materialno-tekhnicheskomu obespecheniiu', 24 September 1993, *Sodruzhestvo*, 1993, 7, pp. 54-58.

⁵³¹ A. Raevsky and I.N. Vorobev, *Russian Approaches to Peacekeeping Operations*, UNIDIR Research Paper, 28, United Nations, New York and Geneva, 1994, p.6; Andrei Kozyrev, 'OON: tregovi i nadezhdy mira', *Rossiiskaya gazeta*, 30 October 1993, p.1.

⁵³² Pavel Baev, *The Russian Army in a Time of Troubles*, p.135.

⁵³³ *Strategicheskii Kurs Rossii s Gosudarstvami - Uchastnikami Sodruzhestva Nezavisimykh Gosudarstv*, (hereafter, *Strategicheskii Kurs*), 14 September 1995, p.3.

⁵³⁴ 'Kontsepsiya', p.39; 'Polozhenie' pp.40-41.

UN Security Council.⁵³⁵ Despite Russia's efforts to give peacekeeping operations a CIS mandate, their legitimacy and neutrality remained under question.

II. Moldova and the Transdniester Separatists

The Transdniester struggle for independence from Moldova, which developed into violent clashes in the Spring of 1992, represented a serious challenge to the Russian authorities.⁵³⁶ For the first time after the collapse of the Soviet Union, Russian and Russian-speaking minorities became the main parties to a conflict which resulted in major losses of lives and which entailed an alleged violation of Russian civic and cultural rights. Russian politicians and analysts tended to interpret the conflict as a struggle of the Russian-speaking minority in Transdniester against the 'Romanising' policies of the Moldovan authorities in Kishinev, on the basis of claims made by Transdniester leaders. Russian Presidential Advisor Sergei Stankevich talked about Russian minorities being the victims of Moldova's ethnocratic regime, and Political Scientist Andranik Migranyan referred to the ethnocultural origins of the crisis as reflected in Kishinev's attempts to incorporate the Slavic populations of Transdniester into Romania.⁵³⁷ However, as Charles King clearly demonstrated, the conflict was less the result of legitimate ethnic grievances and more the product of a long-term contest between two different political elites, one represented by a new generation of non-Transdniestrian cadres replacing another, the Transdniester nomenklatura, in the republic's transition from Soviet republic to independent state.⁵³⁸

⁵³⁵ *ibid.*

⁵³⁶ The most relevant literature on the Transdniester conflict falls into several categories: Anneli Ute Gabanyi supported the neo-imperialist argument by claiming that some Russian nationalist officers with experience in Afghanistan, in alliance with the Military-Industrial Complex and Communist Party members in Parliament, tried to restore the old Soviet system by exacerbating the Transdniester conflict. (Anneli Ute Gabanyi, 'Moldova between Russia, Romania and Ukraine', *Aussenpolitik*, 44, 1993, 1, pp.98-107.) Charles King, instead took a more moderate view, and argued that Russia asserted its role in Moldova for reasons of security and stability. (Charles King, 'Eurasia Letter: Moldova with a Russian Face', *Foreign Policy*, Winter 1994-1995, 97, pp.116) Edward Ozhiganov, almost totally dismissed the neo-imperialist argument, and asserted that Russia's involvement was determined by the concern that Russia would lose control of the 14th Army and its huge stores of military supplies. (Edward Ozhiganov, 'The Republic of Moldova: Transdniester and the 14th Army', p.148.)

⁵³⁷ Sergei Stankevich, 'Yavlenie derzhavy', p.1; Andranik Migranyan, 'Rossiya i blizhnee zarubezh'e', *Nezavisimaya gazeta*, 18 January 1994, p.5.

⁵³⁸ Charles King, *Post-Soviet Moldova: A Borderland in Transition*, Post Soviet Business Forum, 1995, pp. 21-22; Vladimir Socor, 'Creeping Putsch in Eastern Moldova', *RFE/RL Research Report*, 17 January 1992, pp. 8-9. This view is not shared by Russian analyst A. Miklus, who argued that the Transdniester struggle was 'a confrontation between two national ideas, two economic and political orientations, which are diametrically opposed both ideologically and geographically, one is Romanian oriented, the other is Russian oriented.' (A. Miklus, 'Bereg levy. A kto zhe pravyy?', *Komsomol'skaya pravda*, 13 September 1991, p.1).

1. Origins of the Conflict

Before the collapse of the Soviet Union, the left bank of the Dniester was inhabited by a mixed population. Moldovans accounted for roughly 40 percent of the population, while Ukrainians represented 28 percent and Russians around 25.5 percent.⁵³⁹ The vast majority of Moldova's ethnic Russians and Ukrainians actually lived outside this thin strip of land located between the left bank of the Dniester and the Ukrainian state, and displayed little affinity for the aims of the Trans-dniestria leadership, making it more difficult for the Transdnistrians to argue that they formed an ethnic enclave representing exclusively Russian and Russian-speaking interests.⁵⁴⁰ However, the left bank of the Dniester had never formed part of an independent Moldovan state or of Moldova in any sense before its incorporation into the Moldavian SSR in 1944. During 1918-1940, when Bessarabia, as Moldova was called at the time, became reunited with Romania, the left bank of the Dniester river stayed under Soviet control and became part of the Ukrainian SSR, as the Moldavian ASSR. When Moldova was reincorporated into the Soviet Union, the Moldavian ASSR joined the Moldavian lands and formed the Moldavian SSR.⁵⁴¹

During the Soviet era, the left bank hosted important military-related industries which produced a strong Russian political and administrative apparatus. The latter became the dominant force in the Moldavian Communist Party, as well as an anti-reform stronghold within the Soviet Communist Party until the Communists' demise with the August 1991 putsch. The Transdnister leadership worked closely with hard-line party and military circles in Moscow, the *Soiuz* group of Peoples' Deputies and the command of the Odessa Military District.⁵⁴² Transdnister separatism was used by hard-line leaders in Moscow as a bargaining chip to force Moldova into signing the Union treaty.⁵⁴³ During the years of

⁵³⁹ Vladimir Socor, 'Creeping Putsch in Eastern Moldova', p.8.

⁵⁴⁰ Charles King, *Post-Soviet Moldova: A Borderland in Transition*, p.22.

⁵⁴¹ Bohdan Nahaylo, 'Ukraine and Moldova: The View from Kiev', *RFE/RL Research Report*, 1 May 1992, 18, p.40.

⁵⁴² Vladimir Durnov, 'V Rossii skladyvaetsya nevernoe predstavlenie o sobytiyakh v Moldove', *Izvestiya*, 12 June 1992 p.5. See also Jonathan Aves, 'The Evolution of Independent Political Movements after 1988', in Geoffrey Hosking, Jonathan Aves and Peter J.S. Duncan, *The Road to Post-Communism, Independent Political Movements in the Soviet Union 1985-1991*, London and New York, 1992, pp.45-46.

⁵⁴³ Moldovan Minister of the Interior, Ion Costas, *Rompres*, 10 September 1991, in *FBIS-SOV-91-176*, 11 September 1991, p. 74. V. Zagryadskii, deputy chairman of the Dniester Supreme Soviet was quoted as saying, 'The centre has taken virtually no interest in us, it only needed us for political games. By exploiting us, it put pressure on Moldova, saying 'You will have problems

perestroika, when Moldovan nationalist sentiments flourished among the population, the local Russian apparatus succeeded in holding on to power in the Transdniester region. Faced with the possibility of losing control in favour of the new authorities in Kishinev, Transdniester deputies proclaimed a 'Dniester Soviet Socialist Republic' in September 1990. But the August 1991 coup dealt a severe blow to Transdniester leaders, as they lost their allies in Moscow's ruling circles. When Moldova declared its independence from the Soviet Union on 27 August 1991, Transdniester leaders immediately declared the creation of the 'Dniester Moldovan Republic', and expressed their desire to join the USSR. Violence erupted in September 1991 when Moldovan authorities arrested various Transdniester deputies, including Transdniester President Igor Smirnov, because of their open support for the August 1991 coup. Although tension was defused thanks to the mediation of a group of Russian Supreme Soviet deputies, conflict resumed in early March 1992 when the Transdniester militia supported by a group of voluntary Russian Cossacks opened fire on a police station near the town of Dubossary on the left bank, and blocked the bridges and roads leading to Dubossary with heavy equipment.⁵⁴⁴ These events turned out to be the beginning of a three months fierce struggle between the Dniester separatists and the Moldovan forces along the Dniester river. Hostilities reached a high peak during 20-28 June 1992, when Moldovan forces occupied the right-bank city of Bendery, prompting the intervention of the Russian 14th Army in support of the Transdniester militia.

2. Russia's Involvement

a. Motivations

Why did Russia become actively involved in the Transdniester conflict and what were Russia's interests in the region? The Russian authorities were particularly concerned about the negative impact that the various violent conflicts erupting along the perimeter of the Russian Federation, such as South Ossetia, Abkhazia and Transnistria, might have on Russia itself. Centrifugal tendencies in the former Soviet states were perceived as seriously

with all these republics unless you sign the Union treaty.' (A. Milkus, 'Bereg levy. A kto zhe pravy?', p.1).

⁵⁴⁴ TASS, 30 September 1991, in *FBIS-SOV-91-190*, 1 October 1991, p. 63; N. Mulyar, 'Podpisano soglashenie', *Krasnaya zvezda*, 3 October 1991, p.3; Eduard Kondratov, 'Dubossary: politsiya srazhaetsya s militsiei', *Izvestiya*, 2 March 1992 p.1.

threatening Russia's own territorial integrity, particularly in the Caucasus.⁵⁴⁵ Moreover, the development of permanent areas of instability along Russia's borders represented a menace to Russia's own security, in terms of the massive flow of refugees, the transit of illegal trade, and the smuggling of weapons and narcotics, given that inter-state border posts among the former Soviet states had not then been set up.⁵⁴⁶ Transit throughout the former Soviet space remained devoid of control. Furthermore, it became increasingly clear that the international community, burdened by a multitude of problems in Yugoslavia, Africa and other parts of the globe, had no burning desire to take an active part in resolving conflicts in the former Soviet Union, as shown by its limited involvement. Russia was the only state capable of solving these conflicts and providing stability to the various affected areas. However, during 1993 and 1994 elements within the Russian Ministry of Defence began pursuing broader geopolitical aims in the Transdniester region. Russia's military presence, secured either by the preservation of the Russian 14th Army or a Russian-dominated peacekeeping force, was seen as providing Russia with an advanced base in the strategically important area of the Balkans and the Mediterranean.⁵⁴⁷ Russia's willingness to keep a military presence in the area was best shown by Russia's reluctance to withdraw the 14th Army from Moldova and Grachev's proposal in November 1995 that the Army be given a peacekeeping status.⁵⁴⁸

Russian leaders also felt compelled to intervene because of the involvement of an ethnic Russian minority in the conflict. In spite of the ambiguous 'ethnic' character of the conflict, the mere fact that ethnic Russians were involved in a war could not leave Russian leaders indifferent. Although Transdnistria was not located in such a highly sensitive area as the Transcaucasus, and was not even next to Russia's borders, the presence of a large community of ethnic Russians, which claimed to be discriminated against by a Moldovan majority, obliged Russian leaders to pay particular attention to developments in the area. As Sergei Stankevich explained, 'Why are events in Moldova's Dniester region so important for Russia, and what is it seeking hundreds of kilometres away from its own borders? It needs clear guarantees of a tranquil existence, with equal rights, for a

⁵⁴⁵ Andranik Migranyan, 'Rossiya i blizhnee zarubezh'e', *Nezavisimaya gazeta*, 12 January 1994, p. 4; Andranik Migranyan, 'Podlinnye i mnimiye orientiry vo vneshnei politike', *Rossiiskaya gazeta*, 4 August 1992 p. 4.

⁵⁴⁶ Sergei Stankevich, 'Rossiya uzhe sdelaala antimperskii vybor', *Nezavisimaya gazeta*, 6 November 1992, p. 2.

⁵⁴⁷ Yurii Selivanov, 'Kishinev nastaivaet na vyvode rossiiskikh voisk', *Segodnya*, 24 March 1994, p. 5.

⁵⁴⁸ Chisinau Infotag, 13 November 1995, in *FBIS-SOV-95-220*, 15 November 1995, p. 31.

spiritually and historically kindred population.⁵⁴⁹ As early as September 1991, a few days after violence broke out in the Transdnister region, President Yeltsin issued a statement, which clearly stated Russia's intention to protect ethnic Russian populations living outside its borders, although explicit mention of Moldova was avoided. 'The Russian Federation intends to use all legal means and methods within the norms of international law' the statement read, 'to defend the rights, lives, honour, and dignity of citizens of Russian extraction or of other nationalities living outside its frontiers.'⁵⁵⁰ Yeltsin thereby defined Russia's overall policy towards ethnic Russians living in the near abroad, and although practices changed according to the circumstances, the overall policy regarding Russians outside Russia had been set.

b. Russia's Mediation

During the early phases of the Transdnister conflict, from the Autumn of 1991 to the early Spring of 1992, the Russian leadership did not become actively involved in its resolution. Russian Supreme Soviet deputies successfully mediated an end to the Moldovan blockade in October 1991, but such initiatives took place at a time when Russian foreign policy towards the other Soviet republics was only semi-developed. Although no major outbursts of violence occurred during the early months of 1992, the situation in the region remained tense. Russian leaders, however, did not conduct any diplomatic actions aimed at solving the dispute, and instead engaged in negotiations with the Moldovan authorities on the division of Soviet military assets located on Moldovan territory. During this stage, Russia's policies towards the former Soviet states were primarily conducted by the Russian Foreign Ministry - the Russian Ministry of Defence was only created in May 1992 - which tended to emphasise a non-interventionist policy in the former Soviet states, in an effort to reverse Moscow's previous imperialist policies.

When fierce fighting erupted in early March 1992, and Russian Cossack volunteers became involved on the separatists' side, the Russian authorities became automatically drawn into the conflict. Russian leaders however, did not conduct any efforts to try to stop Cossack involvement, nor did they express an official condemnation of these actions.⁵⁵¹

⁵⁴⁹ Sergei Stankevich, 'Yavlenie derzhavy', p.1.

⁵⁵⁰ Reuters, 30 September 1991, cited by Suzanne Crow, 'Russian Moderates Walk a Tightrope in Moldova', *RFE/RL Research Report*, 15 May 1992, p.9.

⁵⁵¹ Eduard Kondratov, 'Kazaki usugublyaiut krizis v Pridnestrov'e', *Izvestiya*, 5 March 1992, p.1; Moscow Radio, 17 March 1992, in *FBIS-SOV-92-053*, 18 March 1992, p. 58.

Russia's behaviour could be interpreted as providing covert support for the Transdniester separatists. In reality, Russia's inaction reflected a lack of preparedness to handle such situations as well as the absence of a clearly defined policy towards Russian minorities living beyond Russia's borders and towards the violent conflicts emerging in the former Soviet Union. Although Russia had placed itself as the defender of the rights of ethnic Russians living in the near abroad, its government had not yet defined a clear and effective policy in the specifics it was confronted with. The Russian government, in fact, faced a serious dilemma. Supporting Russians in the Transdniester region meant strong confrontation with Moldova, and the risk of pushing the latter towards unification with Romania. On the other hand, taking Kishinev's side provoked the indignation of the opposition at home and of the Russian-speaking population in other CIS states. From April 1992 until violence was brought to an end in August 1992, Russian leaders decided to balance these two options, both backing Moldovan integrity but at the same time providing official support for Transdniester demands for a special status, and closing an eye to the 14th Army's military involvement in support of the Transdniester militia. This seemingly incoherent policy, which in many ways was a result of the internal power struggle taking place in Moscow, eventually proved quite successful since it put an end to violence and allowed Russia to keep a military and political presence in the area.

The escalation of violence in the region of Dubossary in late March 1992 led to an assertive response from the Russian opposition in the Supreme Soviet, the Congress of People's Deputies (CPD) and from Vice-President Rutskoi, all of whom sympathised with the Transdniester separatists, and insisted on the recognition of their special rights. On 5 April 1992, Rutskoi visited the Transdniester region and gave his open support to the Dniester Moldovan republic. 'The Dniester republic did and will exist' he told a crowd gathered in Tiraspol,⁵⁵² and called for the Russian 14th Army located in the area to play a peacekeeping role 'so that the people of the Dniester region can gain their independence and hold it.'⁵⁵³ Rutskoi also proposed that the CPD recognise the Dniester Moldovan republic and called for the adoption of an overall programme aimed at providing real protection for Russian citizens living in the CIS.⁵⁵⁴ The Russian parliament's reaction, however, although supportive of Transdniester demands, was much milder. On 20 March 1992, the Supreme Soviet adopted a statement appealing to the Moldovan authorities to

⁵⁵² Interfax, 6 April 1992, in *FBIS-SOV-92-066*, 6 April 1992, p. 65.

⁵⁵³ Eduard Kondratov, 'Vizit A. Rutskogo v Pridnestrov'e vlasti Moldovy otsenivaiut kak vyzov statusu nezavisimogo gosudarstva', *Izvestiya*, 6 April 1992, p.1.

⁵⁵⁴ 'Sobytiyam v Pridnestrov'e', *Rossiiskaya gazeta*, 8 April 1992 p.7.

grant the Transdniester region an appropriate political status that would guarantee the latter's right of self-determination in case of Moldova's reunification with Romania.⁵⁵⁵ The Supreme Soviet however, stressed that any settlement of the dispute should respect Moldova's territorial integrity and guarantee of rights of minorities.⁵⁵⁶ In order to put an end to violence, the Russian parliament proposed that the 14th Army separate the forces in the conflict, and that the UN and the CSCE take part in efforts aimed at settling the conflict.⁵⁵⁷ Support for international participation indicated that, at this early stage, the Supreme Soviet as a whole also had taken an anti-imperialist attitude, despite the fact that elements within it were supportive of a more neo-imperialist behaviour which would see Moldova brought back into Russia's sphere of influence. The Russian Foreign Ministry responded to the escalation of violence by launching quadripartite diplomatic negotiations, involving representatives not only from Moldova and Ukraine, but also from Romania, a non Soviet state, thus indicating the absence of a neo-imperialist attitude among Russian diplomatic circles. Negotiators tried to find a solution to the conflict within the framework of Moldova's territorial integrity and the respect of national minorities. No special status was envisaged for the Transdniester region.⁵⁵⁸ However, these initial efforts proved unsuccessful, if only because of the exclusion of the Transdniester leadership from the talks, and because of the absence of mechanisms for enforcing a settlement.⁵⁵⁹ Further attempts by Kozyrev to use the 14th Army as a peacekeeping force failed. A series of other quadripartite meetings followed in April 1992 and June 1992, but they did not succeed in solving the conflict, nor in bringing about an end to hostilities. By the end of June 1992, a massive Moldovan offensive brought the talks to an end.

Moldova's massive attack on the right-bank city of Bendery on 19-20 June 1992, which resulted in 270 deaths and over 400 wounded, compelled the Russian leadership to adopt a much more assertive stance. Yeltsin immediately condemned Moldovan actions, called on Moldovan leaders to put an end to violence, and threatened to take strong measures if the bloodshed continued.⁵⁶⁰ A cease-fire agreement under the aegis of the quadripartite group was reached within the framework of the Black Sea Summit in Istanbul on 25 June 1992,

⁵⁵⁵ Tass, 20 March 1992, in *FBIS-SOV-92-056*, 23 March 1992, p.47.

⁵⁵⁶ Itar-tass, 3 April 1992, in *FBIS-SOV-92-065*, 3 April 1992, p.40; 'Zayavlenie Verkhovnogo Soveta Rossiiskoi Federatsii', *Rossiiskaya gazeta*, 6 April 1992 p.1.

⁵⁵⁷ *ibid.*

⁵⁵⁸ Eduard Kondratov, 'Moldovan Parliament Assesses Events in Dniester Region', *Izvestiya*, 26 March 1992, p.1, in *FBIS-SOV-92-060*, 27 March 1992, p.57.

⁵⁵⁹ 'Pridnestrov'e: voina idet svoim cheredom', *Nezavisimaya gazeta*, 21 April 1992, p.1

⁵⁶⁰ 'Voina stuchitsya v vorota kremlya', *Nezavisimaya gazeta*, 23 June 1992, p.1

but it was soon violated by both sides. The continuation of the violence promoted Russia to take over the negotiating process and to put strong economic, military and diplomatic pressure on Moldova. On the one hand, Russia imposed restrictions on the deliveries of Russian freight to Moldova, and Transdniester leaders cut off Moldova's supplies of gas and electricity.⁵⁶¹ On the other hand, President Yeltsin made the withdrawal of the 14th Army conditional upon a cessation of violence. Moreover, during late June and early July 1992, Major General Aleksandr Lebed, the new commander of the 14th Army, carried out several demonstrations of force in the form of manoeuvres and deployment of heavy weapons, in order to prevent further Moldovan attacks.⁵⁶² Additional pressure was also placed by the Russian Supreme Soviet, which on 9 July 1992 threatened Moldova with the use of force if a cease-fire was not reached. Some deputies even threatened to submit for consideration by Parliament the recognition of Transdniester and its integration into the Russian Federation.⁵⁶³

Russia's pressure brought violence to an end. President Yeltsin and his Moldovan counterpart, President Snegur, met at the Kremlin on 21 July 1992 and agreed on the imposition of a cease-fire and the establishment of a joint control commission composed of representatives from Russia, Moldova and the Transdniester to oversee implementation of the measures adopted. Snegur and Yeltsin also agreed that peacekeeping forces made up of contingents belonging to the three sides involved in the settlement of the conflict were to be sent to the region in order to help separate the conflicting armies. The role of the 14th Army as a peacekeeping force was ruled out. Instead, it was agreed that the Army would keep strict neutrality and that Russia and Moldova would engage in negotiations to determine its status and the terms of its withdrawal.⁵⁶⁴ The Transdniester region was to be granted a special status within Moldova, to be determined in future negotiations. Moldova's territorial integrity thus was to be respected, but Moldovan leaders also agreed to grant the Transdniester population the right to determine the region's status in the event of Moldova's reunification with Romania.⁵⁶⁵ This agreement, which received the support of the Transdniester authorities, represented a victory for Russia's diplomacy. Russia

⁵⁶¹ Svetlana Gamota and Eduard Kondratov, 'Mircea Snegur: Nachalas' ekonomicheskaya blokada Moldovy', *Izvestiya*, 29 June 1992, p.1; Radio Romania, 3 July 1992, in *FBIS-SOV-092-129*, 6 July 1992, p. 68.

⁵⁶² Edward Ozhiganov, 'The Republic of Moldova: Transdniester and the 14th Army', p.182.

⁵⁶³ Sergei Chugaev, 'The Russian Parliament has Authorised the Use of the 14th Army as a Peacemaking Force', *Izvestiya*, 9 July 1992, p.1-2, in *CDPSP*, XLIV, 1992, 27, p.14.

⁵⁶⁴ Radio Chisinau, 21 July 1992, in *FBIS-SOV-92-142*, 23 July 1992, pp.9-10.

⁵⁶⁵ Valerii Vyzhutovich, 'Mirotvorcheskaya diplomatiya beret verkh: snachala -v Iuzhnoi Osetii, teper -v Pridnestrov'e', *Izvestiya*, 22 July 1992, p.1.

succeeded in putting an end to violence, thus saving the lives of Russians and Russian-speakers, to guarantee a special status for the Transdnister and to introduce a Russian peacekeeping force to disengage the warring sides.⁵⁶⁶ During the first week of August 1992, Moldovan, Transdnister and Russian battalions moved into the region and successfully separated the warring sides, establishing a 10-km safety zone along the Dniester river. Shootings stopped and a precarious peace was restored.⁵⁶⁷ Although the 14th Army was requested to stay neutral, its presence played a major role in stopping the violence and in deterring any further attacks by the Moldovan forces.⁵⁶⁸

Russia's successful peacemaking efforts, its dominant position in the mediation process, which resulted in the introduction of Russian peacekeeping forces, and its support for Transdnister's demands to be granted a 'special status' might be interpreted as 'neo-imperial.' However, the exact nature of Russia's motivations, as far as Moldova is concerned, is difficult to discern. Although attempts to keep Moldova within Russia's sphere of influence were probably influencing policy-making, Russian policies appear to have been primarily aimed at putting an end to violence. It seems highly unlikely that in the Summer of 1992, the Russian President and the Russian Foreign Ministry were motivated in their behaviour by 'neo-imperial' ambitions and attempts to set up an informal empire in Moldova. The evidence available suggests that there was no desire to preserve a foothold in Moldova through the existence of a Russian-oriented Transdnister political entity nor to try to keep Moldova within Russia's sphere of influence, despite the fact that Russian nationalist circles and some Russian military officers were in favour of keeping this area under Russia's sway. President Yeltsin and Foreign Minister Kozyrev were primarily interested in bringing violence to an end, above all through peaceful means, and in protecting the lives of Russians in the area. Both were adamant in their support for a solution which respected Moldova's territorial integrity. The Russian Ministry of Defence on the other hand, was mainly concerned with the safety of Russian servicemen in the area, as well as with the protection of local Russian inhabitants. Like the Foreign Ministry, it was eager to put an end to violence, although it seemed more prone to use force in order to achieve peace. The Defence Ministry, however, was also eager to keep the 14th Army

⁵⁶⁶ Russian forces were predominant in terms of manpower and resources. (Pavel Felgengauer, 'Rossiiskie "Mirotvortsy" v zapadne', *Nezavisimaya gazeta*, 11 August 1992, p.2.)

⁵⁶⁷ Aleksandr Tago, 'Bufernaya zona v Pridnestrov'e sozdana', *Nezavisimaya gazeta*, 4 August 1992, p.1; Svetlana Gamova, 'V Moldove otmeneno chrezvychainoe polozenie', *Izvestiya*, 19 August 1992, p.2

⁵⁶⁸ Pavel Felgengauer, 'Rossiiskie "Mirotvortsy" v zapadne', p.2.

permanently based in Moldova. Not only was the army perceived as fulfilling strategic tasks, such as protecting the Russian state, enhancing regional stability and precluding any 'hostile' presence in the area, but its withdrawal presented serious logistic difficulties.

Russia's mediation efforts and peacekeeping activities were not primarily aimed at bringing Moldova back into Russia's sphere of influence. However, they actually resulted in Russia keeping an important military and political foothold in that country, which led to the creation, to a certain extent, of a Russian neo-empire in Moldova, particularly in Transdnistria. Although Russia supported the territorial integrity of Moldova, Kishinev never managed to restore control over the Transdnistrier region and the 14th Army remained in the area. Russia sponsored, together with the CSCE/OSCE, various rounds of negotiations between 1992 and 1996, but little was achieved in terms of reaching a lasting political settlement. The victory of the Communist Party and Zhirinovskiy's LDPR in the Russian Duma 1995 elections, and their open display of support for the Transdnistrier cause gave additional impetus to the Transdnistrier leadership, making it increasingly hard for both sides to reach a compromise. In December 1995, the State Duma issued a declaration recommending Yeltsin to declare Transdnistria a zone of special strategic interests for Russia, and Communist Party leader Gennady Zyuganov sent an open letter to the Transdnistrier inhabitants, expressing the support of the party for their cause.⁵⁶⁹ However, Yeltsin and the Foreign Ministry did not modify their positions. Moscow's official line remained in support of Moldova's territorial integrity and of granting a special status to Transdnistria. The record of neo-imperialism, therefore, remains mixed. On the one hand, Yeltsin and Kozyrev supported Moldova's territorial integrity, sponsored political negotiations, and welcomed the mediating role of international organisations, such as the CSCE, and neighbouring countries, such as Romania, and Ukraine, which joined the negotiations in January 1996. On the other hand, the Russian Defence Ministry tried to obtain a peacekeeping mandate for the 14th Army, and objected to Ukraine's willingness to send in peacekeepers to the region - an indication that it conceived its peacekeeping operation not just as a means of avoiding a resumption of violence, but also as a military instrument fulfilling strategic goals, above all ensuring Russia's presence in the area and preventing other states in the region from getting a military foothold in Moldova.⁵⁷⁰ The Transdnistria conflict therefore brought to light the conflicting agendas of the Russian

⁵⁶⁹ Svetlana Gamova, 'Nepriiznanaya respublika progolosovala za svoiu nezavisimost' i samostayatel'noe vkhozhdenie v SNG', *Izvestiya*, 26 December 1995, p.2.

⁵⁷⁰ Yulia Kapustina, 'Calm Before Elections', *Kommersant-daily*, 19 January 1996, p. 4, in *CDPSP*, XLVIII, 1996, 3, p.28; *FBIS-SOV-95-220*, 15 November 1995.

Foreign and Defence Ministries, which led to the conduct of seemingly contradictory policies, a result of Yeltsin's attempts to reach broad compromises in order to satisfy domestic constituencies.

c. The Role of the 14th Army

When the Soviet Union collapsed, most Soviet Armed Forces in the FSS, including the 14th Army located in Moldova, were placed under CIS command. However their status remained unclear. Negotiations between the CIS Command and the Moldovan leadership led to the signing of an agreement on 14 February 1992, which provided for the transfer of former Soviet troops stationed on the *right bank* of Moldova, to Moldovan jurisdiction on 1 March 1992.⁵⁷¹ On 20 March 1992, President Snegur signed a decree on the transfer to Moldovan jurisdiction of the military units of the Soviet army stationed on its territory. The peaceful transfer of weapons to Moldovan jurisdiction followed thereafter.⁵⁷² The armed forces located on the *left bank* of the Dniester, which accounted for the bulk of the 14th Army, were initially placed under CIS jurisdiction. These forces had been politically and militarily involved in the Transdniester conflict, providing assistance to the Transdniester militia and giving open support to the separatist cause. Moreover, 14th Army officers refused to be subordinated to Moldovan authority and preferred to be transferred to Transdniester jurisdiction. They expressed their 'readiness, at the request of the people, to come to the defence of the population of the Dniester republic and of legitimate local bodies of power against any armed formations.'⁵⁷³ Furthermore, most officers and reservists were local inhabitants and their transfer to Russia meant uprooting them from their homes. In view of this situation, Moldova agreed to renounce the 14th Army on condition that it be withdrawn from the country within a year. The 14th Army was directly subordinated to the CIS JAF Supreme Command for a transitional period until its complete withdrawal back to Russia.⁵⁷⁴ However, as conflict in the Dniester region escalated in the Spring of 1992, Yeltsin unilaterally placed all military facilities and army units in the left bank under the jurisdiction of the Russian Federation.⁵⁷⁵ The aim was to prevent further

⁵⁷¹ Radio Romania, 17 February 1992, in *FBIS-SOV-92-032*, 18 February 1992, p.63.

⁵⁷² Tass, 20 March 1992, in *FBIS-SOV-92-056*, 23 March 1992, p.47; 'Pridnestrov'e mezhdru voynoi i mirom', *Nezavisimaya gazeta*, 3 April 1992 p.1. Apparently, 155 tanks, 102 armoured personnel carriers and 248 artillery pieces were concentrated in Moldova in June 1992. (Vladimir Mukhin, 'Voyna v Zakavkaz'e i Pridnestrov'e tol'ko nachinaetsya', *Nezavisimaya gazeta*, 26 June 1992, p.2.)

⁵⁷³ Tass, 23 September 1991, in *FBIS-SOV-91-185*, 24 September 1991, p.77.

⁵⁷⁴ Tass, 9 February 1992, in *FBIS-SOV-92-027*, 10 February 1992, p.95.

⁵⁷⁵ Interfax, 2 April 1992, in *FBIS-SOV-92-064*, p. 74.

involvement of the 14th Army in the conflict.⁵⁷⁶ Although Moldova initially opposed the move, it finally decided to open negotiations with the Russian government in order to settle the question of the status of the army in Moldova, and its withdrawal back to Russia.⁵⁷⁷

i) The 14th Army's Involvement

How did the 14th Army become increasingly involved in the conflict? Was the army's involvement part of a strategy to exacerbate the Transdniester conflict in order to intervene militarily and thus, bring Moldova under Russia's sphere of influence? Given the contradictory data available, it is difficult to determine the exact role played by the 14th Army during the early stages of the conflict. Although it is clear that the left-bank 14th Army provided covert support to the separatists in the form of weapons, equipment, training and personnel in the Autumn of 1991, it is harder to determine whether army officers acted independently or, whether instead, they were receiving orders from Moscow.⁵⁷⁸ The evidence available, however, suggests that during the Autumn of 1991, a split occurred among the 14th Army's officer corps, some detachments actively participating in the conflict, some units even switching to the jurisdiction of the Transdniester leadership, while others attempting to keep a semblance of neutrality.⁵⁷⁹ Officially, however, the Army was ordered by the leadership of the Odessa Military District, to remain neutral.⁵⁸⁰ Although neutrality was systematically violated, the initiative seems to have come from local officers. The USSR General Staff regularly dismissed accusations by the Moldovan government of covert support by the army to the separatists and Lt. Col. G. Yakovlev, the commander of the 14th Army, was immediately dismissed in December 1991, when he agreed to become head of the Transdniester Security Council.⁵⁸¹

When fighting intensified in early March 1992, the new leadership of the 14th Army resisted attempts by the Transdniester leaders to drag the army into fighting on their side.

⁵⁷⁶ A. Krayny, 'Marshal Shaposhnikov ob obstanovke v Pridnestrov'e', *Komsomol'skaya pravda*, 4 April 1992, p.3.

⁵⁷⁷ Interfax, 22 April 1992, in *FBIS-SOV-92-079*, 23 April 1992, p. 42.

⁵⁷⁸ Lebed admitted the transfer of weapons and the involvement of officers. (Radio Chisinau, 29 June 1992, in *FBIS-SOV-92-126*, 30 June 1992, p.44.)

⁵⁷⁹ Moscow Radio, 27 September 1991, in *FBIS-SOV-91-189*, 30 September 1991, p.73; Vladimir Durnov, 'V Rossii skladyvaetsya nevernoe predstavlenie o sobyitiyakh v Moldove', *Izvestiya*, 12 June 1992, p.5

⁵⁸⁰ N. Mulyar, 'Troop Withdrawal Question Postponed', *Krasnaya zvezda*, 28 September 1991, p.2, in *FBIS-SOV-91-190*, 1 October 1991, p.62.

⁵⁸¹ Interfax, 9 December 1991, in *FBIS-SOV-91-237*, 10 December 1991, p. 60.

Maj.-Gen. Netkachev, Commander of the 14th Army, several times reaffirmed the army's non-involvement in the conflict and its exclusive subordination to the CIS Commander in Chief.⁵⁸² However, in early April, as the situation on the ground deteriorated, the army issued an ultimatum to the warring sides demanding an immediate cease-fire and the holding of peaceful negotiations. Otherwise, 'units of the 14th Army [would] be placed on full alert.'⁵⁸³ The officers also voiced their readiness to participate in peacekeeping operations, and went as far as calling for a recognition of the Dniester Moldova Republic.⁵⁸⁴ When the ultimatum expired, the army began mobilising and occupying key positions in Bendery, and proceeded to establish a cease-fire line between the Moldovan and Dniester armed formations, not without getting involved in the fighting on the Transdniester side.⁵⁸⁵ A month later, on 20 May 1992, the 14th Army extended its occupation of the left-bank districts. Its tanks and infantry vehicles appeared in the city of Dubossary, which was subjected to mortar attack from Moldovan forces.⁵⁸⁶ Maj.-Gen. Netkachev confirmed and justified the mobilisation of the army on the grounds that populated areas had been under attack.⁵⁸⁷ There seems, therefore, to be compelling evidence suggesting the direct and open involvement of the 14th army on the Transdniester side. However, it is not clear whether or not officers were following orders from Moscow. The evidence available suggests that Maj.-Gen. Netkachev had lost control over units of the 14th Army, and that the army as whole was not responding to Moscow's orders. In other words, the army remained out of Moscow's control. In defiance to Grachev's orders of neutrality, the army got progressively involved in the fighting. Although Grachev admitted the involvement of the army, he insisted that officers and soldiers had done so on a personal basis, out of their own initiative. He noted, however, that servicemen were probably being dragged against their own will into the conflict by the local population.⁵⁸⁸ The involvement of the 14th Army in the conflict, in fact, was not officially condemned by

⁵⁸² Interfax, 4 March 1992, in *FBIS-SOV-92-043*, 4 March 1992, p. 70; Radio Romania, 5 March 1992, in *FBIS-SOV-92-045*, 6 March 1992, p. 52.

⁵⁸³ Svetlana Gamova and Nikolai Burbyga, '14-ya Armiya pereshla pod iurisdiktsiiu Rossii i vydvynula ultimatum Kishinevu i Tiraspoliu', *Izvestiya*, 2 April 1992 p.1;

⁵⁸⁴ *ibid.*; Interfax, 2 April 1992, in *FBIS-SOV-92-064*, p.74.

⁵⁸⁵ *ibid.*; Russian TV, 5 April 1992, in *FBIS-SOV-92-066*, 6 April 1992, p.66; Interfax, 10 April 1992, in *FBIS-SOV-92-070*, p.43

⁵⁸⁶ 'Russia's 14th Army Moves into Combat Positions in the Dniester Region', *Nezavisimaya gazeta*, 21 May 1992, p.1 in *CDPSP*, XLIV, 1992, 20, pp. 20-21.

Natalya Prikhodko, 'Zasedanie shona otlozhenno', *Nezavisimaya gazeta*, 21 May 1993, p.1

⁵⁸⁷ Viktor Volodin, 'V Dubossarakh prifrontovom gorode', *Izvestiya*, 21 May 1992, p.2.

⁵⁸⁸ Interfax, 3 June 1992, in *FBIS-SOV-92-108*, 4 June 1992, p. 21. Lebed admitted participation of officers on a personal basis. (Radio Chisinau, 29 June 1992, in *FBIS-SOV-92-126*, 30 June 1992, p. 44.). President Yeltsin also acknowledged the existence of supporters of the Dniester

the Russian military leadership and the CIS High Command.⁵⁸⁹ On the contrary, both institutions took an understanding view regarding the army's participation and became increasingly sympathetic with the position of the 14th Army officers.⁵⁹⁰ Despite the understanding shown by the Defence Ministry, Grachev seemed eager to put an end to violence and anarchy among his forces, and this probably explains why General Lebed was sent to take charge of the explosive situation. It can therefore be argued that despite the active involvement of the 14th Army at local level, the Defence Ministry did not follow a clearly defined strategy of exacerbating the conflict in order to intervene.

The arrival of Lebed brought violence to an end. Lebed significantly enhanced the combat capabilities of the 14th Army with elite unit reinforcements, deployed air defence and long range artillery systems, and conducted a series of exercises with his troops, which managed to put an end to Moldova's attacks on the Transdnister region and pacified the region.⁵⁹¹ In order to enhance security, Lebed also conducted joint peacekeeping activities with Moldovan forces in the town of Bendery.⁵⁹² Moreover, he successfully confiscated the weapons distributed among the Transdnister militia and the population, and properly safeguarded the vast amounts of equipment belonging to the 14th Army, which were coveted by both sides. In addition, Lebed also managed to restore discipline among the 14th Army and the Transdnister units.⁵⁹³ Lebed's successes, however, came at a price as he became increasingly involved in the political developments of the region. In July 1992, he openly condemned the Moldovan authorities in Kishinev, calling them 'fascists', and refused to recognise the elected Moldovan government. Moreover, Lebed openly supported the integration of the Transdnister region into Russia, and the attachment of the town of Bendery to Transdnistria.⁵⁹⁴ In September 1993, he even got elected to the Transdnister parliament.⁵⁹⁵ Lebed's open support for the Transdnister cause, however, does not seem to

cause among the officers corps of the 14th Army. ('Ya ne skryvaiu trudnostei i khochu, chtoby narod eto ponimal', *Komsomol'skaya pravda*, 27 May 1992, p.2.)

⁵⁸⁹ Svetlana Gamova and Nikolai Burbyga, '14-ya Armiya pereshla pod iurisdiksiiu Rossii i vydvynula ultimatum Kishinevu i Tiraspoliu', p.1.

⁵⁹⁰ A. Krayny, 'Marshal Shaposhnikov ob obstanovke v Pridnestrov'e', p.3.

⁵⁹¹ A. Kakotkin, 'Lull for the Time Being on the Fronts', *Moskovskie novosti*, 5 July 1992, p.4 in *FBIS-SOV-92-131*, 8 July 1992, p.20.

⁵⁹² Russian Television, 24 July 1992, in *FBIS-SOV-92-144*, 27 July 1992, p.57.

⁵⁹³ Radio Rossii, 17 July 1992, in *FBIS-SOV-92-138*, 17 July 1992, p.55.

⁵⁹⁴ Itar-tass, 4 July 1992, in *FBIS-SOV-92-129*, 6 July 1992, p. 71; Radio Chisinau, 29 June 1992, in *FBIS-SOV-92-126*, 30 June 1992, p.44.

⁵⁹⁵ In spite of his sympathies for the Transdnister cause, in 1993, Lebed became extremely critical of the Transdnister leadership, and openly accused it of corruption. (Evgenii Strigunov, 'General Lebed as the Scalpel of Russian Diplomacy', *Novaya ezheдневnaya gazeta*, 3 February 1994, p.4 in *CDPSP*, XLVI, 1994,4, p. 25)

have reflected the official position of the authorities in Moscow, especially of the Foreign Ministry which was supportive of Moldova's territorial integrity. It seems that Moscow was ready to keep him in his post, at least until his removal in 1995, because of his successful peacekeeping operations and the support that his policies received among military and nationalist circles. Lebed's role, therefore, remains controversial, making it difficult to determine how his actions fitted with Russia's policies and aims in the region. In fact, the complexities of the situation in the ground and the unstable domestic situation within Russia, resulted in the absence of a clear cut Russian strategy towards the region. Despite the absence of a clearly devised neo-imperialist strategy, the independent involvement of the 14th Army and the active peacekeeping activities of Lebed resulted, to all intents and purposes, in Russia prolonging its military presence in the region. As negotiations on the withdrawal of the 14th Army failed to make any progress, Russia's military presence in Moldova acquired an increasingly neo-imperialistic character.

ii) The 14th Army's Withdrawal

Negotiations between Russia and Moldova on the withdrawal of the 14th Army began as early as August 1992. However, progress was hindered by a series of factors which complicated the retreat of the army. First, the Russian MOD feared that if Russia removed the army Transdnester leaders would place it under Transdnester jurisdiction, prompting 14th Army officers, most of whom strongly sympathised with the Transdnester cause, to join the Transdnester military formations.⁵⁹⁶ Second, the possibility also existed that the local population would physically block the withdrawal of Russian personnel and equipment. When President Yeltsin first announced the withdrawal of the Army in late May 1992, groups of women and elderly people had held a sit-in in protest against the Army's withdrawal.⁵⁹⁷ Third, serious problems of resettlement in Russia argued in favour of a delay in the retreat of the army back to Russia.⁵⁹⁸ Fourth, the Russian leadership was extremely concerned about the safety of the vast amounts of ammunition and weapons belonging to the 14th Army.⁵⁹⁹ The risk that all these weapons might end up in the hands of Transdnester forces, looted or smuggled into Russia or other FSS, if the Army withdrew,

⁵⁹⁶ Interfax, 8 June 1992, in *FBIS-SOV-92-111*, 9 June 1992, p. 22; Svetlana Gamova, 'Pridnestrov'e ostaetsya bez 14-i Armii, General Lebed - bez raboty', *Izvestiya*, 5 August 1994, pp.1-2.

⁵⁹⁷ Interfax, 8 June 1992, in *FBIS-SOV-92-111*, 9 June 1992, p.22; Lyudmila Feliksova, 'Dolzhna pritupit'sya bol' ', *Rossiiskaya gazeta*, 7 September 1994, p.1.

⁵⁹⁸ Interfax, 8 June 1992, in *FBIS-SOV-92-111*, 9 June 1992, p.22.

⁵⁹⁹ Mikhail Leontyev, 'Kapriznye deti generala Gracheva', *Segonya*, 11 May, 1995, p.1.

remained very high.⁶⁰⁰ Moreover, the removal of equipment was also constrained by financial reasons.⁶⁰¹ The cost of withdrawing the army was estimated to be equivalent to that of keeping it in the Dniester region for 30 years.

Aware of the difficulties involved in the withdrawal of forces, Russian military leaders tried to delay the retreat of the 14th Army as long as possible. Besides the obstacles mentioned above, the Russian MOD, in particular General Lebed, was convinced that the presence of the 14th Army was preventing a re-emergence of violence in Transdnistria.⁶⁰² Defence Minister Grachev argued that only after a cease-fire had been reached, and Russian lives would be safe, would the Army retreat.⁶⁰³ Russian leaders in fact insisted on linking the withdrawal of the Army to the reaching of a political settlement and to the granting of a special status to Transdnistria. However, the Russian MOD also became eager to keep a military base in Moldova on the basis of the 14th Army, and during 1993 and most of 1994 tried to persuade Kishinev to accept such a Russian presence.⁶⁰⁴ But Moldovan leaders refused, and on 21 October 1994 managed to reach an agreement with the Russian leadership on the withdrawal of the 14th Army within a three year period. Although the agreement did not specifically link the withdrawal of the army to the settlement of the status of Transdnistria, Moldovan leaders committed themselves to resolve the issue. In other words, the withdrawal of the army was 'synchronised' with the reaching of a political settlement.⁶⁰⁵ During 1993-1995, significant parts of the 14th Army's equipment and weapons were removed back to Russia, but by early 1996, Russia still retained an important presence in the area.⁶⁰⁶ On the one hand, the Russian State Duma delayed the ratification of the October 1994 agreement, and on the other hand, by

⁶⁰⁰ Moscow and Kishinev agreed in August 1994 that Moldova would get 35 percent of the army's equipment and Russia 65 percent. However, on 3 February 1995, Transdnistrier leader Igor Smirnov issued a decree which forbade the removal of all assets belonging to the 14th Army from the region. (Mikhail Leontev, 'Podpishet li Prezident proshenie Lebedya ob otstavke?', *Segodnya*, 7 June 1995, p.22; Natalya Prikhodko, 'Tiraspol' protiv soglashenii Moskvy i Kishineva', *Nezavisimaya gazeta*, 7 February 1995, p.1.)

⁶⁰¹ Mikhail Leontyev, 'Kapriznye deti generala Gracheva', p.1.

⁶⁰² Interfax, 8 June 1992, in *FBIS-SOV-92-111*, 9 June 1992, p.22.

⁶⁰³ 'General Grachev: 9 iyunya posleduiut novye naznacheniya v ministerstve oborony i v armii', *Nezavisimaya gazeta*, 9 June 1992, p.1; Similar views were held by Lebed, see Svetlana Gamova, 'A. Lebed: "v den, kogda mirotvorcheskie sily uidut iz Pridnestrov'ya, ia nachnu ser'ezno gotovit'sya k voine"', *Izvestiya*, 26 February 1993, p.5.

⁶⁰⁴ Igor Rotar, 'Krym - Abkhaziya - Pridnestrov'e', *Nezavisimaya gazeta*, 2 March 1994, p.3.

⁶⁰⁵ Interfax, 12 August 1994, in *FBIS-SOV-094-157*, 15 August 1994, p. 46; Svetlana Gamova, 'Moskva i Kishinev reshili vyvesti 14-iu Armiiu. Tiraspol' soglasiya ne daval', *Izvestiya*, 12 August 1994, p.2.

⁶⁰⁶ Ilya Bulavinov, 'Fate of the 14th Army: Referendum Results Might Yet Come In Handy', *Kommersant-daily*, 29 March 1995, p.4, in *CDPSP*, XLVII, 1995, 13, p.21.

late 1994, some elements within the Russian military, in particular Gen. Vladimir Semyonov, commander of Russia's ground forces, again began toying with the idea of keeping a small well-trained, well-organised military group in Transdnistria.⁶⁰⁷ But the idea was dismissed in 1995, the Russian Defence Ministry arguing that Russia did not need the 14th Army as an operational formation in the Dniester region.⁶⁰⁸ However, Russia delayed the total withdrawal of the army, and in November 1995, Grachev proposed that the army be granted peacekeeping status - an indication that, besides the difficulties involved in the retreat, Russia, and in particular the Defence Ministry, was eager to keep a military presence in Moldova.

3. Assessment of Russia's Participation

The outburst of violence in Transdnistria confronted the Russian leadership with a very complex dilemma. The involvement of Russian minorities in a struggle for secession from Moldova, to a great extent, compelled the Russian government to react. Open support for the Transdnistrian cause, however, entailed the risks of creating a precedent and boosting secessionist movements at home. On the other hand, remaining indifferent to the fate of Russian minorities was bound to lead to strong criticism from the domestic opposition. The situation was further complicated by the direct involvement of the Russian 14th Army in support of the local secessionists. There seems to be little indication that Russian leaders in Moscow exacerbated the conflict in order to intervene and preserve a military presence in the area. The intervention by local officers and soldiers of the 14th Army was most probably the result of personal initiatives, and reflected a break in the military chain of command. It is therefore difficult to sustain the hypothesis that Russia tried to provoke the conflict in the region in order to destabilise Moldova and thus bring it back into Russia's sphere of influence. However, it must be acknowledged that the Transdnistrian cause found many sympathisers among the Russian military, including the commander of the 14th Army, General Lebed. But despite their desire to bring Transdnistria under Russia's control, the Russian military did not manage to impose their views.

Russia's initial efforts to find a political settlement to the conflict attested to the original view of the Foreign Ministry, that inter-ethnic conflicts had to be solved in a peaceful

⁶⁰⁷ Igor Rotar, 'Krym - Abkhaziya - Pridnestrov'e', *Nezavisimaya gazeta*, 2 March 1994, p.3.

⁶⁰⁸ Viktor Litovkin, 'Posle uvol'neniya Lebedya drugoi stanet vsya Armiya', *Izvestiya*, 16 June 1995, p.1.

manner. However, once violence escalated, the Russian Defence Ministry took the upper hand, and used force to stop the violence. Was Russia motivated in its behaviour by an attempt to keep Moldova into its sphere of influence? The evidence available seems to indicate that the Defence Ministry's and Foreign Ministry's active involvement was primarily motivated by a desire to put an end to violence, impose peace and stability, and - last but not least - avoid that the Transdniester militias take over control of the 14th Army and huge military stockpiles. Nevertheless, Russia's participation resulted in Russia keeping an important military force in the region and creating, to a certain extent, a neo-empire in Moldova. Although agreement on the withdrawal of the Russian 14th Army was reached in August 1994, Russia delayed the retreat, showing a reluctance to bring the Army back to Russia. Various factors explain Russia's decision. First, delay in the withdrawal reflected a desire by certain elements within the military to keep military bases in the near abroad, as part of a strategy of 'forward basing'. In this particular case, the base could allow for the projection of power in the Balkan region. Second, delays were caused by the technical difficulties involved in the retreat. However, the Defence Ministry's refusal to allow Ukrainian peacekeepers to intervene indicated that the Russian military tended to perceive Moldova as an area of exclusive Russian military influence. The Foreign Ministry instead was more concerned with finding a political settlement, with the participation of international organisations such as the OSCE, and neighbouring FSS such as Ukraine. As such, they tended to adopt a less neo-imperialist view. However, both the MOD and the MFA considered Moldova an area of vital interest to Russia, not only because of the presence of a large Russian minority in the area, which was involved in a violent conflict, but also because of the potentially negative repercussions that the conflict could have on Russia's internal security and stability. Russia's involvement in the Moldovan-Transdniester conflict thus corresponded to the regular pattern of Russian active participation in the former Soviet space during 1992-1996, which to a great extent reflected a reluctance by Russian leaders to distance themselves from the former Soviet space and to completely discard Russia's imperial legacy.

III . Georgia and the War in Abkhazia

1. Origins of the Conflict

Since the early days of the Soviet Union, Tbilisi's relations with Abkhazia, an autonomous entity which was part of the Georgian SSR, were characterised by tension as a result of the latter's desire to secede from Georgia and join the Russian SFSR.⁶⁰⁹ After 1917, Abkhazia maintained a relationship of treaty association with Georgia until it was incorporated as an autonomous republic within Georgia in 1931. Since then, the Abkhaz have attempted repeatedly either to regain independent status or to join the Russian Federation altogether. In August 1990, the Abkhaz Supreme Soviet passed a vote in favour of independence, which was immediately annulled by the Georgian Supreme Soviet. In February 1992, after Georgia became an independent state, the Georgian Military Council decided to rescind the 1978 Soviet Constitution, which granted the Abkhaz significant cultural freedom and a disproportionate share of government posts within Abkhazia, and to restore the 1921 Constitution in which Abkhazia was referred not as an autonomous republic but simply as the Sukhumi region.⁶¹⁰ This prompted a sharp reaction from Abkhazia. On 23 July 1992,

⁶⁰⁹ Current literature on the Abkhaz war reveals the following arguments: Stephen Blank embraced the neo-imperialist argument completely by arguing that Russia's policies in the region were aimed primarily at restoring a sphere of political and economic influence. (Stephen Blank, 'Russia's Real Drive to the South', *Orbis*, 29, Summer 1995, 2, pp.369-386.) Edmund Herzig, adopted a more moderate tone and recognised the incoherent character of Russia's behaviour. However, he did not totally dismiss the neo-imperialist argument, and instead claimed that Russia exploited Georgia's conflicts and internal weaknesses in order to pressure its leadership to accept the joint defence of the external CIS borders, the maintenance of Russian bases on Georgian territory, and the deployment of Russian peacekeepers. In other words, Russia tried to keep Georgia and the entire Transcaucasus within its sphere of influence. (Edmund Herzig, *The New Caucasus: Armenia, Azerbaijan and Georgia*, p.49.) Similarly, Oles M. Smolansky argued that Russia asserted its influence over Georgia and Azerbaijan by exacerbating regional conflicts. (Oles M. Smolansky, 'Russia and Transcaucasia: The Case of Nagorno-Karabagh, in *Regional Power Rivalries in the New Eurasia: Russia, Turkey and Iran*, eds., Alvin Z. Rubinstein and Oles M. Smolansky, London, 1995, pp. 201-230.) Dmitri Trenin also argued that Russia's policies in Transcaucasia were aimed at restoring Russia's influence throughout the region in order to prevent developments from slipping out of control and thus opening the door to outside interference. (Dmitri Trenin, 'Russia's Security interests and Policies in the Caucasus Region', p. 99) Dov Lynch argued that Russian peacekeeping in Georgia was an instrument of a wider strategy aimed at advancing Russia's interests in Georgia, using means short of war. (Dov Lynch, *The Conflict in Abkhazia: Dilemmas in Russian 'Peacekeeping' Policy*, p.3.) Edward Ozhiganov instead stressed the existence of differences of opinion and policy within the Russian government, and dismissed the imperialist argument. (Edward Ozhiganov, 'The Republic of Georgia: Conflict in Abkhazia and South Ossetia', p. 385.)

⁶¹⁰ In 1989, the ethnic Abkhaz constituted 17.8 per cent of the population of Abkhazia, (while the Georgians constituted 45.7 percent) but formed 41 percent of the Abkhaz Supreme Soviet deputies, 67 percent of the republican ministries and 50 percent of the rayon and city communist

thirty-five Abkhaz Supreme Soviet deputies voted to return to the Abkhaz Constitution of 1925, according to which Abkhazia was a Union republic, until another constitution was adopted.⁶¹¹ The Abkhaz leadership intended to conduct bilateral negotiations with the authorities in Tbilisi on the basis of a draft treaty between the Republic of Abkhazia and the Republic of Georgia for creation of an Abkhaz-Georgian Federal state. Abkhazia's Supreme Soviet Chairman Vladislav Ardzinba made it clear that Abkhazia did not intend to secede from Georgia.⁶¹² Still, the move was denounced as separatism by the Georgian State Council, which proceeded to declare invalid the Abkhaz Supreme Soviet's decision.⁶¹³ Within weeks, hostilities erupted in Abkhazia.

On 14 August 1992, the Georgian National Guard, supported by armoured cars and battle aircraft, and under the command of the Georgian Minister of Defence, Tengiz Kitovani, entered Abkhazia.⁶¹⁴ Under the pretext of freeing a number of Georgian leaders, including the Minister of the Interior, who had been taken hostage by supporters of former President Zviad Gamsakhurdia, and in order to restore control over transportation lines in Abkhazia and Western Georgia, Kitovani advanced towards Sukhumi.⁶¹⁵ Apparently no agreement had been obtained from the Abkhaz authorities, and the Abkhaz guardsmen opened fire on the Georgians.⁶¹⁶ A cease-fire was agreed between the sides on 17 August 1992, but the following day, the Georgian Defence Minister ordered the Georgian National Guard to storm Sukhumi, the Abkhaz capital, apparently in violation of Shevardnadze's orders. The Abkhaz leadership was forced to retreat to the region of Gudauta.⁶¹⁷ Simultaneously, Georgian forces landed on the northern territory of Abkhazia and occupied the areas of Leselidze, Gantiadi and Gagra. However, the Georgian forces were not able to advance north beyond the Gumista river, nor were they able to close the gap by advancing

party first secretaries. (Catherine Dale, 'Turmoil in Abkhazia: Russian Responses', *RFE/RL Research Report*, 27 August 1993, p. 49).

⁶¹¹ Tengiz Pachkoriya, 'Federativnoe gruzino-abkhazskoe gosudarstvo?' *Nezavisimaya gazeta*, 25 July 1992, p.1.

⁶¹² *ibid.*

⁶¹³ Tengiz Pachkoriya, 'V Abkhazii mozhnet byt' khuzhe, chem v Iozhnoi Osetii', *Nezavisimaya gazeta*, 28 July 1992 p.1.

⁶¹⁴ Nodar Broladze, 'Novyi konflikt na zapade Gruzii', *Nezavisimaya gazeta*, 15 August 1992, p.1.

⁶¹⁵ *ibid.*; Akaky Mikadze, 'Abkhazia: Another South Ossetia?', *Moscow News*, 34, 1992, p. 5; Konstantin Litvinov and Oleg Odnokolenko, 'V Sukhumi strelyaiut, grabyat i zhdut nachala partizanskoi voyny', *Krasnaya zvezda*, 21 August 1992, p.1.

⁶¹⁶ Nodar Broladze, 'Novyi konflikt na zapade Gruzii', p.1.

⁶¹⁷ Akaky Mikadze, 'A Tragic August in Abkhazia', *Moscow News*, 35, 1992, p.4.

southward from Gagra.⁶¹⁸ Therefore, despite being able to take control of Sukhumi and of most of the Abkhaz territory, the Georgian forces were incapable of achieving their most important objective - crushing the resistance and securing rail and road communications.⁶¹⁹ Abkhaz leaders found a safe haven in the area of Gudauta where a Russian military base was located. From there they conducted their counter-offensive to dislodge the Georgians from Abkhazia during the Autumn of 1992 and most of 1993.

2. Russia's involvement

a. Motivations

Why did Russia become involved in the Abkhaz conflict and what were Russia's interests in the region? Located in the vicinity of the turbulent Northern Caucasian region, the Transcaucasian republics represented one of the most sensitive areas of the post-Soviet space. Russian leaders were aware that conflicts and instabilities in the Transcaucasus were bound to have a negative impact on developments in the unstable Russian Northern Caucasus, since both areas were closely linked by geographical, cultural and economic ties. Control over developments in the Transcaucasus was, therefore, considered essential for control over the Northern Caucasus.⁶²⁰ Russia's involvement in the region was also motivated by the concern that Abkhaz demands for independence and secession from Georgia might lead to similar requests by the Russian North Caucasian republics, thus threatening the territorial integrity of Russia. Moreover, the development of ethnic conflicts not only in Georgia but also in Azerbaijan boosted the illegal traffic of drugs and weapons, thus significantly contributing to the general instability of the entire Caucasian area.

Furthermore, the collapse of the Soviet Union dealt a severe blow to Russia's forward defence strategy and significantly reduced Russia's presence in the shores of the Black Sea. Although, during the Spring and Summer of 1992, the MFA and the MOD favoured the withdrawal of Russian forces from areas of conflict, the Russian MOD still wished to keep a military presence in Georgia, as a counter to a potential NATO threat coming from

⁶¹⁸ Dodge Billingsley, 'Georgian-Abkhazian security issues', *Jane's Intelligence Review*, February 1996, pp.65-66.

⁶¹⁹ Besik Urigashvili, 'Shevardnadze obvinyat Abkhazskuiu storonu v sryve dogovorennosti', *Izvestiya*, 9 September 1992, p.1.

⁶²⁰ Andranik Migranyan, 'Podlinnye i mnimiye orientiry vo vneshnei politike', *Rossiiskaya gazeta*, 4 August 1992, p.4.

Turkey.⁶²¹ Col. Gen. Patrikeyev, commander of the Transcaucasian Military District (TCMD), suggested that Russia take the troops under its control and legalise their stay on Transcaucasian territory with inter-republican agreements.⁶²² In the Autumn of 1992, as conflict erupted in Abkhazia, Georgia became increasingly identified as strategically vital to Russia's security, and the desire to retain a significant military presence in that country grew. On 22 February 1993, Grachev clearly stated the strategic importance that Russia attached to the Black Sea coast and declared that Russia should take all the necessary steps to ensure that Russian troops remained in the area. Otherwise, Russia would lose control over the Black Sea.⁶²³

In addition, Russia was particularly worried that other countries might intervene in Georgia in order to stop the violence, and thus dislodge Russia from a traditional sphere of Russia's influence.⁶²⁴ Georgia's increasingly pro-Western orientation, especially after 1993, created additional concerns among the Russian elite regarding Russia's loss of economic and military influence in the area. Economic support from the West, and Georgia's participation in the projects transporting Caspian fuel to the West and Turkey, led to a tendency to view the entire Transcaucasus region as an area of rivalry between Russia and the West.⁶²⁵ Last but not least, the presence of a large Russian-speaking community in Abkhazia, including a large number of Russian citizens spending their holidays in Abkhazia when the conflict erupted, also called in favour of Russia participating actively in order to find a resolution to the conflict. This question had a significant impact on a Russian national consciousness shattered by the psychological effects of Russia's recent loss of empire.

⁶²¹ For Grachev's comments on the need to keep a presence in Georgia, see Moscow Mayak Radio, 29 May 1992, in *FBIS-SOV-92-105*, 1 June 1992, p.65. For the Ministry of Defence's policy on military withdrawal from the FSS see: Pavel Grachev, 'Pri formirovanii armii Rossii nuzhen chetkii raschet i zdravyi smysl', *Krasnaya zvezda*, 21 July 1992, p.1.

⁶²² Postfactum, 18 March 1992, in *FBIS-SOV-92-054*, 19 March 1992, p.19.

⁶²³ Russian TV Network, 22 February 1993 in *FBIS-SOV-93-035*, 24 February 1993 p.36.

⁶²⁴ Andrei Kozyrev, 'Rossiya fakticheski v odnochku neset bremya real'nogo mirotvorchestva v konfliktakh po perimetru svoikh granits', p.1; Andrei Kozyrev, 'Demokratiya i mirotvorchestvo - dve storony odnoi medali', p.1.

⁶²⁵ Georgy Dvali, 'Edvard Shevardnadze on a Quest for Geopolitical balance', *Kommersant-daily*, 22 May 1996, p. 4 in *CDPSP*, XLVIII, 1996, 21, p.22.

b. Russian Military Support to the Sides in the Conflict

The current section will examine whether Russia deliberately exacerbated the Abkhaz conflict, by providing military support to either side involved in the fighting, in order to impose its military presence in the region, and thus bring Georgia back into Russia's sphere of influence. In order to provide an accurate assessment of Russia's involvement in the conflict, it is necessary first to examine Russia's participation in the formation of the Georgian army, especially in terms of transfer of military equipment and material, and to analyse the legal basis of Russia's military presence in Georgia. When the Soviet Union collapsed, the armed forces located in Georgia, as well as all other forces belonging to the TCMD, were initially placed under the control of CIS Commander in Chief, Marshal Shaposhnikov. During the early months of 1992, the Russian and CIS leadership seemed eager to withdraw all TCMD troops back to Russia, especially from Armenia and Azerbaijan, where army barracks were constantly assaulted by local Armenian and Azeri formations in order to obtain military equipment.⁶²⁶ In Georgia, however, the Russian MOD seemed more favourable to keep a Russian military presence for various reasons. First, the advent of a new government in Georgia, headed by Eduard Shevardnadze, led to a significant improvement in relations between the local authorities and the CIS armed forces.⁶²⁷ Attacks on military installations aimed at seizing weapons significantly diminished.⁶²⁸ Second, the Georgian leadership also seemed supportive of a CIS military presence in the country. On 11 March 1992, Shevardnadze officially requested the presence of CIS troops in Georgia and gave assurances to local officers that servicemen would be protected.⁶²⁹ On the one hand, Shevardnadze believed that Russian troops could provide significant help in the setting up of the new Georgian army, and on the other, he probably saw the troops as an internal guarantee of security against any return of Gamsakhurdia's forces.⁶³⁰ Third, Russia was experiencing serious difficulties in resettling all the former Soviet troops that were returning from Eastern Europe, and other former

⁶²⁶ For Ruskoi's comments on the need to withdraw all CIS troops from Transcaucasia, see Radio Moscow World Service, 10 March 1992, in *FBIS-SOV-92-048*, 11 March 1992 p. 10; For CIS Commander Shaposhnikov's comments, see Radio Moscow, 24 February 1992, in *FBIS-SOV-92-038*, 26 February 1992, p.17.

⁶²⁷ Interview with Lt.-Gen. Suffian Beppayev, Commander of the TCMD, Interfax, 6 March 1992 in *FBIS-SOV-092-045*, 6 March 1992, p.70.

⁶²⁸ This was confirmed by Grachev in an interview with Mayak Radio on 29 May 1992. (*FBIS-SOV-92-105*, 1 June 1992, pp.65-66.)

⁶²⁹ Russian TV, 11 March 1992, *FBIS-SOV-92-049*, 12 March 1992, p.10.

⁶³⁰ Georgian Defence Minister Lt. Levan Sharashenidze stated that Georgia sought support from the TCMD for the creation of the Georgian army. (Besik Urigashvili, 'Georgia is Forming its Own Army', *Izvestiya*, 30 April 1992 p. 2, in *FBIS-SOV92-085*, 1 May 1992 p.57.)

Soviet states, and therefore was happy to delay the return of those troops which were not subjected to daily attacks. Last, but not least, the Russian MOD had already, at this early stage, given Georgia special priority in Russia's new geo-strategic map. Interviewed by Radio Mayak, on 29 May 1992, Grachev said that 'strategically speaking, Georgia's territory is a zone of interests for Russia.'⁶³¹ Therefore, after placing under its temporary jurisdiction all forces belonging to the TCMD on 19 March 1992, Russia engaged in negotiations with Georgian government to reach an agreement that would legalise the presence of these forces on Georgian soil. These negotiations lasted for almost two years until a first agreement on a Russian presence was reached in February 1994.

Although Georgia was ready to accept a Russian military presence on its territory, its leaders still intended to claim what they considered was Georgia's legitimate share of the former Soviet Army material. At the end of April 1992, Shevardnadze officially demanded the transfer to Georgia's jurisdiction of part of the arms and equipment belonging to the TCMD deployed on Georgian territory, as well as the transfer of part of the Black Sea Fleet located along the Georgian coast.⁶³² Russia agreed to the division of the former Soviet Armed forces, and negotiations on the allocation of material began in May 1992. Russia's decision was part of an overall strategy of restructuring and reducing the size of the Russian armed forces, as well as of an awareness that nothing could be done to stop the formation of national armies. As Grachev clearly explained, denial of equipment to the Georgian side most certainly would have resulted in the illegal capture of material from Russian military installations, thus endangering the lives of Russian servicemen, as was happening in Azerbaijan. On 15 May 1992, agreement was reached on the transfer of military equipment to Georgia on the basis of the Treaty on Conventional Forces in Europe (CFE),⁶³³ and on 27 May 1992, Grachev instructed the TCMD to give Georgia 100 artillery guns and combat infantry vehicles, 30 tanks, 10,000 Kalashnikov submachine guns and 2,000 Makarov pistols. However, Grachev made it clear to Georgian leaders that material would be transferred only if it was not used in ethnic conflicts, thus indicating that the Russian MOD did not intend to supply weapons to Georgia in order to exacerbate potential conflicts in the region.⁶³⁴ On the contrary, the perpetuation of the conflict in South

⁶³¹ Radio Mayak, 29 May 1992, in *FBIS-SOV-92-105*, 1 June 1992, pp.65-66.

⁶³² Besik Urigashvili, 'Georgia is Forming its Own Army', p.2.

⁶³³ According to this agreement, Georgia was to receive 220 tanks, 220 APC, 135 artillery pieces, 100 planes and 50 helicopters. ('Dokument: Dogovor po obychnym vooruzheniyam: posledstvia dlya Rossii', *Nezavisimaya gazeta*, 29 July 1992 p.1,3).

⁶³⁴ Moscow Mayak Radio, 29 May 1992, in *FBIS-SOV-92-105*, 1 June 1992, p.35.

Ossetia, and the emergence of instability in Abkhazia delayed the transfer of equipment for a couple of months.⁶³⁵ Only in July 1992, did Russia finally proceed with the transfer of all allotted weapons to Georgia.

When fighting initially broke out in August 1992, Georgia found itself in a clearly advantageous military position. During the initial offensive, Georgia used part of the material received from the TCMD, including 30 battle tanks, and a similar number of infantry fighting vehicles, to crush the Abkhaz resistance.⁶³⁶ The Abkhaz soldiers in contrast, were simply fighting with shot-guns and sticks, and only had seven or eight tanks and armoured personnel carriers, and about 3,000 pieces of firearms.⁶³⁷ These development led to a reassessment of Russia's military policies towards Georgia and a hardening of the position of the Russian MOD. Immediately after violence erupted, Grachev sent an airborne division to the Russian base in Gudauta in order to protect the Russian Army units stationed in Abkhazia and to help evacuate Russian citizens trapped there.⁶³⁸ Although the main aim was to protect the local civilian population, Russian paratroopers apparently made it clear from the start that any attempt to cross the Gumista river and advance on Gudauta would be perceived as a hostile attack, thus effectively sealing off Kitovani's vanguard in Gagra from Georgian supplies.⁶³⁹ Moreover, on 31 August 1992, the Russian Chief of the General Staff, Col.-Gen. Viktor Dubynin threatened to intervene 'in order to stop actions which endangered the lives of Russian citizens or the security of the region.'⁶⁴⁰ Russia's menacing statements and its growing involvement in the crisis resulted in an exacerbation of Georgian-Russian relations, within the background of an extremely explosive situation in Abkhazia. During the Autumn of 1992, the Georgian leadership increasingly perceived Russia as the main enemy in its confrontation with the Abkhaz and thus began pressing for the withdrawal of Russian troops initially from Abkhazia and eventually from the whole of Georgia. The Russian MOD, in turn, became

⁶³⁵ Pavel Felgengauer, 'General Grachev: 9 iunya posleduiut novye naznacheniya v Ministerstve Oborony i v Armii', p.2; Lt.-Col. Vladimir Mukhin, 'Voina v Zakavkaz'e i Pridnestrov'e tol'ko nachinaetsya', *Nezavisimaya gazeta*, 26 June 1992, p.2.

⁶³⁶ Akaky Mikadze, 'Abkhazia: Another South Ossetia?', *Moscow News*, 1992, 34, p.5.

⁶³⁷ Akaky Mikadze, 'A Tragic August in Abkhazia', *Moscow News*, 1992, 35, p.4.

⁶³⁸ Interfax, 17 August, 1992, in *FBIS-SOV-92-160*, 18 August 1992, p.9.

⁶³⁹ Pavel Baev, *Russia's Policies in the Caucasus*, p.45.

⁶⁴⁰ Itar-tass, 31 August 1992, in Catherine Dale, 'Turmoil in Abkhazia: Russian Responses', p. 53.

more and more supportive of the Abkhaz cause and favourable of keeping a military presence in Georgia at any cost.⁶⁴¹

In early October 1992, Abkhaz military formations, with the support of North Caucasian volunteers, heavy armoured equipment, including T-72 tanks, and rockets from Grad and Alazan launchers, conducted a successful offensive in northern Abkhazia and dislodged the Georgians from the Gagra region.⁶⁴² The Abkhaz offensive led to a string of Georgian accusations that Russia had supplied the Abkhaz with military equipment from the Russian base at Bombora. The Russian MOD systematically denied these accusations, and insisted that Russian troops had maintained strict neutrality.⁶⁴³ Whether or not Russia provided military help to Abkhazia, at this early stage of the conflict, is difficult to know, given that hard evidence regarding Russia's participation in the transfer of material is lacking. Some early reports suggest that only Russia could have provided the Abkhaz with the military equipment, since T-72 and T-80 tanks were neither produced in Gudauta nor in the North Caucasus. Consequently, they could only have reached Abkhazia by sea or by air, with the tacit approval of Russia.⁶⁴⁴ However, no hard evidence seems to have been found yet to sustain the hypothesis that Moscow ordered the transfer of these weapons to the Abkhaz. It seems more plausible that Russian forces in Abkhazia acted independently, either in support of the Abkhaz cause or simply, in order to obtain financial profits. The development of a profitable local weapons trade was acknowledged not only by respectable journalists, but also by the deputy commander of the TCMD, General Sufian Beppayev.⁶⁴⁵ Moreover, the Abkhaz themselves, like the Georgians, conducted regular attacks against Russian military installations in Gudauta in order to obtain military equipment. Apparently, shortly after the Georgian attack in August 1992, the Abkhaz assaulted an air defence regiment deployed in Gudauta, and a substantial number of machine guns were

⁶⁴¹ Yurii Gladkevich, 'Chem zapratit "tret'ya sila"?', *Krasnaya zvezda*, 15 September 1992, p. 1; Yurii Gladkevich, 'Prolog k bol'shoi voine?', *Krasnaya zvezda*, 7 October 1992, pp. 1,3; Yurii Gladkevich, 'Russkie v Abkhazii s nadezhdoi smotryat oni segodnya na Rossiiu', *Krasnaya zvezda*, 16 October 1992, p.1.

⁶⁴² Besik Urigashvili, 'Ataka na Gagra: ranenye i ubitie ischislyaiutsya desyatkami', *Izvestiya*, 2 October 1992, p.2; Besik Urigashvili, 'Politicheskii kompromiss obernulsya dlya Gruzii voennym porazheniem v Gagrakh', *Izvestiya*, 5 October 1992, pp.1-2.

⁶⁴³ Nodar Broladze, 'Voina v Abkhazii: otnosheniya mezhdru Gruziei i Rossiei stremitel'no ukhudshaiutsya', *Nezavisimaya gazeta*, 6 October 1992, p.3.

⁶⁴⁴ Besik Urigashvili, 'Ataka na Gagra: ranenye i ubitie ischislyaiutsya desyatkami', p.2.

⁶⁴⁵ Personal interview with Aleksandr Zhilin, *Moskovskie novosti* military correspondent, Moscow, November 1996; General Sufian Beppayev, interviewed by *L'Unita*, 22 October 1992 p.12, in *FBIS-SOV-92-211*, 30 October 1992 p.68.

captured.⁶⁴⁶ Whether weapons were handed by Russian servicemen or whether they were actually stolen is difficult to determine. However, the evidence seems to indicate that during August-October 1992, the Abkhaz received a substantial part of their weapons from local Russian troops, most probably without Moscow's approval.

In the Winter of 1992-1993, the strategy of the Russian MOD acquired a new dimension, as the Russian military got progressively more involved in the conflict, and began providing direct military support to the Abkhaz. Local journalists reported that, on 21 February 1993, the Russian MOD sent an SU-25 fighter plane to bomb Sukhumi - a report never denied by the Russian MOD.⁶⁴⁷ In early March 1993, as Abkhaz bombings on Sukhumi intensified, a deserter, who was a regular officer in the Russian special forces, stated that the Abkhaz side had received large amounts of fuel from Russia as well as 20 state-of-the-art T-72 tanks. Moreover, Russian military specialists apparently arrived in Gudauta to advise the Abkhaz side. The deserter also affirmed that soldiers from a Russian army landing-force battalion stationed in Nizhnie Eshery were directly involved in combat operations on the side of the Abkhaz.⁶⁴⁸ Furthermore, on 11 March 1993, *Interfax* reported that a team of Russian officers was helping the Abkhaz to plan the recapture of Abkhazia. On 12 March 1993, an SU-25 fighter plane with Russian identification marks dropped bombs on the village of Tsagera in the Ochamchira region.⁶⁴⁹ Although Grachev stated that it was a Georgian SU-25 aircraft, with painted Russian emblems, that was bombing Sukhumi and other populated areas in Abkhazia, such an interpretation is hard to accept.⁶⁵⁰ Apparently, the Russian airborne assault unit at the Bombora airfield in Abkhazia also took a direct part in the assaults of Sukhumi both in March, July and September 1993.⁶⁵¹ The Russian Ministry of Defence regularly denied the involvement of Russian forces in the attack on Sukhumi and insisted that all Russian units in Abkhazia were maintaining strict neutrality, a position also upheld by Russian officers in Gudauta.⁶⁵² However, these claims seem very hard to sustain on the basis of the available evidence.

⁶⁴⁶ Yekaterina Glebova, 'An Ordinary War', *Moscow News*, 1992, 42, p.4.

⁶⁴⁷ Sergei Taranov and Besik Urigashvili, 'Bombardirovka Sukhumi rezko oslozhnila otnosheniya Rossii s Gruziei', *Izvestiya*, 23 February 1993, p.1. Georgia accused Russia of bombing the residential quarters of Sukhumi. The Russian Ministry of Defence did not deny the attack, it simply affirmed that the raid was against military installations and not against the civilian population.

⁶⁴⁸ Besik Urigashvili, 'Abkhazskie voiska shturmuiut Sukhumi', 17 March 1993, p.1.

⁶⁴⁹ Interfax, 11 and 13 March 1993, *FBIS-SOV-93-048*, 15 March 1993, pp.15-16.

⁶⁵⁰ Interfax, 18 March 1993, *FBIS-SOV-93-052*, 19 March 1993, p.10.

⁶⁵¹ Tbilisi 7 DGHE, 22-28 September 1995, in *FBIS-SOV-95-194*, 6 October 1995, p.73.

⁶⁵² Viktor Litovkin, 'Rossiiskie voennye otritsaiut svoe uchastie v boyakh', *Izvestiya*, 17 March 1993 p. 2; Interfax, 11 March 1993, in *FBIS-SOV-93-047*, 12 March 1993, p.70.

What were Russia's aims in providing help to the Abkhaz? Was the MOD trying to put pressure on Georgia in order to bring it back into Russia's sphere of influence? The available evidence seems to indicate that the Russian MOD decided to support the Abkhaz in order to secure a Russian military presence in the country. In mid-December 1992, the Georgian parliament had demanded the withdrawal of Russian troops from Abkhazia, and had threatened to demand the withdrawal of all Russian troops from Georgia.⁶⁵³ The Russian MOD, however, was eager to keep a military presence in Abkhazia and the rest of Georgia. In February 1993, Grachev openly declared that Russia considered Georgia and area of key strategic importance, and made it clear that Russia wanted to keep a military presence in that country. During the last Abkhaz offensive on Sukhumi, in September 1993, Grachev put strong pressure on Georgia in order to obtain a military presence in that country and, after the dislodging of the Georgians from Abkhazia, Russia finally succeeded in obtaining the consent of the Georgian government for the presence of Russian forces on Georgian soil. Although agreement on the issue had been reached during the visit of Grachev to Tbilisi on 1 September 1993, the final offensive wiped out the last doubts, since the Georgian leadership became aware that without Russia's support it could not set up its own army, repel any eventual attack and restore its authority over Abkhazia. Russia's military presence in Georgia was legalised in the Friendship and Co-operation treaty signed on 3 February 1994 which stipulated the presence of three Russian military bases in Georgia - Batumi, Akhalkalaki, and Vaziani, near Tbilisi - and the joint border protection of the Georgian-Turkish border. The agreement also envisaged Russian support for the creation of the Georgian army. Russia's military bases in Georgia were intended to fulfil three purposes. First, Russian forces were seen as part of a unified system of military bases in Transcaucasia, aimed at deterring a large-scale foreign intervention in the internal conflicts of the region. Second, the bases were intended to guarantee the isolation and containment of the explosive North Caucasian region. Finally, they were aimed at ensuring stability inside Georgia.⁶⁵⁴ On the basis of this evidence, it can therefore be argued with almost total certainty that the Russian Defence Ministry used covert military support to introduce a military presence in Georgia, and thus keep this area under Russia's sphere of influence.

⁶⁵³ Itar-tass, 25 December 1992, cited by Catherine Dale, 'Turmoil in Abkhazia: Russian Responses', p.54.

⁶⁵⁴ Pavel Felgengauer, 'Rossiiskie voiska ostaiutsya v Zakavkaz'e', *Segodnya*, 21 October 1994, p.2.

c. Russian Mediation Activities

When fighting broke out in Abkhazia in the summer of 1992, the Russian leadership, in particular President Yeltsin and Foreign Minister Kozyrev decided, after some initial hesitation, to conduct an active policy aimed at bringing about a negotiated and peaceful settlement of the conflict. Although Russia made it clear that it regarded events in Abkhazia as an internal Georgian affair, and officially supported the unity and territorial integrity of Georgia, Russian leaders also showed concern for the fate of Abkhazians and Russians, inhabiting the area. Kozyrev emphasised that Russia would not 'stand idly by if the lives of Russian citizens were endangered,' and Yeltsin stressed the need 'to put an end to hostilities and protect the human rights and legitimate interests of the Abkhaz and other peoples of Georgia.'⁶⁵⁵ In an effort to protect its nationals and defuse tension, Russia immediately sent a regiment of paratroopers to Abkhazia to evacuate Russian citizens, and introduced measures to reinforce the Russian-Georgian border along the Psou river in order to prevent the penetration of armed formations into Georgian territory.⁶⁵⁶ In addition, it conducted active mediation efforts aimed at stopping the violence, which soon bore fruits. On 3 September 1992, Yeltsin brokered the first cease-fire agreement, which temporarily put an end to violence. The agreement envisaged the establishment of a trilateral commission made up of representatives of Georgia, Abkhazia and Russia, responsible for monitoring the cessation of hostilities and the withdrawal of forces.⁶⁵⁷ The cease-fire, however, collapsed in early October 1992, when the Abkhaz launched their offensive on Gagra.⁶⁵⁸

The Abkhaz attack on Gagra and the growing perception that Russia was supporting the Abkhaz campaign substantially eroded Russia's mediation capabilities, and significantly worsened relations between Moscow and Tbilisi. Georgia placed all military property of the TCMD located on Georgian territory under Georgian jurisdiction, causing great uproar among the Russian MOD.⁶⁵⁹ Moreover, during October-November 1992, as fighting intensified around Sukhumi, Georgian forces conducted regular attacks against TCMD

⁶⁵⁵ Russian TV, 'Vesti', 17 August, 1992, in *FBIS-SOV-92-160*, 18 August 1992, p.8.

⁶⁵⁶ Itar-tass, 14 August 1992, in *FBIS-SOV-92-160*, 18 August 1992, p.54.

⁶⁵⁷ Itar-tass, 4 September 1992, in *FBIS-SOV- 92-173*, 4 September 1992, pp.8-9.

⁶⁵⁸ Liana Minasyan, 'Posle pobedy na vyborakh Eduard Shevardnadze sobiraetsya zanyat zhestkuiu pozitsiiu na peregovorakh s El'tsinym', *Nezavisimaya gazeta*, 13 October 1992, p.1,3.

⁶⁵⁹ Besik Urigashvili, 'Politicheskii kompromiss obernulsya dlya Gruzii voennym porazheniem v Gagrakh', pp.1-2.

installations, which often led to artillery duels.⁶⁶⁰ Russian-Georgian relations reached a low ebb during the Winter and early Spring of 1993, as Russian-supported Abkhaz attacks against Sukhumi intensified, and the Russian military issued increasingly assertive policy statements concerning Russia's interests in the region - an indication that control over Russia's policies towards Abkhazia was slipping away from the Foreign Ministry into the hands of the Ministry of Defence. In January 1993, the Georgian leader, mistrustful of Russian mediation, asked the UN to mediate in the conflict, and requested that a UN peacekeeping force be sent to the conflict zone, but UN involvement took too long to arrive.⁶⁶¹ In May 1993, the UN Secretary General appointed Eduard Brunner as his Special Envoy for Georgia, but his mediation efforts proved unsuccessful.⁶⁶²

Despite the reverses of Russian diplomacy, and Georgia's perception that Russia was not a neutral party to the conflict, Yeltsin and the Russian MFA resumed their negotiating efforts, during the Spring and Summer of 1993. The two cease-fires brokered by Yeltsin and the MFA on 14 May and on 27 July 1993 showed that Russia remained the only external mediator both willing to and capable of negotiating a halt in the violence, mainly because it alone possessed the political, military and economic clout to force the sides to a compromise. Besides being the dominant economic power, Russia retained a dominant military presence in the region, whereas the conflicting sides' had limited military capabilities. The 27 July cease-fire represented a major success for Russian diplomacy, since it envisaged the participation of Russian forces, subject to UN approval, in the implementation of the cease-fire and the maintenance of law and order.⁶⁶³ Moreover, in the summer of 1993, the UN agreed to the establishment of a UN Observer Mission in Georgia (UNOMIG) with a strength of 88 military observers, responsible for verifying compliance with the cease-fire agreement.⁶⁶⁴ The conditions for a lasting settlement seemed to have been achieved. However, soon after the arrival of the first UNOMIG personnel, in mid-September 1993, the Abkhaz launched a final offensive on Sukhumi and managed to restore control over the rest of Abkhazia.

⁶⁶⁰ Jonathan Aves, *Post-Soviet Transcaucasia*, p.42.

⁶⁶¹ Besik Urigashvili, 'Politichesky kompromiss obernulsya dlya Gruzii voennym porazheniem v Gagrakh', p.4.

⁶⁶² *The Blue Helmets: A Review of United Nations Peace-keeping*, United Nations, New York, 1996, p. 572.

⁶⁶³ United Nations Security Council, (UNSC), S/26250, 6 August 1993, p.7.

⁶⁶⁴ UNSC, Resolution 858, S/RES/858, 24 August 1993.

The Abkhaz offensive dealt a severe blow to Russia's efforts aimed at reaching a lasting settlement of the conflict and brought to light the limitations of Russia's diplomacy. During most of 1992 and 1993, Russia's mediation efforts had been negatively affected by the contradictory policies conducted by the MOD and the MFA. Whereas Kozyrev and other senior members of the Russian government, such as Deputy Prime Minister Sergei Shakhrai, attempted to find a settlement of the conflict which would involve a recognition of Georgia's territorial integrity and a respect for Abkhazia's autonomous status, the MOD openly sympathised with the Abkhaz, provided the latter with covert military support, and made every effort to legalise Russia's military presence in Georgia. The MOD's pro-Abkhaz stance was shared by most members of the Russian parliament, as indicated by the resolution adopted by the Supreme Soviet on 25 September 1992. In direct contradiction with the official policy of the Russian government, the resolution condemned the policies of the Georgian government and recommended that Russia both abstain from signing economic agreements with Georgia and refuse to provide Shevardnadze with arms and military equipment. Moreover, a point on Georgia's territorial integrity and Russia's respect of Georgia's state sovereignty was removed from the text.⁶⁶⁵ Although the statement did not directly affect the policies of the Russian MFA, it brought to light the different approaches of the Russian parliament and the government, towards the Abkhaz and most other military conflicts in the FSS. Most Supreme Soviet deputies favoured more assertive policies in support of pro-Russian minorities within the former Soviet states. They tended to favour the right of self-determination of those entities eager to join Russia, to the detriment of the territorial integrity of the new states, attesting to an 'imperial' thinking. Similar views were held by the Russian military, most of whom found it very difficult to accept Russia's newly acquired borders, as well as the independence of the FSS, in particular Georgia, Ukraine and Belarus. They tended to believe that the map of Russia could easily be changed, and therefore were eager to take and protect as many territories loyal to Russia as possible.⁶⁶⁶ Yeltsin and Kozyrev, instead, were supportive of the territorial integrity of the newly independent states, and of abiding with the principles of international law regulating inter-state relations, enshrined in the UN Charter and the CSCE Paris Declaration of 1990, which upheld the respect for the territorial integrity of states and refused to accept forcible changes of borders.⁶⁶⁷

⁶⁶⁵ Vera Kuznetsova, 'Parlament "razobratsya" s Gruziei', *Nezavisimaya gazeta*, 26 September 1992, p.1.

⁶⁶⁶ Personal interview with Galina Starovoitova, Moscow, November 1996.

⁶⁶⁷ 'Joint Declaration of Twenty-two States', Paris, 19 November 1990, *NATO Review*, December 1990, p.26.

Immediate reactions to the Abkhaz offensive again brought to light the conflicting agendas of the Foreign and Defence Ministries. Whereas the MFA condemned the Abkhaz offensive, accused the Abkhaz side of violating the truce and imposed an economic blockade on Abkhazia,⁶⁶⁸ Defence Minister Grachev laid the blame primarily on the Georgians, and declared that there had been serious violations of the cease-fire agreement on both sides.⁶⁶⁹ Moreover, Grachev turned down Shevardnadze's request that Russian troops in the region help restore the previous positions of the warring parties. When Shevardnadze eventually agreed to the immediate dispatch of a Russian peacemaking force as requested by Grachev, the latter refused to send such forces, arguing that it was too late.⁶⁷⁰ The MOD's apparent covert support for the Abkhaz and Grachev's refusal to come to Shevardnadze's help attested to a desire to put maximum pressure on Georgia so that it agree to the presence of Russian troops in Georgia, and join the CIS and the Collective Security Treaty (CST). In exchange for military support in his struggle against Gamsakhurdia's followers - in early November 1993, a Russian marine battalion landed on the Georgian coast in order to protect the Transcaucasian lines of communication - Shevardnadze was forced to agree to the presence of three Russian military bases on Georgian territory and to bring Georgia into the CIS and the CST.⁶⁷¹ It can therefore be argued that the Defence Ministry clearly followed a neo-imperialist policy aimed at enhancing Russia's military-strategic position in the region and thus bring Georgia back into Russia's sphere of influence. The MFA, instead, aimed its policy at reaching a peaceful settlement of the conflict which respected the territorial integrity of Georgia and granted Abkhazia a special status, thus attesting to a non-imperialist behaviour. Its involvement was primarily motivated by a desire to avoid the spread of violence and instability along Russia's southern borders, and reflected a concern for the potential negative repercussions that secessionists movements could have on the fragile internal structure of Russia itself. However, the MFA's views as far as peacekeeping is concerned, increasingly adopted a neo-imperialist character during the Autumn of 1993 and the whole of 1994.

⁶⁶⁸ Besik Urigashvili, 'V Sukhumi po-prezhemu l'etsya krov' ', *Izvestiya*, 22 September 1993, pp.1-2.

⁶⁶⁹ Pavel Felgengauer, 'V Sukhumi idut ulichnye boi. General Grachev umyvaet ruki', *Segodnya*, 21 September, 1993 p.1.

⁶⁷⁰ *ibid.*

⁶⁷¹ Pavel Baev, *Russia's Policies in the Caucasus*, p.47.

d. The Introduction of Russian Peacekeepers

The total dislodging of Georgian forces from Abkhazia in the Autumn of 1993 opened up a new phase in the Georgian-Abkhaz conflict, which lasted until the Spring of 1994, and which was characterised by intensive UN and Russian mediation efforts, aimed at securing a lasting cease-fire agreement and at preparing the ground for the deployment of international peacekeeping forces. The Russian MFA proved supportive of an agreement which respected Georgia's territorial integrity, and seemed eager to work in strict collaboration with the UN, not only because Shervardnadze insisted on the involvement of international organisations, but also because UN participation provided additional legitimacy to Russian mediation and peacekeeping operations. At the UN-sponsored first round of negotiations held in Geneva during 30 November-1 December 1993, Georgians and Abkhaz committed themselves to renounce the use of force, and asked for an increase in the number of military observers and the presence of an international peacekeeping force to monitor the cessation of violence.⁶⁷² The agreement also envisaged the creation of a group of experts, made up of representatives of the UN, the CSCE, Russia and the warring parties, and responsible for preparing recommendations on Abkhazia's future political status.⁶⁷³

At the second round of UN-sponsored talks in Geneva in mid-January 1994, Georgia and Abkhazia again expressed their support for the deployment of UN peacekeeping forces, and this time agreed to the participation of Russian military contingents as part of the forces.⁶⁷⁴ The sides also asked the UN Security Council to expand the UNOMIG mandate and to entrust it with the verification of the cease-fire.⁶⁷⁵ In view of these requests, the UN suggested that a UN peacekeeping force, under UN command, and including a contingent of Russian soldiers not exceeding one third of the force, be dispatched to the area to monitor the cease-fire and the withdrawal of force, and to create the conditions for the safe return of refugees. The UN also examined the possibility of the Security Council authorising a multinational military force involving primarily Russian contingents not

⁶⁷² UNSC, S/26875, 15 December 1993, pp.3-4.

⁶⁷³ *ibid.* In addition, the parties agreed to create the necessary conditions for the safe return of refugees. The September-October 1993 Abkhaz offensive had resulted in the displacement of around 200,000 ethnic Georgians who had found shelter in the central areas of Georgia.

⁶⁷⁴ UNSC, S/1994/32, 14 January 1994, pp. 2-3; Yuri Kovalenko, 'Rossiiskie soldaty vykrasyat svoi kaski v goluboi tsvet', *Izvestiya*, 15 January 1994, p.4.

⁶⁷⁵ *ibid.*

under UN command, but monitored by UNOMIG.⁶⁷⁶ Although both the Abkhaz and the Georgians showed preference for the first option, UN forces failed to materialise. On the one hand, disagreements existed between the Georgians and the Abkhaz, regarding the exact mandate of the forces.⁶⁷⁷ On the other hand, the UN Secretary General refused to recommend to the Security Council the dispatch of a force, because he considered that the conditions were not ripe for such a deployment. The reservations raised by the Abkhaz as far as the peacekeeping mandate was concerned, the lack of acceptance by both sides of the UN proposals for the mandate and deployment of UN forces, as well as the lack of progress in the negotiations, made the UN operation highly risky.⁶⁷⁸ But the main reason why UN forces were never sent was, as Boutros-Ghali explained, the absence of financial resources and the lack of political will by the international community to send forces to the region.⁶⁷⁹ UN forces were broadly over-stretched at the time, concurrently conducting operations in many parts of the globe, and heavily engaged in the former Yugoslavia.

On 4 April 1994, Russia finally managed to broker a lasting cease-fire agreement, which again envisaged the introduction of UN peacekeeping forces, involving a Russian contingent. However, the UN failed to assemble a force. In view of this, Russia decided to take the initiative, and on 14 May 1994 agreed with the Georgian and Abkhaz leadership to a Russian peacekeeping operation along the Inguri river with a CIS mandate and UN observation. The forces were to oversee the implementation of the cease-fire agreement, monitor the withdrawal of forces from a 12km-wide zone along the Inguri river, and promote the safe return of refugees to their homes in Abkhazia.⁶⁸⁰ Although this agreement legalised the Russian peacekeeping presence in Abkhazia, CIS approval of the operation arrived only in October 1994, five months after Russian forces took up their positions in Abkhazia. At the CIS summit on 21 October, CIS leaders granted the CIS forces a six month mandate aimed at promoting a full-scale settlement of the conflict and furthering the return of refugees.⁶⁸¹ Six months later, on 26 May 1995, CIS states expanded the CIS peacekeeping mandate, allowing the forces to fulfil other tasks aimed at the restoration of peace, 'in accordance with the decision of the commander of the forces and in co-ordination

⁶⁷⁶ UNSC, S/1994/80, 25 January 1994, pp.5-6. The force would monitor the disarmament and withdrawal of armed units along the demarcation line set by the Inguri and Psou rivers, and would also help create the conditions for the safe return of refugees to the Gali region.

⁶⁷⁷ UNSC, S/1994/312, 18 March 1994, p.2.

⁶⁷⁸ UNSCE, S/1994/253, 3 March 1994, p.2; UNSC, S/1994/529, 3 May 1994.

⁶⁷⁹ Moscow NTV, 3 April 1994, in *FBIS-SOV-94-064*, 4 April 1994, pp.6-7.

⁶⁸⁰ UNSC, S/1994/583, 21 May 1994, pp.2-3.

⁶⁸¹ 'Mandat na provedenie operatsii po podderzhaniiu mira v zone gruzino-abkhazskogo konflikta', 21 October 1994, *Sodruzhestvo*, 1994, 11, pp.70-73.

with the warring sides.⁶⁸² The force's mandate however, remained quite limited, given that peacekeepers were expected to comply with the 20 March 1992 CIS peacekeeping agreement, which regulated peacekeeping activities very much in accordance with the traditional concept of monitoring a cease-fire and the separation of forces.⁶⁸³

In an attempt to justify Russia's actions, Foreign Minister Kozyrev wrote a letter to the UN Secretary General on 21 June 1994, in which he explained that the deployment of a CIS peacekeeping force was the only way to prevent a resumption of hostilities. Aware that the UN would not send troops in the immediate future Russia had decided to immediately deploy an advanced contingent based on the Russian troops already present in Abkhazia. The troops were to be part of a CIS collective force, and were to be deployed for a six months period, on the basis of Chapter VIII of the UN Charter.⁶⁸⁴ Kozyrev made it clear that the CIS did not intend to replace the UN, but instead wanted to help the UN in its efforts to restore peace. The CIS, according to Kozyrev, was willing to co-operate closely with UNOMIG.⁶⁸⁵ In view of this situation, the UN resigned itself to approve the deployment of Russian peacekeeping forces, and modified the UNOMIG mandate so as to accommodate its activities with those of the Russian peacekeeping forces. Although Russian peacekeepers were not granted a UN mandate, their presence was 'legalised' by the UN, whose military observers were asked to co-operate with CIS peacekeepers in the fulfilment of their mandate. However, UN observers were also made responsible for the '[observation of] the operations of the peacekeeping forces', in other words they were entrusted with the of monitoring of Russian peacekeeping actions.⁶⁸⁶

e. Assessment of Russian Mediation and Peacekeeping

The introduction of Russian peacekeeping forces and the ability of the Russian MOD to impose a Russian military presence in Georgia, seems to indicate that Russia intended to restore a neo-empire in the region, and this most probably was the aim of the Russian MOD. However, the motivations behind the Russian MFA's policies are harder to discern.

⁶⁸² 'Mandat kollektivnykh sil po podderzhaniyu mira v zone konflikta v Abkhazii, Respublika Gruziiya', 26 May 1995, *Sodruzhestvo*, 1995, 6, p.77.

⁶⁸³ *ibid.*, p. 78; 'Soglasenie o Gruppakh voennikh nabludatel'ei i kollektivnykh silakh po podderzhaniyu mira v Sodruzhestve Nezavisimykh Gosudarstv', 20 March 1992, *Sodruzhestvo*, 1992, 4, pp.9-10.

⁶⁸⁴ UNSC, S/1994/732, 21 June 1994, pp.2-3.

⁶⁸⁵ *ibid.*

⁶⁸⁶ UNSC Resolution 937, S/RES/937, 21 July 1994, p.2

During 1992 and most of 1993, Kozyrev worked hard to bring about a cessation of violence and a lasting settlement of the dispute which respected Georgia's territorial integrity and Abkhazia's autonomy. However, the last Abkhaz offensive which dislodged Georgian forces from Abkhazia, dealt a severe blow to the MFA and brought to light the predominance of the MOD over the MFA in policy-making towards Abkhazia. After these events, Kozyrev adopted a more assertive stance and his discourse became clearly neo-imperialistic. '[Abkhazia] is vital to Russia's interests' Kozyrev stated in an interview with *Izvestiya* on 8 October 1993, 'If Russia abandons its positions [in Abkhazia], other forces might replace it, leading to the destabilisation of the Northern Caucasus, the disintegration of Georgia, and eventually of Russia as well.'⁶⁸⁷ Although, according to Kozyrev, Russia was eager to collaborate with the UN, it did not want other regional players or Western countries to replace its predominant peacekeeping role in the area.⁶⁸⁸ Neither did Russia want the UN or the CSCE to play a predominant role.⁶⁸⁹

Despite Kozyrev's assertive rhetoric, during the Winter and Spring of 1994 the MFA collaborated closely with the UN in order to reach a lasting settlement, and did not block the sending of a UN force. When UN forces failed to materialise, and a Russian peacekeeping force was introduced, Kozyrev tried hard to get a UN mandate for such an operation. Moreover, Russia agreed to UN monitoring of its operations and strictly collaborated with UNOMIG on the ground. Russia's readiness to provide at least some semblance of international legitimacy to its peacekeeping forces and its willingness to collaborate with the international community in negotiations and peacekeeping, might indicate that the Russian government, in particular the MFA, was not conducting a neo-imperialist policy. However, international participation provided additional legitimacy, and consequently further strength to Russia's military presence. Therefore, it is difficult to tell on the basis of this evidence whether or not Russian policies in the peacekeeping field were neo-imperialist. Most probably, the MOD saw Russian peacekeepers as part of its forward-basing strategy, whereas the MFA saw them as an instrument of regional stability.

Whether or not Russia's policies were neo-imperial they actually resulted in Russia keeping an important military presence in Georgia, and this led to the establishment, to a certain extent, of a Russian neo-empire in Georgia. Although Russia regularly supported a

⁶⁸⁷ Maksim Yusin, 'Polgoda nazad Ruskoi skazal mne: "ya ikh nenavizhu, etikh krasnikorichnykh"', p.1

⁶⁸⁸ *ibid.*

⁶⁸⁹ Igor Rotar, 'Voennye dolzhny obladet' iskusstvom mirotvorchestva', pp.1-2.

settlement which envisaged the territorial integrity of Georgia, Tbilisi never managed to restore control over Abkhazia, and Russian military forces remained in the area.⁶⁹⁰ Moreover, the various rounds of negotiations conducted under UN and Russian co-chairmanship between April 1994 and July 1996 did not manage to bring the position of the parties any closer together. However, after the signing of the Treaty of Friendship and Co-operation in February 1994, which legalised Russia's military presence in Georgia, bilateral relations improved, as both the MFA and the MOD began adopting a clearly pro-Georgian stance. The outbreak of the Chechen war in December 1994, and the risk that Georgia might become a rear base for Chechen operations, a possibility all the more likely given the close ties that existed between the Chechens and the Abkhaz, further increased the strategic importance of Georgia. In March 1995, Russia managed to obtain Georgia's approval for the stationing of Russian military forces in Georgia for a 25 year period. Russia not only obtained the basis of Vaziani, Akhalkalaki and Batumi, but also acquired the entire coastal infrastructure between the ports of Poti and Gudauta, including the ports of Poti and Ochamchira. However, Shevardnadze made it clear that he would not sign the treaty unless Georgia's jurisdiction was re-established over Abkhazia, and Georgian refugees were allowed to return to their homes in Abkhazia. Shevardnadze's conditions and Russia's own concern over the potential negative impact of Abkhaz separatism on Chechnya prompted Russia to put growing pressure on the Abkhaz. In December 1994, Russia closed its border with Abkhazia, dealing a significant blow to its economy, and in January 1996 it blockaded the port of Sukhumi to foreign ships.⁶⁹¹ Moreover, at the 19 January 1996 CIS summit, Russia pressed for the adoption of a document on 'Measures to Settle the Conflict in Abkhazia', which imposed economic sanctions on Abkhazia.⁶⁹² Russia's efforts, however, failed to bring the Abkhaz and the Georgians any closer to a political settlement, and as a result, Russia's military presence in Georgia remained shaky.

⁶⁹⁰ In their 13 January 1994 joint communiqué, the UN, the CSCE and Russia called upon the parties to proceed from the need to observe the territorial integrity of Georgia. (UNSC, S/1994/32, 14 January 1994, p. 4). Most UN Security Council Resolutions on Abkhazia affirmed the respect for Georgia's sovereignty and territorial integrity (S/RES/876, 19 October 1993; S/RES/896, 31 January 1994; S/RES/906, 25 March 1994; S/RES/937, 21 July 1994). The Russian-Georgian Friendship and Cooperation treaty signed on 3 February 1994 stipulated the respect for Georgia's and Russia's territorial integrity. ('Dogovor mezhdru Rossiiskoi Federatsiei i Respublikoi Gruziiya o druzhbe, dobrososedstve i sotrudnichestve', *Svobodnaya Gruziiya*, 4 February 1994, p.1.) In early January 1996, Primakov stated that Russia's policies towards Abkhazia were based on the recognition of Georgia's territorial integrity and the need to agree on a status for Abkhazia within Georgia. ('Primakov nachinaet s SNG', *Moskovskie novosti*, 14-21 January 1996, p.13.)

⁶⁹¹ Alla Barakhova, 'Obostroilis' otnosheniya v treugol'nike "Rossiya - Gruziiya - Abkhaziya"', *Nezavisimaya gazeta*, 11 January 1996, p.3.

⁶⁹² Mikhail Globachev, 'Presidents Fail to Resolve Abkhaz Issue', *Nezavisimaya gazeta*, 24 January 1996, p. 3, in *CDPSP*, XLVIII, 1996, 4, p.19.

3. Conclusion

After the collapse of the Soviet Union, the Russian military and diplomatic establishment considered Georgia a key country in strategic terms, both in terms of Russia's defence against Turkey in the south, and in terms of Russia's control over the north Caucasian republics. During the first half of 1992, with the advent of Shevardnadze to power in Tbilisi, Georgian-Russian relations improved significantly, and the Russian military became confident that they could preserve a military presence, albeit reduced, in that country. However, when the war erupted in Abkhazia, the position of the Russian Ministry of Defence towards the Georgian leadership hardened. What initially began as open 'sympathies' for the Abkhaz cause, ended up in covert military support for the Abkhaz separatists, in view of the deterioration of Russia's relations with Tbilisi, and the demands of the latter that Russian troops withdraw from Georgia. By the end of 1992, the Russian Ministry of Defence managed to obtain the agreement of the Georgian government for the stationing of Russian forces in Georgia, and succeeded in sending a Russian-dominated peacekeeping force to the zone of conflict. The pro-Abkhaz stance however was not entirely shared by the Russian MFA which adopted a more balanced approach. Although it put pressure on Georgia to grant Abkhazia regional autonomy, the MFA as well as President Yeltsin always came up in support of Georgia's territorial integrity. The Abkhaz war thus brought to light the inconsistencies of Russian government policies in the near abroad, a result mainly of the different agendas of the Ministry of Defence and the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, and the upper hand acquired by the Ministry of Defence in resolving conflicts in the near abroad. Kozyrev's weak position prevented him from imposing his views on the rest of the government.

Russia's active policies in Abkhazia did bring about Georgia's return into Russia's sphere of influence. However, Russia's initial involvement resulted from an exacerbation of the situation in the ground, provoked, by the way, by the Georgians themselves after Kitovani's storming of Sukhumi in August 1992, and not by a desire of Russia to create tension in order to intervene. Russia's actions in the initial phase of the conflict, from August to December 1992, responded to legitimate state interests, in this case, putting an end to instability and war along its southern borders. However, the evidence available seems to indicate that the Russian military eventually took an active role in support of the Abkhaz during the Winter and Spring of 1993. Thus, the case of intervention in support for

legitimate state interests does not really stand up to scrutiny after the Autumn of 1992. The Russian military clearly wanted to keep a military presence in Georgia and the Russian Foreign Ministry had made it clear it did not want other powers present in the region. Although no other country seemed ready to send troops to the area, except for Russia, this situation very much fitted Russia's desires. Russia allowed other foreign organisations to participate, in particular the UN, but it still managed to keep the dominant role. Above all, it managed to get UN support for its peacekeeping operations. Russian policies in Georgia therefore very much fitted the pattern of 'informal empire building.'

IV. The War in Nagorno-Karabagh

1. Historical Background

Nagorno-Karabagh, a predominantly Armenian-populated region in Azerbaijan, was granted the status of an autonomous oblast within the Azerbaijani Soviet Socialist republic in 1923.⁶⁹³ Starting in the 1940s, the Armenians systematically put forward the demand that the Nagorno-Karabagh enclave be re-attached to the Armenian republic, but with little success. As the Soviet system relaxed into the era of glasnost and perestroika, the Karabagh issue re-emerged. In February 1988, the Nagorno-Karabagh Soviet officially appealed to the Supreme Soviets of Armenia, Azerbaijan and the Soviet Union, to endorse the transfer of Nagorno-Karabagh to Armenia, but the pleas went unheard. During the Spring of 1998, Karabagh Armenians organised huge demonstrations both in Yerevan and Stepanakert, the Karabagh capital. This led to Azeri counter-demonstrations which eventually turned into riots and pogroms against large Armenian minorities in the cities of Sumgait and Baku. An attempt to administer the region directly from Moscow failed to stop the violence, and in November 1989 control over Karabagh was handed back to Azerbaijan. The Armenian Supreme Soviet retaliated by unilaterally declaring Karabagh's annexation to Armenia. In 1990-91, Soviet Army troops reportedly in co-operation with the

⁶⁹³ The literature on the war in Nagorno-Karabagh reveals the following positions: Edmund Herzig and Oles M. Smolansky argued that Russia's tried to keep Azerbaijan within Russia's sphere of influence by exploiting the Nagorno-Karabagh conflict. (Edmund Herzig, *The New Caucasus: Armenia, Azerbaijan and Georgia*, pp.49,106; Oles M. Smolansky, 'Russia and Transcaucasia: The Case of Nagorno-Karabagh', pp. 201-230) Pavel Baev, in turn, claimed that Russia was not interested in a peaceful resolution of the Karabagh conflict, because regional peace would devalue Russia's military assets and leave it with few political levers. (Pavel Baev, *Russia's Policies in the Caucasus*, p.43.) Alex Zverev instead raised the multi-faceted character of Russia's policies in the region. (Alexei Zverev, 'Ethnic Conflicts in the Caucasus', pp. 32-35)

Azerbaijani OMON security troops conducted systematic deportations of Armenians from Nagorno-Karabagh, leading to several waves of fighting.

After the August 1991 coup, Azerbaijan immediately declared its independence from the Soviet Union, leading to Nagorno-Karabagh's declaration of independence from Azerbaijan in September 1991. Nagorno-Karabagh's initiative seriously complicated relations between its leaders and the Armenian government in Yerevan. Under the terms of a cease-fire agreement signed in late September 1991, and mediated by President Yeltsin and his Kazakh counterpart, Nursultan Nazarbaev, Armenia abjured all territorial claims on Nagorno-Karabagh, although it continued to insist that the oblast had a right of autonomy. On 20 November 1991, the cease-fire agreement collapsed when a helicopter carrying Azeri and Russian officials on their way to Stepanakert, for talks on a cease-fire agreement, crashed. Azerbaijan put the blame on Armenia and retaliated by abolishing Nagorno-Karabagh's autonomous status within Azerbaijan. The situation became increasingly exacerbated when a referendum held on 10 December 1991 confirmed Nagorno-Karabagh's desire for independence. Two days later, the Nagorno-Karabagh authorities demanded to accede to the CIS. With the collapse of the Soviet Union, the conflict which had already reached a violent stage acquired a new international status.

2. Russia's Involvement

a. Russia's Motivations

What were Russia's interests in the region, and why did Russia get involved in the conflict? The development of the war in Nagorno-Karabagh represented another serious threat to Russia's security interests in Transcaucasia, especially in terms of the negative repercussions that the conflict could have on the unstable North Caucasian region, as far as weapons' smuggling, drug trafficking, exodus of refugees, and overall instability were concerned. Moreover, the Transcaucasian region as a whole was perceived by Russian leaders, in particular the military, as an area of key military-strategic importance, primarily in terms of countering a potential threat from Turkey.⁶⁹⁴ Armenia and Georgia were considered the two main pillars of Russia's security in the southern flank. Azerbaijan, although not directly bordering Turkey, except for an eleven-km section along the

⁶⁹⁴ Postfactum, 18 March 1992, in *FBIS-SOV-92-054*, 19 March 1992, p.18.

Nakhichevan border, still retained crucial importance, not least because of its valuable energy resources. Control over the rich Azerbaijani oil resources and over the pipeline routes which transported the oil from the Caspian sea to the West very much determined Russia's strategy towards the area. Some Russian scholars even argued that Russia tried to keep the Nagorno-Karabagh conflict constantly simmering, in order to prevent the transit of Azeri oil from the Caspian Sea through Turkey, thus securing its passage through Russia.⁶⁹⁵ However, enough hard proof to sustain such a hypothesis is lacking. Russian leaders were also very much concerned that other regional powers, such as Iran and Turkey, might displace Russia from what they considered was Russia's natural sphere of influence.⁶⁹⁶ Moreover, the Russian military were particularly worried that an exacerbation of the conflict might lead to the stationing of foreign troops, especially NATO troops, in the area. In June 1992, CIS Commander-in-Chief Marshal Shaposhnikov openly stated his opposition to NATO forces conducting peacekeeping operations in the former Soviet space under the aegis of the CSCE.⁶⁹⁷ All these factors most probably explain Russia's readiness to conduct an active policy in the region in order to reach a negotiated settlement, and Russia's desire to be the dominant force in any eventual peace-keeping operation in the area.

b. Russian Military Support to the Warring Sides

The current section will examine whether Russia deliberately exacerbated the Nagorno-Karabagh conflict, by providing military support to either side involved in the fighting, in order to impose its military presence in the region, and thus bring both Armenia and Azerbaijan back into Russia's sphere of influence. In order to correctly evaluate Russia's military policies in Nagorno-Karabagh, it is necessary first to examine the developments of Russia's military presence in Armenia and Azerbaijan. When the Soviet Union collapsed, Soviet military forces in the region - the 7th Army in Armenia, the 4th Army in Azerbaijan, and the 366th Motorised Infantry Division (MID) in Nagorno-Karabagh - were placed under CIS jurisdiction. Only when Russia created its own armed forces in May 1992, were

⁶⁹⁵ Personal interview with Sergei Solodovnik, Scholar at the Moscow State Institute for International Relations, MGIMO, Moscow, November 1997.

⁶⁹⁶ Andranik Migranyan, 'Podlinnye i mnimiye orientiry vo vneshnei politike', p.4.

⁶⁹⁷ Colonel O. Falichev, 'Ya protiv togo, chtoby voiska NATO ispolzovalis' dlya uregulirovaniya nashikh vnutrennikh konfliktov', *Krasnaya Zvezda*, 23 June 1992, p.3. Similar views were taken by First Deputy of the Russian Chief of the General Staff, Col. Gen. Mikhail Kolesnikov. (Pavel Felgengauer, 'Voennye ozhidayut vmeshatel'stva zapada' *Nezavisimaya gazeta*, 1 August 1992, p.1.)

these forces put under Russia's control. Their status for a while, therefore, remained unclear, and as conflict in Nagorno-Karabagh exacerbated, the CIS forces soon found themselves involved in the fighting, often against their own will. From late 1991 until the mid-1992, armed detachments in Armenia, and especially in Azerbaijan, conducted regular attacks on CIS/Russian military installations in order to obtain military hardware for the war in Nagorno-Karabagh, thus putting the lives of local servicemen in danger.⁶⁹⁸ In Nagorno-Karabagh, Azeri forces carried out intensive shelling campaigns against the 366th MID based in Stepanakert. In response to attacks on Stepanakert, Karabagh Armenians stormed and captured the town of Khodzhal'y in late February 1992, allegedly with the support of the CIS 366th MID, causing the death of over a thousand civilians.⁶⁹⁹

What role did the 366th MID play in the fighting? Accusations that the 366th MID was siding with the Karabagh Armenians were regularly denied by CIS military commanders, and were never confirmed by an independent inquiry. However, Interfax reported that the 366th MID did take part in military operations in the village of Khodzhal'y, following orders from the Commander of the TCMD, and acting in self-defence.⁷⁰⁰ Moreover, there is substantial circumstantial evidence indicating that CIS officers and servicemen from the 366th regiment decided, on a voluntary basis, to help the Karabagh Armenians. Many officers and soldiers belonging to the CIS armed forces in Nagorno-Karabagh were of Armenian nationality and therefore strongly sympathised with the Karabagh cause. Moreover, lucrative profits could be obtained both from the illegal sale of weapons and from mercenary participation. *Izvestiya* journalist Viktor Litovkin reported that individual officers and soldiers from the 366th MID participated, on a voluntary basis, in military actions on both sides. Apparently, when the 366th division was ordered to withdraw from the zone of armed conflict, Major Oganyan, commander of the second Motorised Infantry Battalion, along with several Armenian officers and soldiers under his command, seized a tank, three infantry fighting vehicles and two artillery pieces, and occupied commanding positions to the south of the village of Balydzha.⁷⁰¹ However, after the events in Khodzhal'y, the 366th MID, as well as the other armed forces located along the Armenian-

⁶⁹⁸ Postfactum, 20 March 1992, in *FBIS-SOV-92-056*, 23 March 1992, p.19.

⁶⁹⁹ For attacks against 366th MID, see Viktor Litovkin, 'Nagornii Karabakh: Armiya - god pritsel'nyy ognem', *Izvestiya*, 24 February 1992, p.1; Moscow TV, 18 February 1992 in *FBIS-SOV-92-034*, 20 February 1992, p. 89; Interfax, 26 February 1992, in *FBIS-SOV-92-039*, p.77.

⁷⁰⁰ Interfax, 27 February 1992, in *FBIS-SOV-92-040*, 28 February 1992, p. 61.

⁷⁰¹ Viktor Litovkin, 'Nagornii Karabakh: Armiya - god pritsel'nyy ognem', *Izvestiya*, 4 March 1992, pp.1-2.

Azerbaijani border, were immediately withdrawn to Russia, and no more Russian forces were left in the area.⁷⁰²

The withdrawal of the 366th MID clearly indicated that CIS and Russian commanders did not want Russian forces to get involved in the conflict. During 1992 and most of 1993, the Russian government, in agreement with the MOD, conducted a policy of disengagement and retreat from the region, rather than increased involvement. In 1992, Russia began withdrawing its forces from Azerbaijan, and by the end of May 1993, the last units of the Russian army left the military base of Gyandzha.⁷⁰³ Only a small Russian military presence guarding the Gabala radar station was retained. Russia also significantly decreased its military presence in Armenia - the number of troops fell from 20,000 in October 1992 to 5,000 in October 1994.⁷⁰⁴ Moreover, in the Spring of 1992, the Russian MOD proceeded with the synchronous transfer of combat equipment and weapons from the TCMD both to Azerbaijan and to Armenia, in accordance with the CFE Treaty. In Azerbaijan, where more than 4,000 weapons from the Russian Army had already been privatised during 1991-1992, the transfer was often only registered on paper.⁷⁰⁵ Armenia 'privatised' a smaller quantity of combat equipment and weapons from the TCMD, only about 200 items. It therefore found itself initially in a less advantageous position.⁷⁰⁶ However, once it received its own share of the weapons, the situation on the ground was reversed, especially after Karabagh Armenian forces opened the Lachin corridor to Armenia in mid-May 1992. It can therefore be argued that during 1992 and most of 1993, Russia did not try to

⁷⁰² Moscow Mayak Radio, 28 February 1992, in *FBIS-SOV-92-040*, 28 Feb. 1992 p. 60. Georgian journalist sources also describe large amounts of firearms and ammunition from the Russian 147th Motorised Division based in Akhalkalaki (Georgia) being transferred to Karabagh Armenian fighters during the Spring of 1992, and of Russian T-72 tanks from the same division, with Russian crew, launching successful offensive actions against Sussha and Lachin. However, these reports must be treated with caution. On the one hand, it is difficult to explain how these forces reached Nagorno-Karabagh given that the corridors to Armenia were not open then. However, it might be possible that the forces intervened from the Armenian side. On the other hand, if Russian forces did intervene, it is more likely that they were acting on a voluntary basis, given that in the Spring of 1992, Russia was actually withdrawing its forces from Nagorno-Karabagh. (Tbilissi, 7 DGHE, 22-28 Sept. 1995, in *FBIS-SOV-95-194*, 6 October 1995, p. 74.)

⁷⁰³ Stephen Foye, 'Russia's Defence Establishment in Disarray', *RFE/RL Research Report*, 2, 1993, 10 September 1993, pp. 49-54.

⁷⁰⁴ Pavel Baev, *Russia's Policies in the Caucasus*, p.24.

⁷⁰⁵ The Russian army was accused of helping Azerbaijan in the military operations in Nagorno-Karabagh. But this was not the case. Under existing agreements, the personnel of units transferred to the republic's jurisdiction could serve in Azerbaijan's army. According to data from the republic's Defence Ministry, almost 10 percent of servicemen of Slavic nationality exercised this right. (Lt. Col. Vladimir Mukhin, 'Voina v Zakavkaz'e i Pridnestrov'e tol'ko nachinaetsya', *Nezavisimaya gazeta*, 26 June 1992, p.2.)

⁷⁰⁶ *ibid.*

exacerbate the conflict in order to keep or introduce a military presence in the region. This does not mean however, that Russian-made weapons did not reach both sides involved in the conflict. During 1992-1993, the armies stationed in Armenia and Azerbaijan independently engaged in the sale of military weapons and equipment to both sides of the conflict.⁷⁰⁷ Eye-witness accounts describe the emergence of a regular pipeline of weapons' supplies from Russia in 1992.⁷⁰⁸ However, this cannot be equated with a deliberate policy by the Russian government and the MOD in Moscow to keep the conflict simmering in order to preserve a stalemate and intervene militarily. It seems more likely that such weapons' flows resulted from personal and corporate initiatives - the military, the military industrial complex, individuals within the MOD - aimed at making profits, rather than from a well-orchestrated policy designed by Moscow to further exacerbate the conflict in order to bring the region under Russia's sway.

In the Autumn of 1993, however, Russia's attitude towards Armenia and Azerbaijan changed. First, Russian leaders increasingly identified Armenia as their key strategic ally in the region, and negotiations began with Yerevan on the preservation of a military presence in that country.⁷⁰⁹ In March 1994, Moscow and Yerevan agreed on the joint protection of Armenia's borders with Turkey, and on 16 April 1995, final agreement on the location of two Russian military bases, at Gyumri and Yerevan, for a 25 year period was reached.⁷¹⁰ Moreover, several agreements on joint air defence were signed by Moscow and Yerevan between March 1994 and December 1995.⁷¹¹ Russia's efforts were facilitated by the eagerness of the Armenians themselves to keep a Russian military presence in their country. Russian forces were seen as a major deterrent against a potential attack from Turkey, Armenia's historical enemy.⁷¹² Russia had openly supported Armenia when it was threatened by Turkey in the Spring of 1992, after Karabagh forces advanced into

⁷⁰⁷ Personal interview with Aleksandr Zhilin, Moscow, November 1996; Dmitrii Trenin and Vadim Makarenko, 'Chto delat' armii, kogda krugom idet voina', *Novoe vremya*, Moscow, 1992, 21, p.21.

⁷⁰⁸ Felix Corley, 'Nagorno-Karabagh: An Eyewitness Account', *Jane's Intelligence Review*, 6, April 1994, 4, p.164.

⁷⁰⁹ Personal interview with Galina Starovoitova, Moscow, November 1996; Elizabeth Fuller, 'Paramilitary Forces Dominate Fighting in Transcaucasus', *RFE/RL Research Report*, 18 June 1993, p.75.

⁷¹⁰ Pavel Felgengauer, 'Rossiiskie voiska ostaiutsya v Zakavkaz'e', *Segodnya*, 21 October 1994, p.2. During 1992 and 1993 the status of Russian forces in Armenia remained uncertain as the 7th Army was disbanded and its predominantly ethnic Armenian units were subsumed into the embryonic Armenian armed forces. Russian forces were limited to the 164th Motorised rifle division based at Gyumri.

⁷¹¹ See Chapter 2.

⁷¹² Pavel Felgengauer, 'Rossiiskie voiska ostaiutsya v Zakavkaz'e', p.2.

Azerbaijani territory.⁷¹³ Moreover, Russian military aid and expertise was needed in order to successfully support the Karabagh Armenian war effort. As opposed to Georgia and Azerbaijan, Armenia and Russia found a common understanding in military terms in the spring of 1992. Armenia became from the very beginning an enthusiastic supporter of the CIS, and joined the CST when it was set up in May 1992.

Second, the Russian MOD started taking an actively pro-Armenian stance, and began providing military help to Armenia, which had become, to all intents and purposes a party to the conflict.⁷¹⁴ Human Rights Watch/Helsinki documentation reported that during the height of the Azerbaijani offensive in December 1993-January 1994, individuals from the Russian Ministry of Defence regularly called the Karabagh authorities to inquire about the military situation and weapons' needs, and sent large weapons' shipments through the Lachin corridor.⁷¹⁵ Moreover, in 1993, the Russian MOD began illegally to provide arms to Armenia. A Russian parliamentary inquiry conducted in the Spring of 1997 proved that a major flow of illegal Russian heavy and light weapons into Armenia developed during 1993-1996, for a total value of \$1 billion. According to Lev Rokhlin, Chairman of the Russian Duma Defence Committee (1993-1996), Russian forces in the Caucasus transferred to Armenia vast amounts of heavy equipment, including 32 SS-1 Scud B missiles, 349 SA-4 Ganef missiles, 84 T-72 battle tanks, and 50 armoured combat vehicles. Russian forces also transferred a large number of small arms, ammunition and non-lethal equipment, including 26 mortars, 306 submachine guns, and 7,910 assault rifles.⁷¹⁶ These transfers, which according to Rokhlin could not have occurred without the knowledge of Defence Minister Grachev and the approval of Chief of Staff Mikhail Kolesnikov, were confirmed by Aman Tuleev, Russian Minister for CIS Affairs (1995-1997) and Igor Rodionov, Russian Defence Minister (1996-1998). Apparently during the

⁷¹³ *The Guardian*, 25 May 1992, cited by Jonathan Aves, 'The Caucasus states: the regional security complex', in *Security Dilemmas in Russia and Eurasia*, eds. Roy Allison and Christoph Bluth, London, 1998, p.182.

⁷¹⁴ Personal Interview with Galina Starovoitova, Moscow, November 1996. Human Rights Watch/Helsinki gathered plenty of material showing that Armenia provided substantial military and economic support to the Karabagh Armenians in 1992 after the Lachin corridor was opened, and especially after the first months of 1993, in terms of personnel, equipment and supplies. Although the Armenian government regularly denied such participation, and limited itself to claim that only volunteers were participating in the war, there seems to be overwhelming evidence proving that Armenia did provide support to Nagorno-Karabagh's struggle against Azerbaijan. (*Seven Years of Conflict in Nagorno-Karabagh*, Human Rights Watch/ Helsinki, New York, Washington, Los Angeles, London, Brussels, 1994, pp.67-73.)

⁷¹⁵ *Seven Years of Conflict in Nagorno-Karabagh*, p. 88.

⁷¹⁶ *Sovetskaya Rossiya*, 3 April 1997, *FBIS-SOV-97-967*, 3 April 1997; Liz Fuller 'Yerevangate Disclosures Leave Key Questions Unanswered', *RFE/RL Newsline*, 23 April 1994.

entire war, damaged military equipment belonging to the Alkhalkalaki division and to Armenia was regularly brought by train to the Russian Ministry of Defence tank repair factory in Tbilisi.⁷¹⁷

Although Russia never openly expressed its support for the Armenian war effort, the evidence clearly indicates that Russian leaders, or at least the Russian MOD, provided military equipment and expertise to Armenia. What were the MOD's motives for such behaviour? Besides the potential lucrative profits involved, Russian leaders, in particular the Russian MOD, seemed ready to support the Armenian war effort, most probably because Armenia was considered a key strategic ally in the region. Military co-operation with Azerbaijan remained quite insignificant throughout 1992-1996.⁷¹⁸ However, Russian weapons also reached Azerbaijan. Throughout 1993 and 1994, a lucrative, seemingly illegal, arms trade developed with Russia, which supplied both sides with weapons, reportedly on easy term credits.⁷¹⁹ Both sides received a wide range of Russian-made weapons, from AK-47s and RPG-7s to heavy weapons like Grad rocket launchers. Apparently, weapons were regularly loaded onto cargo planes in Moscow, something that could hardly take place without the approval, if not the sponsoring of the Russian government.⁷²⁰ Whether this was part of a clearly-devised policy by the Russian government and the Russian military, or whether it simply was part of an illegal lucrative business is difficult to tell. It seems more likely that in the chaotic atmosphere that reigned after the collapse of the Soviet Union, policies were conducted independently from the President's orders, leading to inconsistencies which often played against Russia's interests. This is especially true, if we considered the efforts being conducted by the Russian MFA to bring about a negotiated settlement to the conflict.

The inconsistencies and incoherences of Russia's policies towards the Karabagh conflict become all the more evident if we consider the following additional points. During mid 1992-mid 1993, when Azerbaijan was ruled by the pro-Turkish Azerbaijani Popular Front led by Abulfaz Elchibey, and the country adopted a strongly anti-Russian stance - the

⁷¹⁷ *ibid.*

⁷¹⁸ Alexander A. Sergounin, 'Military-technical cooperation between the CIS member states', in *Russia and the Arms Trade*, ed. Ian Anthony, SIPRI, Oxford, 1998, pp.167-171.

⁷¹⁹ Felix Corley, 'Nagorno-Karabagh: An Eyewitness Account', p.165.

⁷²⁰ Gerard Libaridian, adviser of the Armenian President Ter-Petrosyan, and Defence Minister Grachev both admitted the existence of a flourishing illegal weapons market involving both CIS and non-CIS states 'We Must not Permit Genocide', *Der Spiegel*, 23 March 1992, p.144, in *FBIS-SOV-92-057*, 24 March 1992, p.71; *RFE/RL Daily Report*, 18 May 1994.

Azeri parliament rejected CIS membership in October 1992, and Elchibey refused to sign the CST - Russia leaders did not provide substantial covert military help to Armenia, and instead conducted an even-handed policy towards the conflict. Moreover, in the Spring of 1992, the Russian MOD transferred the allotted Soviet military equipment to the Azerbaijani government, and withdrew all its forces from Azerbaijan. On the other hand, when Geidar Aliev replaced Elchibey in the Summer of 1993, and relations with Russia improved - Aliev re-established close ties with Russia, re-negotiated the Caspian oil deal granting Russia an important share, brought Azerbaijan back into the CIS and signed the CST - Russia increased its military aid to Armenia, and did not provide Azerbaijan with the support it expected in its war in Nagorno-Karabagh. After Aliev took power, Azerbaijan continued to suffer major losses on the ground, partly attributed to Russian supplies to Armenia. Agdam was lost in late July 1993, Dzhebrail and Fizuli at end of August 1993, and Goradiz and Zanglean in October 1993. Moreover, when Azerbaijan began conducting a major offensive in December 1993, Russia put great pressure on the Azerbaijani leadership to put an end to the fighting, and provided Armenia with substantial military help.⁷²¹ Russia's help to Armenia after October 1993, was most probably part of an effort by Russia to put pressure on Azerbaijan in order to obtain a military presence in that country, given that after October 1993, Russia began pressing hard for a military base in Azerbaijan.

Furthermore, the MOD's policy line contrasted sharply with the position adopted by the Russian Ministry of Fuel and Energy (MFE). In November 1993, the MFE had managed to strike a deal with the Azerbaijani government which granted the Russian oil company Lukoil a 10 percent share in the 'oil deal of the century' to develop the Azeri and Chirag fields in the Caspian Sea. Apparently, Fuel and Energy Minister, Yurii Shafranik, had assured Aliev that the signing of the deal would have a positive impact on Azerbaijan's position in Nagorno-Karabagh.⁷²² However, no major Azeri break-through was achieved. Instead, in late 1993-1994, the Russian Defence Ministry began putting pressure on Azerbaijan so as to re-introduce military forces in that country, both as peacekeepers and in the form of a military base - thus attesting to a clear conflict of interests between the Russian MOD and the Russian MFE. Starting in late 1993, and especially throughout

⁷²¹ Aidyn Mekhtiev, 'Voennye uspekhi Baku bespokoyat Rossiю', *Nezavisimaya gazeta*, 29 January 1994, p.1.

⁷²² See Chapter 4.

1994, the MOD, as well the MFA, showed an interest in having a military base in Azerbaijan and in introducing Russian-led peacekeeping forces into Nagorno-Karabagh.⁷²³

The available evidence, therefore, does not seem to sustain the hypothesis that leaders in Moscow carefully devised a plan to intervene militarily in the conflict, by providing covert support to both warring parties, in order to perpetuate the fight, become the main peace-broker of the Karabagh conflict and thus bring Armenia and Azerbaijan within Russia's sphere of influence. Policies towards Nagorno-Karabagh were very much a result of improvisation, rather than cautious planning, and more often than not chaos reigned supreme. There is, however, significant circumstantial evidence pointing to local Russian military support in favour of the Karabagh Armenians, as well as substantial hard evidence attesting to direct military support provided by the Russian Ministry of Defence to Armenia, which had become, to all intents and purposes, a direct party in the conflict. This military support was probably motivated by the big lucrative profits involved as well as by the close military ties that had developed between Russia and Armenia. It also is quite possible that, after the Summer of 1993, military support was intended to put pressure on Azerbaijan so that it accept the presence of Russian military bases and peacekeeping forces on its territory, and in order to get control over oil resources and oil transportation routes, thus attesting to a neo-imperialist behaviour.

c. Russian Mediation in the Nagorno-Karabagh War

When the Soviet Union collapsed, the Nagorno-Karabagh war developed into an international conflict which involved two sovereign independent states, and this opened the door to regional participation in the mediation efforts. No other conflict in the former Soviet Union saw such an active participation both by regional powers and by the international community, in terms of mediation and conciliatory activities, as the war in Nagorno-Karabagh. As opposed to the other conflicts that erupted beyond Russia's borders, where Russia quite quickly acquired a central role in the negotiating process, in the Nagorno-Karabagh conflict, Russia was compelled to co-ordinate its mediation efforts with other regional players, such as Iran and Turkey, and with international organisations, particularly with the CSCE. The first diplomatic efforts conducted by Foreign Minister Kozyrev in mid-February and April 1992 proved unsuccessful, and Russia was forced to

⁷²³ Sokhbet Mamedov, 'Azerbaidzhan protiv sozdaniya rossiiskikh voennykh baz na svoei territorii', *Izvestiya*, 7 April 1994, p.3.

leave the initiative to the Iranian government. Russia's mediation efforts failed for various reasons. First, Russia proved unable to influence events, largely because of its image of the 'imperial state.' Its mediation activities did not enjoy the complete trust of the warring parties.⁷²⁴ Second, Russia's mediation did not involve representatives of Nagorno-Karabagh, and consequently was bound to have little effect on developments on the ground, and was unlikely to produce any significant breakthroughs in the negotiations.⁷²⁵ Third, no agreement was reached on an enforcement mechanism. In February 1992, Marshal Shaposhnikov proposed the introduction of a CIS peacekeeping force in Nagorno-Karabagh, but the proposal was rejected by Azerbaijan.⁷²⁶ Fourth, Kozyrev's negotiating plan was based on respect of the principle of territorial integrity and inviolability of borders, and although Kozyrev also insisted on the need to respect human and minority rights, his position was interpreted by the Karabagh Armenians as being biased against them, since it closed the door to any eventual Karabagh independence or regional autonomy.⁷²⁷ On the other hand, the signing by Russia and Armenia of a Friendship Treaty in early April 1992, which included provisions for military assistance, was unlikely to be welcomed by Azerbaijan. Iran, however, seemed initially to enjoy the support of both Armenia and Azerbaijan. Armenia saw Iran as a counterbalance to Turkish influence in the region, and Azerbaijan probably thought that Moslem Iran was the most preferable of all possible mediators, since it was likely to take the interests of Azerbaijan more into account.⁷²⁸ In the Spring of 1992, Turkey also offered its mediation offices, but its participation in the resolution of the conflict was hindered by its bad relations with Armenia. Armenia's insistence that Turkey officially recognise the 1915 Armenian genocide, and Turkish demands that Armenia reject territorial claims on Turkey, prevented the establishment of diplomatic relations between the two countries.⁷²⁹

⁷²⁴ Konstantin Eggert, 'Missiya Velayati v Nagornom Karabakhe', *Izvestiya*, 26 February 1992, pp.1-4.

⁷²⁵ Igor Rotar, 'Andrei Kozyrev pokinul Zakavkaz'e', *Nezavisimaya gazeta*, 7 April 1992, p. 3; Ludmila Khanbabayan, 'Stepanakert otkazyvaetsya ot posrednichestva Rossii. Emy bolshe nravitsya Iran', *Nezavisimaya gazeta*, 24 April 1992, p.1.

⁷²⁶ TASS, 19 February 1992, in *FBIS-SOV-92-034*, 20 February 1992, p. 21. Galina Starovoitova supported the idea of sending UN 'blue helmets' prior to the setting up of CIS peacekeeping forces. (Tass, 20 Feb 1992 in *FBIS-SOV-92-034*, 20 February 1992, p.36). On the Azerbaijani position see Interfax, 21 February 1992, in *FBIS-SOV-92-036*, 24 February 1992, p.24.

⁷²⁷ Valter Shonia, 'Azerbaijan: Its Relations With Russia Are Ever-Lasting,' *Moscow News*, 24, 1992, p. 5

⁷²⁸ Konstantin Eggert, 'Missiya Velayati v Nagornom Karabakhe', pp.1,4.

⁷²⁹ Konstantin Eggert, 'Turtsiya trebuet zashchitit' musul'man v Karabakhe', *Izvestiya*, 2 March 1992, p.4.

The possibility that Iran or Turkey might obtain a dominant role in the Nagorno-Karabagh negotiations, and thus displace Russia from the Transcaucasus, created great concern among the Russian elite. Iran's active diplomatic efforts prompted Russian leaders to insist on the sending of a Russian representative to any further negotiations on Nagorno-Karabagh that might be held in Tehran.⁷³⁰ However, Iran did not prove any more successful than Russia in reaching a lasting cessation of hostilities. The two cease-fires it brokered in late February 1992 and early May 1992 were immediately violated and followed by successful Karabagh Armenian offensives on Khodzaly and Shusha. The month of May 1992 saw a further exacerbation of the situation on the ground, as Karabagh forces captured the key strategic town of Shusha, and the city of Lachin, located in Azerbaijani territory. Armenian advances beyond the Nagorno-Karabagh enclave prompted a strong reaction from the international community. The European Union, Turkey and Iran strongly condemned Armenian aggression, and Turkish President Turgut Ozal even threatened to intervene militarily on Azerbaijan's side. These threats - later denied by Turkish Prime Minister Suleyman Demirel - caused great uproar among Russian and CIS military circles. On 20 May, Marshal Shaposhnikov warned Turkey against direct intervention in the conflict, arguing that such actions could lead to another world war - an indication of Russia's increasing sensitivities regarding Turkey's growing influence in the region.⁷³¹ Tension between both countries was defused a couple of days later when Yeltsin and Demirel issued a joint statement, which condemned the acquisition of territory by force, and offered Turkish-Russian mediation services. However, the advent to power of the Azerbaijani Popular Front in June 1992 characterised by its pro-Turkish and anti-Russian orientation, precluded Russia, as well as Iran, from any further negotiating initiatives.⁷³² The Russian representative at the UN, Yuli Vorontsov, proposed that joint peacekeeping forces made up of UN 'blue helmet' forces, CSCE troops and special units of the CIS Armed Forces be sent to the region, but his initiative received little support.⁷³³

⁷³⁰ Radio Rossii, 4 May 1992, in Elizabeth Fuller, 'Russia's Diplomatic Offensive in the Transcaucasus', *RFE/RL Research Report*, 1 October 1993, p.32.

⁷³¹ Konstantin Eggert, 'Evropeiskoe soobshchestvo obvinilo Armeniiu v agressii protiv Azerbaidzhana', *Izvestiya*, 20 May 1992 p.1; Konstantin Eggert, 'Marshal Shaposhnikov: "My riskuem okazatsya na grani mirovoi voiny" ', *Izvestiya*, 21 May 1992, p.2.

⁷³² Aidyn Mekhtiev, 'Baku i Tegeran stremyatsya k ekonomicheskomu sotrudnichestvu', *Nezavisimaya gazeta*, 30 July 1992 p.3.

⁷³³ Konstantin Eggert, 'Evropeiskoe soobshchestvo obvinilo Armeniiu v agressii protiv Azerbaidzhana', p.1

Instead, during the Summer of 1992, mediating efforts were confined to the CSCE 'Minsk group'.⁷³⁴

On 23 March 1992, the CSCE Council of Ministers had decided to set up an international conference under the auspices of the CSCE aimed at providing a permanent forum for negotiations on a peaceful settlement of the conflict. The conference, to be held in Minsk, was meant to include representatives of eleven countries: Armenia, Azerbaijan, Russia, Turkey, France, Italy, Czechoslovakia, Germany, Sweden, Belarus and the US. Elected representatives of Nagorno-Karabagh, primarily Armenians, as well as representatives of the Azerbaijani community in Nagorno-Karabagh were invited to participate in the conference as interested parties.⁷³⁵ The CSCE initiative represented a major break-through in terms of conflict resolution in the area. For the first time ever, an international organisation became primarily responsible for regulating an inter-ethnic conflict in the former Soviet space. However, its chances of success remained quite slim, given that the CSCE lacked the necessary political or diplomatic clout to enforce a decision or to induce the parties to reach a settlement. Its effectiveness depended on the willingness of the CSCE members to enforce a decision. Moreover, the CSCE did not have any military infrastructure to conduct effective peacekeeping operations. It was, therefore, no surprise that after five rounds of preliminary talks, held in Rome between June and September 1992, attempts to convene the Minsk conference failed. Disagreements among Armenia and Azerbaijan regarding the official status of the Karabagh Armenian delegation, and disputes over the responsibility of the Armenian government for the actions of Karabagh Armenians blocked any advancement.⁷³⁶

In September 1992, in view of the CSCE ineffectiveness, Russia managed to re-take the initiative, this time in the form of a cease-fire brokered by the Russian Defence Minister Pavel Grachev.⁷³⁷ The direct involvement of the Russian MOD in the resolution of the Nagorno-Karabagh conflict represented a major turning point in Russian mediation efforts.

⁷³⁴ John Maresca, 'Resolving the Conflict over Nagorno-Karabagh: Lost Opportunities for International Conflict Resolution', in *Managing Global Chaos*, eds. Chester A. Crocker, Fen Osler Hampson and Pamela Aall, USIP, Washington DC, 1996, p.259.

⁷³⁵ *ibid.*, p.226.

⁷³⁶ Olivier Paye and Eric Remacle, 'UN and CSCE policies in Transcaucasia', in *Contested Borders in the Caucasus*, ed. Bruno Coppieters, Brussels, 1996, pp.116-118; Georgy Ivanov-Smolensky and Vasif Samedov, 'Azerbaidzhan: uzhe mir, no eshche voyna', *Izvestiya*, 10 June 1992, p.3.

⁷³⁷ Vladimir Chupakhin, 'My reshili voennye voprosy i postaralis' raschistit' dorogu politikam', *Krasnaya zvezda*, 24 September 1992, p.1.

By placing itself at the forefront of the negotiations, the MOD not only displaced the MFA, but also began acquiring a major role in the resolution of conflicts in the former Soviet space. The cease-fire agreement, which envisaged a withdrawal of the warring parties from the zones of conflict and the introduction of CIS observers, also foresaw the deployment of peacekeeping (*mirotvorcheskie sily*) in case of violations to the cease-fire. Grachev also stated that if no lasting agreement was reached between Armenia and Azerbaijan on Nagorno-Karabagh, the only remaining variant was the introduction of UN or UN plus CIS peacekeeping forces in the zone of conflict.⁷³⁸ The cease-fire however did not hold. In February 1993, Nagorno-Karabagh Armenians launched a major offensive in the area of Mardakert and recaptured numerous villages in the region. These attacks were the first of a series of major Karabagh offensives which left little room for either Russian or other negotiating initiatives. In early April 1993, the Karabagh Armenian forces occupied the Kelbadzhar district, in Azerbaijan, completing the *defacto* annexation of Nagorno-Karabagh to Armenia.⁷³⁹ In April 1993, Karabagh Armenians continued their offensive, this time against the southern district of Fizuli, close to the Iranian border, causing great alarm among Azerbaijan's southern neighbours, Turkey and Iran, and resulting in condemnation by the international community.⁷⁴⁰ On 30 April 1993, the UN Security Council approved Resolution 822, which called for the withdrawal of foreign and local Armenian forces from occupied territory, a halt to hostilities in and around Nagorno-Karabagh, and the resumption of peace negotiations. On the basis of this resolution, a tripartite US-Turkish-Russian peace plan was unveiled three days later. Intended as a basis for galvanising the stalled CSCE talks, it contained a detailed timetable for the implementation of a sixty-day cease-fire, the withdrawal of troops, and the resumption of negotiations. Both this plan and a modified version of it were endorsed by Armenia and Azerbaijan, but were rejected by the Armenian Karabagh leadership in Stepanakert, on the grounds that neither plan provided adequate security guarantees for the Armenian population of Karabagh.⁷⁴¹

In June 1993, an internal rebellion in Azerbaijan created another opportunity for a further Armenian offensive against the Agdam, Agdary and Agdzhbedi districts, east of Nagorno-

⁷³⁸ *ibid.*

⁷³⁹ Aidyn Mekhtiev, 'Armyanskie voiska zanyali Kelbadzhar', *Nezavisimaya gazeta*, 6 April 1993, p.3.

⁷⁴⁰ Aidyn Mekhtiev, 'Karabakhskaya problema okonchatel'no internatsionalizirovalas' poka na diplomaticheskoy urovne', *Nezavisimaya gazeta*, 8 April 1993 p.1,3.

⁷⁴¹ Elizabeth Fuller, 'Russia's Diplomatic Offensive in the Transcaucasus', p.33.

Karabagh. Agdam was occupied at the end of July 1993 after heavy fighting that lasted for over a month. The fall of Dzhebrail and Fizuli at the end of August 1993 and the capture of Goradiz and Zangelan in late October 1993 resulted in the occupation of large swathes of territory between the southern border of Nagorno-Karabagh and the Azeri-Iranian frontier, and precipitated a massive exodus of refugees across the Iranian border. Iran reacted sharply to Armenian advances by reinforcing its border with Armenia and Azerbaijan and conducting incursions into Azerbaijani territory.⁷⁴² This prompted a strong response from Russia. During a visit to Yerevan, Col. Gen. Andrei Nikolayev, commander of the Russian border forces, let it be understood that the borders of Armenia were simultaneously the borders of the CIS, and that no one would be permitted to violate them.⁷⁴³ The Russian MFA also condemned the incursion of Iranian troops into the territory of Azerbaijan, although in a milder tone, and expressed concern that it might lead to an escalation of violence and an internationalisation of the conflict.⁷⁴⁴ Tension was diffused when Russian special envoy Vladimir Kazimirov brokered a cease-fire on 31 August 1993, which envisaged a partial pullback of Karabagh Armenian forces.

The Karabagh Armenian offensive coincided with an increasingly pro-Armenian stance adopted by the Russian Minister of Defence. During a visit to Turkey in mid-May 1993, Grachev blamed both Armenia and Azerbaijan for developments in Karabagh, but let it be known that he understood the need of Karabagh Armenians to establish life-corridors with the outside world, thus vindicating Yerevan.⁷⁴⁵ Moreover, during the Summer of 1993, the Russian government adopted an increasingly assertive position towards the Karabagh mediation process, manifested by attempts to play the key role in the resolution of the conflict and to gradually displace the CSCE Minsk group from the negotiations. On the one hand, separate unilateral Russian proposals began to surface in stark contradiction to the joint work of the group. These proposals were based on the concept of a Russian or Russian-controlled CIS 'separation force', which would be inserted between the warring sides and would be authorised to use force to suppress any violations of an accompanying cease-fire.⁷⁴⁶ On the other hand, the newly appointed special negotiator for Nagorno-

⁷⁴² Sokhbet Mamedov, 'Novaya vspyshka voyny v Azerbaidzhane. Armyskie snaryady rvutsya na territorii Irana', *Izvestiya*, 27 October 1993, p.1.

⁷⁴³ Khoren Oganessian, 'Zapad uprekaet Erevan v eskalatsii konflikta', *Nezavisimaya gazeta*, 2 September 1993, p.3.

⁷⁴⁴ Dmitrii Gornostaev, 'Rossiya osuzhdaet iranskoe vtorzhenie v Azerbaidzhan', *Nezavisimaya gazeta*, 8 September 1993, p.2.

⁷⁴⁵ Aleksandr Syrov, 'Turtsiya pokupaet oruzhie u Rossii - no ne razdelyaet ee vzglyadov na polozhenie v "goryachikh tochkakh"', *Izvestiya*, 14 May 1993, pp.1,3.

⁷⁴⁶ John Maresca, 'Resolving the Conflict over Nagorno-Karabagh', p.263.

Karabagh, Vladimir Kazimirov, openly expressed Russia's dissatisfaction with the peacemaking activity of the CSCE Minsk Group, and affirmed Russia's intentions to continue its mediating efforts not only as part of the CSCE Minsk group but also as an independent mediator and member of the UN Security Council.⁷⁴⁷ Russia's position regarding the CSCE mediation efforts was mainly determined by its strategic interests - preventing other countries from gaining influence in the region, especially by conducting peacekeeping activities - but was also a result of the unwillingness of the CSCE member states to make the necessary efforts in terms of peacekeepers and observers. Western countries were ready to dispatch only 30 out of the 150-200 observers initially expected to be sent to the region.⁷⁴⁸

Russia's detachment from the CSCE process coincided with a similar position being adopted by Azerbaijan's new President Geidar Aliev, who was eager to improve relations with Russia, as indicated by his decision to bring Azerbaijan back into the CIS and into the CST in September 1993.⁷⁴⁹ Aliev openly criticised the CSCE Minsk process, expressed his dissatisfaction with the tripartite US-Russian-Turkish mediation effort, and stated his support for a Russian peacemaking mission.⁷⁵⁰ Aliev agreed to meet with the Karabagh Armenians, and on 13 September 1993, the first bilateral Azerbaijani-Karabagh talks were held in Moscow under the aegis of the Russian Foreign Ministry.⁷⁵¹ The most important result of the negotiations was the prolongation of the August cease-fire for another month. Russia's successful mediating efforts were followed by attempts to introduce Russian peacekeeping forces in Nagorno-Karabagh. At a meeting in early September 1993 between Turkish Prime Minister Tansu Ciller, Aliev and Yeltsin, Russia proposed the introduction of Russian peacekeepers to monitor the cease-fire.⁷⁵² Aliev proved reluctant to accept the deployment of Russian peacekeeping troops, and insisted that CSCE monitors would be enough. Turkey also remained adamant in its opposition to a Russian-only peacekeeping force, and, instead, showed its support for a multinational monitoring mission made up of

⁷⁴⁷ Turan, 21 August 1993, and Assa-Irada, Baku, 21 August, 1993, in *FBIS-SOV-93-161*, 23 August 1993, p.49.

⁷⁴⁸ Vincent Ramelot and Eric Remacle, 'L' OSCE et les conflits en Europe', in *Le Caucase Post-Sovietique: la transition dans le conflit*, ed. Mohammad-Reza Djalili, Bruxelles and Paris, 1995, p.123.

⁷⁴⁹ Mekhman Gafarly, 'Geidar Aliev khochet v SNG', *Segodnya*, 9 September 1993, p. 1. Aliev hoped that Russia would help Azerbaijan improve its position in the Nagorno-Karabagh war.

⁷⁵⁰ Elizabeth Fuller, 'Russia's Diplomatic Offensive in the Transcaucasus', p.34.

⁷⁵¹ John Lloyd, 'Azeris offer peace talks', *The Financial Times*, 9 September 1993, p.2.

⁷⁵² Elizabeth Fuller, 'Russia, Turkey, Iran, and the Karabagh Mediation Process', *RFE/RL Research Report*, 25 February 1994, p.32.

contingents from Russia, Turkey, the US and other CIS states.⁷⁵³ A further setback to Moscow's efforts aimed at introducing Russian peacekeepers came in early October 1993 at the meeting of Transcaucasian heads of state in Moscow. Russia asked for the return of Russian troops to Azerbaijan, in the form of a paratroop division, and the deployment of Russian border guards along the Azerbaijani-Iranian frontier, but Aliev refused. Russia's displeasure with Aliev's refusal was made clear when Karabagh Armenian troops launched a new offensive in late October 1993. While Iran and Turkey both called on the UN Security Council to condemn the Armenian aggression, there was deafening silence from Russia. Previously, Russia had shown support for Azerbaijan's demands 'that Armenia withdraw its forces from occupied Azerbaijani territory' and had supported the UN Security Council statement of 18 August 1993 which condemned the Karabagh Armenian attack on the Fizuli region.⁷⁵⁴ Moreover, the Russian MOD provided substantial military support to Karabagh Armenians through the Lachin corridor during the Winter 1993-1994 Azerbaijani offensive.

Russia's efforts to obtain Azerbaijan's approval for the introduction of Russian peacekeepers in Nagorno-Karabagh were complemented by a vigorous diplomatic campaign launched at international level by Foreign Minister Kozyrev aimed at obtaining the recognition by the UN and the CSCE of Russia's special right to conduct peacekeeping activities in the former Soviet space. In late November 1993, at the CSCE Foreign Ministers meeting in Rome, Kozyrev demanded that Russia be formally granted a special role as a peacekeeper in those areas of the former USSR where 'aggressive nationalism has led to bloodshed', and that the cost of such peacekeeping operations be shared among CSCE members states.⁷⁵⁵ Russia was trying to accomplish several tasks at once. First, to obtain legitimacy for its military presence in the near abroad. Second, to obtain political and, if possible, financial support for conducting peacekeeping operations there. Third, to share with the international community responsibility for the failures that frequently accompanied Moscow's efforts to avert bloodshed in neighbouring states. But the reaction to Kozyrev's proposals was one of mistrust, given that Russian peacekeeping operations did not conform with the UN peacekeeping practices and were perceived as neo-imperialist.

⁷⁵³ Reuters and Itar-tass, 21 September 1993, cited by Elizabeth Fuller, 'Russia, Turkey, Iran, and the Karabagh Mediation Process', p.33.

⁷⁵⁴ Konstantin Eggert, 'Moskva i Ankara pytaiutsya preodolet' vzaimnoe okhlazhdenie', *Izvestiya*, 20 August 1993 p.3; *Seven Years of Conflict in Nagorno-Karabagh*, p.37.

⁷⁵⁵ Maskim Yusin, 'Rossiya ne smozhet provodit' mirotvorcheskie operatsii pod flagom SBSE', *Izvestiya*, 3 December 1993, p.2.

Not only did the Baltic states, Ukraine and several east European countries reject the proposal, but also Turkey, Canada and Norway opposed the motion.⁷⁵⁶ The CSCE Minsk Group instead was putting forward proposals for an internationally controlled monitoring force not authorised to use force.⁷⁵⁷

The first months of 1994 saw a sudden increase in parallel mediation efforts aimed at reaching a lasting cease-fire. In January, Russian envoy Kazimirov, in co-operation with the Iranian leadership, introduced a proposal which envisaged the disengagement of forces and the creation of a buffer zone in which international observers, in conjunction with Russian peacekeepers, would be deployed. Karabagh Armenian forces would be withdrawn from occupied territory, and negotiations on a political settlement would begin thereafter. Whereas the plan was approved by Yerevan and Stepanakert, the Azerbaijani leadership objected to the proposal, arguing that any cease-fire had to be preceded by an Armenian withdrawal, and that peacekeeping forces had to be multinational.⁷⁵⁸ On the other hand, on 18 February, while the MFA continued its negotiations, Defence Minister Grachev, and his Armenian and Azerbaijani counterparts, signed a draft protocol on a cease-fire in Nagorno-Karabagh, to be followed by the disengagement and withdrawal of troops from all occupied territories. The cease-fire, however, was violated when heavy fighting broke out near Agdam and Markakert, in mid-April 1994. Furthermore, during February-April 1994, the CSCE Minsk group renewed its mediation efforts and tried to persuade Russia to co-ordinate its Karabagh diplomacy with the Minsk group. These three parallel diplomatic efforts brought to light the lack of co-ordination not only between Russia and the CSCE, but also within the Russian government, particularly due to the rivalry existing between the MOD and the MFA. In mid-May 1994, when Kazimirov seemed ready to co-ordinate its efforts with the CSCE, and the CSCE apparently managed to obtain Aliev's agreement on an alternative deal, Grachev independently brokered another cease-fire agreement with the Defence Ministers of Armenia and Azerbaijan, and the head of the Nagorno-Karabagh armed forces.

Grachev's plan envisaged the deployment of military observers from Russia, the warring sides and possibly from the CIS and CSCE countries, at forty-nine observer posts. Russian officers would head all forty nine posts, thus thwarting the CSCE proposal that observers

⁷⁵⁶ *ibid.*

⁷⁵⁷ John Maresca, 'Resolving the Conflict over Nagorno-Karabagh', p.263.

⁷⁵⁸ Aidyn Mekhtiev, 'Baku poka ne gotov odobrit' Rossiiskii proekt resheniya Karabakhskoi problemy', *Nezavisimaya gazeta*, 14 January 1994 p.3.

monitor not only the movement of combatants but also those of the peacekeeping forces. The agreement also envisaged the introduction of 1,800 CIS peacekeeping troops, primarily Russian, under the command of Deputy Defence Minister Gen. Kondratyev, to separate the hostile forces.⁷⁵⁹ Although the cease-fire was respected by all sides in the conflict, besides some minor skirmishes occurring regularly along the front-line, the Azerbaijani side rejected the introduction of a Russian-led peacekeeping force. Instead, on 27 July 1994, Armenia and Azerbaijan signed an agreement which foresaw the introduction of a multi-national peacekeeping force and CSCE observers. However, the forces did not materialise, and the rest of 1994 was characterised by a diplomatic struggle between Russia and the CSCE, Russia insisting that its troops dominate the peacekeeping forces - Russia wanted the peacekeeping forces to consist solely of its own military units under its own command - and that it be recognised as the chief negotiator in the Nagorno-Karabagh settlement, and the CSCE rejecting Russia's proposals.⁷⁶⁰

The Russian leadership increasingly perceived peacekeeping forces as a means of preserving influence in the region and of preventing other 'rival powers' from removing Russia from the area. There was growing concern in Russia over the erosion of Russian power and influence in the region, especially in Azerbaijan. Russia had no military presence in that country, was being marginalised from the lucrative Caspian oil deals, and was losing control over the oil transportation lines. Russian diplomats believed that influence in the region would be determined by those countries whose troops made up the backbone of future peacekeeping forces.⁷⁶¹ After a series of tough high level negotiations among Russia and the CSCE Minsk Group, CSCE leaders agreed at the Budapest summit in December 1994, that a 3,300 strong 'multinational CSCE peacekeeping force' would be sent to Nagorno-Karabagh, but only after a political agreement on a cessation of the armed conflict would be reached among the parties. The exact composition of the force was not spelled out, but it was agreed that no state would contribute more than 30 percent of the troops. This represented a defeat for Russia, given that the CSCE would oversee Russia's peacekeeping operations and international forces would be operating in the former Soviet space. Russia, however, achieved a major victory on the mediation front, as agreement was

⁷⁵⁹ Itar-tass, 16 May 1994, cited by Elizabeth Fuller, 'The Karabagh Mediation Process: Grachev versus the CSCE?', *RFE/RL Research Report*, 10 June 1994, p.13.

⁷⁶⁰ Georgii Plekhanov, 'Karabakhskoe uregulirovanie: Moskva po-prezhnemu khochet byt' glavnoe', *Nezavisimaya gazeta*, 10 November 1994, p.3.

⁷⁶¹ *ibid.*

reached on the merging of the parallel Russian and CSCE efforts. Russia was appointed permanent co-chair in the Minsk group of the Nagorno-Karabagh peace efforts.

Despite the general accord on a combined peacekeeping force reached at the CSCE summit in Budapest, the force failed to materialise. According to American negotiator, John Maresca, final agreement was blocked because of disagreements regarding the leadership of the force and the percentage of the forces to be provided by Russia.⁷⁶² However, the main reason why multinational forces failed to materialise, was the lack of determination of the CSCE member-states, with the probable exception of Turkey, to provide the necessary contingents in order to create an international peacekeeping force. The absence of an immediately available international peacekeeping force, in fact, permitted Russia to argue that it was the only country capable of sending a force to oversee the cease-fire. However, the CSCE-Russian negotiations had brought to light Russia's opposition to an international peacekeeping presence, when the international community seemed ready to send one. In other words, Russia refused to accept the presence of foreign troops in Azerbaijan, as well as in the entire Transcaucasian region, because it saw these areas as being part of Russia's exclusive area of influence. According to John Maresca, the negotiations had clearly brought to light Russia's eagerness to regain control over Azerbaijan's frontier with Iran and Turkey, and Russia's wishes to participate in the major oil concessions being developed by Western companies.

3. Conclusion

The complexities of the Nagorno-Karabagh war, in which two former Soviet states were to all intents and purposes fighting each other, precluded any clear-cut policy from the Russian government. Support for one country automatically put the other in antagonism to Russia. This explains why initially Russia attempted to take a balanced approach in order to reach a settlement of the conflict. Although it supported Azerbaijan's territorial integrity, it still established close relations with Armenia, making it its key ally in the region. A Friendship Treaty was signed with Armenia in the Summer of 1992, and close military-cooperation was established, resulting in the stationing of two Russian military bases in Armenia and the joint protection of Armenia's borders with Turkey. However, as the conflict developed and the Russian MOD took away the initiative from the Ministry of

⁷⁶² John Maresca, 'Resolving the Conflict over Nagorno-Karabagh', p.268.

Foreign Affairs, Russia adopted a pro-Armenian stance, providing it with substantial military support, and putting increasing pressure on Azerbaijan to accept Russian military bases and Russian peacekeepers on its soil. By mid-1993, Russia also began taking a much more pro-active policy in term of mediation. Such behaviour most probably can be attributed to an effort by the Russian leadership to find a solution to the conflict. However, it also very much reflected an attempt to settle the conflict in Russia's favour, and keep other regional actors such as Iran and Turkey, or the CSCE, out of the mediation process. Iran, Turkey and the CSCE lacked the necessary political and military clout to impose a cease-fire. Russia, however, was able to act more decisively, not least because of the strong economic leverage it could exert on the parties. The involvement of Western companies in the Azerbaijani oil industry created great hopes among the Azerbaijani elite that the country had a new ally in the form of the Western community. However, Azerbaijani hopes proved wrong since Western countries, although diplomatically supporting the Azerbaijani position, proved unwilling to get too deeply involved in resolving the conflict, least of all in sending troops to the region. This situation allowed Russia to take over the dominant role in the mediation. The CSCE-Russian negotiations during 1994-1995, however, brought to light Russia's eagerness to become the main negotiator and the only peacekeeper in the region. Despite the Budapest 1994 agreement on a joint multinational peacekeeping forces, Russia remained adamant in its opposition to foreign peacekeeping troops, particularly Turkish troops, on Azerbaijani soil. A Russian military presence in Azerbaijan was considered essential for the preservation of Russia's influence in that country, and the exercise of control over oil flows and the participation in oil deals. Caspian oil had increased the strategic importance of Azerbaijan, and Russian leaders, both in the Foreign Ministry and the Defence Ministry, remained eager to bring Azerbaijan back into Russia's exclusive sphere of influence. However, Russia's policies often lacked coherence, as covert military support and illegal weapons flew into the region, and contradictory policies were conducted by the MOD and the MFE, the former supporting the Armenians, and the latter trying to make major inroads into the lucrative Azerbaijani oil business.

V. The Civil War in Tajikistan

1. The Roots of the Conflict

The civil war that erupted in Tajikistan in 1992 and continued throughout the entire period under examination (1992-1996), differs to a certain extent from the previously analysed conflicts.⁷⁶³ Whereas in Georgia, Azerbaijan and Moldova, a particular region or regions of the country were struggling for secession, in Tajikistan the various factions, although having strong allegiances with the different regions of the country, were not fighting for secession but for a role in the central government structures. The struggle for power, however, resulted in the complete fragmentation of the country. By 1996, the Rakhmonov regime retained control only of the Dushanbe and Kulyab areas, while the rest of the country remained in the hands of either the Tajik opposition fighters, which held the areas of Gorno-Badakhshan, Krazhikin, Taval-Daria and Garm, or of pro-Uzbek warlords in control of the northern Leninabad oblast.⁷⁶⁴

The Tajik war has often been portrayed either as a war between Communists and Islamic fundamentalists or as inter-clan conflict. While both of these interpretations contain elements of truth, they misinterpret the very complex web of alliances and loyalties underlying the war. Ideology and family connections certainly played a role, but the main factors provoking the conflict appear to have been economically- and politically-based perceptions of regional identity. Since the creation of the Tajik Soviet Socialist Republic in 1929, the northern Leninabad Oblast dominated the republic's politics, providing all the Tajik Communist Party first secretaries from 1943 until the end of Soviet rule.⁷⁶⁵ Moreover this region was the most economically advanced in the republic. By contrast, the three southern regions, the Kulyab and Kurgan-Tyube oblasts, and Gorno-Badakhshan

⁷⁶³ The literature on the Tajik war falls into several categories: Alvin Z. Rubinstein totally dismissed standard claims that the 'empire [was] striking back' in Central Asia. Instead, he argued that Russia's involvement in Tajikistan was motivated by legitimate state interest such concern over both the spread of Islamic fundamentalism and the increasing cross-border attacks from Tajik fundamentalists in Afghanistan. (Alvin Z. Rubinstein, 'The Asian Interior: The Geopolitical Pull on Russia', *Orbis*, 28, Autumn 1994, 4, pp. 573.) Sergei Gretskey and Barnett R. Rubin, instead, argued that the main motivation behind Russia's behaviour was the restoration of a sphere of influence in Tajikistan. (Sergei Gretskey, 'Russia and Tajikistan', in *Regional Power Rivalries in the New Eurasia*, eds. Alvin Z. Rubinstein and Oles M. Smolansky, London, 1995, pp. 231-251; Barnett R. Rubin, 'Tajikistan: From Soviet Republic to Russian-Uzbek Protectorate', in *Central Asia and the World*, ed. Michael Mandelbaum, Council on Foreign Relations, New York, 1994, pp.218-223.) Lena Jonson took a more moderate view, and described Russia's involvement in Tajikistan as an effort to impose peace by force in what was initially regarded as a form of counter-insurgency. Russia's policies, in her view, were driven by two partly contradictory objectives: to establish a presence and gain influence, and to end the conflict. (Lena Jonson, *The Tajik War: A Challenge to Russian Policy*, Discussion Paper 74, The Royal Institute of International Affairs, London, 1998, pp. 6-7.)

⁷⁶⁴ Personal Interview with Sergei Solodovnik, Moscow, November 1996.

⁷⁶⁵ This faction held political control over the Communist Party and the Supreme Soviet for forty years.

Autonomous Oblast, remained relatively underdeveloped.⁷⁶⁶ It is precisely in these regions that the main opposition parties first emerged, such as the nationalist *Democratic Party*, the *Islamic Renaissance Party*, the *Rastokhez (Rebirth)* movement, which was favoured by the intelligentsia and contained a mixture of nationalist and religious elements, and the *Lale Badakhshon* movement, which wanted greater autonomy for Gorno-Badakhshon and its Pamiri population.

Tension in the republic began in November 1991, after the victory of former Communist Party First Secretary Rakhmon Nabiev in the Tajik presidential elections. The victory of Nabiev, which was never recognised by the opposition parties, signified a return of the old Leninabad-based Communist nomenklatura and a defeat of those forces which supported Islam, democracy and economic reform, and which represented the interests of the poorest regions of the country - Karotegin, Garm and Gorno-Badakhshan. The first challenges to the official authorities began in February 1992, when the opposition organised a mass rally in Dushanbe, and demanded political and economic reforms.⁷⁶⁷ As the demanded changes were not forthcoming, the demonstrators conducted a continuous siege of government buildings during the months of April and early May 1992, which resulted in some minor concessions. Supreme Soviet Chairman Safarli Kendzhayev was dismissed from office and the Supreme Soviet promised to hold new parliamentary elections.⁷⁶⁸ However, the victory of the opposition was short-lived. Two days after the forced resignation of Kendzhayev, supporters of the government organised a rally in front of the Supreme Soviet demanding the return of Kendzhayev to the post of Chairman of the Supreme Soviet.⁷⁶⁹ In early May 1992, the situation began to deteriorate as both factions started arming themselves. President Nabiev signed a decree creating a National Guard and Kendzhayev indiscriminately began distributing large quantities of arms and ammunition to pro-government demonstrators.⁷⁷⁰ The opposition in turn, created its own people's militia comprising about 20,000 men.⁷⁷¹ When fighting finally broke out on 5 May 1992 between

⁷⁶⁶ Keith Martin, 'Tajikistan: Civil War without end?', *RFE/RL Research Report*, 20 August 1993, pp.18-19.

⁷⁶⁷ Nassim Jawad and Shahrbanou Tadjbakhsh, *Tajikistan: A Forgotten Civil War*, Minority Rights Group, Manchester, 1995, p.15; Asal Azamova, 'Na tom zhe meste, 2 goda spustya', *Moskovskie novosti*, 26 April 1992, p.9.

⁷⁶⁸ U. Babakhanov, 'Vysideli otstavku', *Komsomol'skaya pravda*, 24 April, 1992, p.1.

⁷⁶⁹ Asal Azamova, 'Ploshchad' Shokhidon protiv ploshchad Ozodi', *Moskovskie novosti*, 3 May 1992, pp. 1,6.

⁷⁷⁰ Keith Martin, 'Tajikistan: Civil War without end?', p.20.

⁷⁷¹ Aleksandr Karpov, 'Protivoborstvuiushchie storony sozdaiut vooruzhennye otryady', *Izvestiya*, 5 May 1992, p.1.

supporters and opponents of the government, President Nabiev decided to set up a government of national reconciliation, which included eight members of the opposition. Several key posts, such as Chairman of the Defence Committee, Chairman of the State Television and the Radio Committee and the Minister of Education, were handed to members of the Islamic/Democratic coalition, and the vice-Chairman of the Islamic Revival Party, Davlat Usom, was appointed to the post of deputy Prime Minister.⁷⁷²

The creation of the new coalition government significantly reduced the violence in Dushanbe. However, it did not bring about an end to confrontation. The leadership of the Leninabad and Kulyab provinces refused to submit to the new authorities in Dushanbe. This triggered an escalation of violence in the Kulyab and Kurgan-Tyube provinces, which by the month of June 1992 had developed into open civil war.⁷⁷³ By the end of August 1992, the situation had become extremely tense as the country plunged into total anarchy. Neither the president nor the government managed to bring the situation under control, nor to introduce the much demanded economic or political reforms.⁷⁷⁴ In early September 1992, President Nabiev was forced to resign under increasing pressure from the Islamic/Democratic forces, and power passed to the chairman of the Supreme Soviet, Akbarsho Iskandarov who had been elected to that position in mid-August 1992. Nabiev's forced resignation triggered another wave of violence in the Kurgan-Tyube and Kulyab provinces which lasted for several months. On 24 October 1992, a pro-Communist faction unsuccessfully attempted to take control of Dushanbe by military means.⁷⁷⁵ Unable to put an end to the war, President Iskandarov and the government resigned on 10 November 1992. On 16 November, the communist-dominated parliament, in session in Khojand, elected Imomali Rakhmonov as Chairman of the Supreme Soviet, and under pressure from Sangak Safarov, the leader of the Kulyab armed units, formed a new pro-Communist government dominated by Kulyabites.⁷⁷⁶ The confirmation of Abudumalik Abdulladzhonov, a Leninabadi, as Prime Minister of the new government signified a return of the old Leninabad-Kulyab alliance to power in Dushanbe.

⁷⁷² Aleksandr Karpov, 'Rost vliyaniya oppozitsii v Tadjikistane', *Izvestiya*, 13 May 1992, p.2.

⁷⁷³ Aleksandr Karpov, 'Tadjikistan: strelyali v stolitse, teper-v glubinke', *Izvestiya*, 11 June 1992, p.2.

⁷⁷⁴ Aleksandr Karpov, 'Rezidentsiya presidenta Tadjikistana v osade', *Izvestiya*, 2 September 1992, pp.1-2.

⁷⁷⁵ Aleksandr Karpov, 'Popytka svergnut' pravitel'stvo natsional'nogo primireniya Tadjikistana ne udalas', *Izvestiya*, 26 October 1992, pp.1-2.

⁷⁷⁶ Oleg Panfilov, 'Sangak Safarov: "My ochistim Tadjikistan i Rossiiu ot demokraticeskoi mrazi"', *Nezavisimaya gazeta*, 5 December 1992, p.1.

In December 1992, the new government forces, assisted by Uzbekistan and by forces of the Russian 201st Motorised Infantry Division (MID) stationed in Tajikistan seized control of the capital and began conducting punitive actions against the opposition which was forced to retreat to the Garm and Pamir mountainous regions and to neighbouring Afghanistan, where it began training for a major offensive with the support of the Afghan Mujahideen. The advance of government forces resulted in a massive exodus of refugees across the southern Tajik borders into northern Afghanistan. In February 1993, the first attacks took place against border posts along the Tajik-Afghan border, patrolled by Russian border guards. A major Tajik opposition offensive against the border guards, with the participation of Afghan guerrillas, occurred in July 1993 in which as many as 30 Russian soldiers were killed. This triggered a sharp reaction from the Russian government which decided to become actively involved not only in the protection of the Tajik-Afghan border and the support of the Tajik authorities in Dushanbe, but in fostering a dialogue among the two factions in order to bring about a lasting settlement in the country.

2. Russia's Involvement

During the first year of Tajik independence, the Russian government was unable to develop a clearly-defined policy regarding events in that country. This was to be expected, given that the Russian leadership was confronted with a new situation whose complexities were difficult to grasp, and Russian diplomats lacked the expertise and the experience to deal with this new kind of inter-ethnic conflict. The Tajik situation was in constant flux, thus preventing Russian leaders from adopting a straight-forward approach to the crisis. The Russian MOD and the Russian MFA initially reacted more than acted to shape events, as was the case with other conflicts in the former Soviet space. Only by the end of 1992, as power in Tajikistan collapsed completely, did the Russian government adopt a more clearly defined policy-line and threw its lot behind the pro-Communist government. It provided military support to the new Rakhmonov leadership, decided to keep an active military presence in the country, and assisted the government in building-up of its own armed forces.

a. Motivations

Russia's military and diplomatic involvement in the Tajik conflict was determined by a series of factors. Strategic considerations most probably played the determinant role.

Stability and security along the CIS southern borders, in particular the Tajik-Afghan border, were considered essential for Russia's own security.⁷⁷⁷ The war in Tajikistan created great regional instability and resulted in the development of a flourishing illegal trade of weapons, narcotics and other valuable goods into Russia. In 1992-1993, Russian leaders ruled out the establishment of a new defence infrastructure along Russia's new borders, and instead decided to use the old Soviet border installations to protect Russia's own borders.⁷⁷⁸ Moreover, the growing involvement of Afghan mujahideen and the potential 'Afghanisation' of Tajikistan, in other words, the total collapse of state authority and the division of the country among warlords endlessly fighting against each other, created the spectre of instability spreading all across Central Asia and into Russia. Russian leaders were also very much concerned about the fate of the Russian-speaking population in Tajikistan, and the possibility that it might become the target of violence and reprisals.⁷⁷⁹ Last but not least, Russian political analysts raised the spectre of 'Islamic fundamentalism' reaching the gates of Russia, if the civil war in Tajikistan was not contained.⁷⁸⁰ At the height of the fighting along the Tajik-Afghan border in the Summer of 1993, *Segodnya* correspondent Mikhail Leontiev expressed the concern, shared by many in Russia, that Islamic fundamentalism might spread from Tajikistan, to Kyrgyzstan, Kazakhstan, and eventually even to Russia.⁷⁸¹

b. Russia's Initial 'Neutrality'

When violence first erupted in Dushanbe in the Spring of 1992, the 201st MID did not get immediately involved in the fighting, not least because local army officers feared that their families and other Russians could be the subject of violence if they took sides in the conflict. Former Soviet Ministry of Interior troops under Tajik command, however, played a major role in guaranteeing security in the streets of Dushanbe.⁷⁸² Later reports however, seem to indicate that the Tajik leadership, President Nabiev in particular, having in the past established very close ties with officers of the 201st MID, succeeded in obtaining the

⁷⁷⁷ Kozyrev on the need to secure borders: Igor Rotar, 'Moskva pytaetsya pogasit' tadjhikskuiu mezhdousobitsu', *Nezavisimaya gazeta*, 11 November 1992, p. 1.

⁷⁷⁸ Pavel Felgengauer, 'Starye granitsy i "novye" bazi', *Segodnya*, 16 September 1993, p. 3. On Russia's policies regarding border protection see Chapter 2.

⁷⁷⁹ Kozyrev on the need to protect Russian minorities: Igor Rotar, 'Moskva pytaetsya pogasit' tadjhikskuiu mezhdousobitsu', p. 1.

⁷⁸⁰ Aleksnadr Aleksandrov, 'Dolzha li Rossiya vyvesti voiska iz Tadjhikistana?', *Rossiiskie vesti*, 22 July 1993, p. 1.

⁷⁸¹ Mikhail Leontiev, 'Stanet li Rossiya vtorym Tadjhikistanom?', *Segodnya*, 20 July, 1993, p. 3.

⁷⁸² Aleksandra Lugovskaya, 'Tadjhikistan: respublika v traure', *Izvestiya*, 8 May 1992, p. 1.

latter's support in order to put an end to violence. Col. Vyacheslav Zabolotny, commander of the 201st MID Dushanbe garrison, admitted that after some hesitation, and under strong pressure from President Nabiev, the 201st division eventually got involved in suppressing the fighting on 10 May 1992, when eleven people died and dozens were wounded in the streets of Dushanbe.⁷⁸³ The available evidence, however, suggests that the intervention of the 201st MID at that time was not the result of an order coming from Moscow. In May 1992, Russian leaders had ordered the army to stay neutral and avoid getting involved in the conflict. The actions of the army officers seemed to have been the result of an attempt to suppress the fighting in view of the escalation of violence, rather than an effort to prop up a regime that could establish close ties with Russia. Reports also suggest that officers belonging to the 201st MID, acting on an independent basis, provided weapons and equipment to Nabiev supporters during the Spring of 1992.⁷⁸⁴ These arms transfers, however, were most probably the result of independent decisions taken by local commanders, who were either supportive of a particular faction, or interested in obtaining lucrative financial profits, without Moscow's approval.⁷⁸⁵

During the Summer of 1992, as violence throughout the country continued and the new coalition government proved unable to control the situation and effectively protect the Tajik-Afghan border, Russia decided to conduct a more active policy in order to stop the violence. On 21 July 1992, the former Soviet border troops patrolling Tajikistan's external borders were placed under Russia's jurisdiction, and Russia took over the protection of the Tajik-Afghan border, with the consent of the Tajik leadership.⁷⁸⁶ Moreover, in August 1992, Yeltsin discussed with the Tajik government the possibility of introducing CIS peacekeeping forces to act as 'buffer forces' in the conflict ridden areas of Kurgan-Tyube and Kulyab. However, as major demonstrations were held in Dushanbe in early September against President Nabiev and against the introduction of CIS peacekeepers, the initiative was abandoned.⁷⁸⁷ Threats by President Yeltsin and his Kazakh, Kyrgyz and Uzbek

⁷⁸³ Oleg Panfilov, 'General-Polkovnik Nabiev ostaetsya tadjikskim prezidentom', *Nezavisimaya gazeta*, 22 August 1992, p.3.

⁷⁸⁴ Oleg Panfilov, 'Tadjikistan: protivoborstvuiushchie storony otkryli vtoroi front', *Nezavisimaya gazeta*, 22 September 1992, p.3.

⁷⁸⁵ Apparently, appeals were made during that period on a daily basis by Supreme Soviet Chairman Akbarsho Iskandarov to Yeltsin, Shaposhnikov and Grachev asking that the government of Tajikistan be sold 30 pieces of armoured equipment from the Army arsenals, but with no results. (Oleg Panfilov, 'Tadjikistan: protivoborstvuiushchie storony otkryli vtoroi front', p.3).

⁷⁸⁶ Igor Rotar and Andrei Abrashitov, 'Vnutri chuzhoi voyny. Rossiiskie pogranichniki na tadjikskogo-afganskome rubezhe', *Nezavisimaya gazeta*, 15 August 1992, p.3.

⁷⁸⁷ Aleksandr Karpov, 'Rezidentsiya prezidenta Tadjikistana v osade', pp.1-2.

counterparts to intervene militarily, unless violence was brought to an end, also proved ineffective.⁷⁸⁸ On 7 September 1992, President Nabiev was forced to resign and the country plunged into anarchy. In an attempt to bring the situation under control, on 10 September 1992, Russia sent an additional one thousand border guards to the Tajik-Afghan border, thus raising the total number of troops deployed along the Amu-Darya to about 2,500 men.⁷⁸⁹ In mid-September 1992, the Russian 201st MID, which so far had kept at least some semblance of neutrality, began openly to help the Iskandarov regime, which enjoyed the support of Democratic/Islamist parties, in its efforts to impose order throughout the country. On 16 September, units of 201st MID moved into the conflict areas, as a result of a personal order from Tajikistan's acting President Iskandarov, and took control of the Nurek Hydroelectric Station and the Chermozak Pass.⁷⁹⁰ In late September 1992, the command of the 201st MID organised joint patrols with the local police in cities and communities with a high level of illegal weapons' possession.⁷⁹¹ Finally, in late October 1992, during Safarli Kendzhayev's attempt to overthrow Tajikistan's government of national reconciliation, tanks of the Russian 201st division protected the television centre, the airport and the train station.⁷⁹² Although hard evidence to prove that the 201st MID was following Moscow's orders is lacking, it is highly likely that the Defence Ministry ordered the army to intervene, given Yeltsin's intentions to use the 201st MID as peacekeeping forces and his readiness to send additional troops in late September 1992 to guard Russia and CIS installations. Tajikistan was seen as an area of vital interest for Russia, if only because no physical frontiers had been set up between Russia and the Central Asian states. The awareness that Russia alone would be capable of stopping the bloodshed, and the presence of Russian troops in the area, which came regularly under attack by the various Tajik factions eager to get hold of additional weapons, prompted Russia to intervene.

The evidence available so far, does not allow us to determine with certainty whether local officers voluntarily turned over weapons to the warring factions or whether instead they were forced by Tajik fighters to surrender them. For example, in late September 1992,

⁷⁸⁸ 'Nazarbaev, Akaev, Karimov, i El'tsin pishut rukovodstvu Tadzhiikistana', *Nezavisimaya gazeta*, 5 September 1992, p.1.

⁷⁸⁹ Barnett R. Rubin, 'The Fragmentation of Tajikistan', *Survival*, 35, Winter 1993-1994, 4, p.79.

⁷⁹⁰ Aleksandr Karpov, 'Tadzhiikistan: v raiony konflikta vvedeny voiskovye podrazdeleniya', *Izvestiya*, 18 September 1992, p.1.

⁷⁹¹ Aleskandr Karpov, 'I.O. Prezidenta Tadzhiikistana pytaetsya vlast' upotrebit' ', *Izvestiya*, 24 September 1992, p.2.

⁷⁹² Aleskandr Karpov, 'Popytka svergnut' pravitel'stvo natsional'nogo primireniya Tadzhiikistana ne udalas' ', pp.1-2.

three tanks and an armoured personnel carrier were driven away from a regiment of the 201st Russian division in Kurgan-Tyube. According to *Komsomol'skaya pravda* correspondent U. Babakhanov, the combat vehicles were turned over to armed Kulyab units based in the city of Kalininabad, who used this equipment to force their way into Kurgan-Tyube.⁷⁹³ The Russian Ministry of Defence, however, reported that the equipment had not been turned over, but stolen by officers and warrant officers who were from the area.⁷⁹⁴ Incidents of this type and regular attacks on Russian military installations prompted the Russian government to bring units of the 201st MID up to full strength. The troops were ordered to act decisively to stop seizures of weapons and illegal actions against servicemen and members of their families. Both sides in the Tajik conflict were trying hard to drag Russian troops into the fighting.⁷⁹⁵ As a result, local commanders found themselves in a very difficult situation, given that they often belonged to local communities. The 201st MID was not really a Russian army. As many as ninety-five percent of the soldiers and sergeants were local residents. Consequently, it was difficult for them just to remain neutral.

b. Russia Takes an Active Involvement

As the situation in Tajikistan deteriorated in October and early November 1992, Russia decided to get increasingly involved in the conflict. On 5 November 1992, at Russia's insistence, the leaders of Tajikistan, Uzbekistan, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan and Russia agreed to grant the 201st division peace-making functions, thus opening the door to Russia's direct military involvement in the conflict. The 201st MID was entrusted not only with the task of helping in the protection of civilians, but also of assisting the Tajik government in restoring peace and order throughout the country.⁷⁹⁶ It was also decided that the 201st MID was to form the basis of a collective peace-making (*mirotvorcheskii*) force involving other CIS countries. Moreover, it was agreed that additional joint measures would be taken to strengthen security along Tajikistan's border with Afghanistan.⁷⁹⁷ Russia's peace-making role was formally legalised in an agreement signed on 6 November 1992, between Tajik President Iskandarov and Eduard Vorobyov, deputy commander of

⁷⁹³ U. Babakhanov, 'Istinu znaiut tanki', *Komsomol'skaya pravda*, 29 September 1992, p.1.

⁷⁹⁴ *ibid.*

⁷⁹⁵ Vadim Belykh and Nikolai Burbuyga, 'Patrony vmesto khleba', *Izvestiya*, 15 September 1992, p.1.

⁷⁹⁶ Igor Rotar, 'V Tadzhikistane budet Gossovet', *Nezavisimaya gazeta*, 6 November 1992, p.3.

⁷⁹⁷ *ibid.*

the Russian army in Tajikistan. The agreement spelled out the details of a significantly broad peacekeeping mandate. Russian troops were put in charge not only of restoring and maintaining law and order, but also of disarming 'terrorist groups and criminal armed formations', as well as monitoring freight, confiscating illegal equipment, and facilitating the delivery of humanitarian aid.⁷⁹⁸ Troops belonging to the 201st MID were allowed to use force in order to repulse armed attacks against servicemen and their families, against attempts to seize armaments and military equipment, and against attacks on the civilian population. Although it was clearly stipulated that the 201st MID was not allowed to get involved in the political struggle or in open hostilities, the broad provisions spelled out in the agreement, in effect, legalised and opened the way to the direct intervention of the Russian army in the Tajik war. After the capture of Dushanbe by Safarov's forces in mid-November 1992, the 201st MID helped to provide security to the streets of Dushanbe and soon became the main guarantor of security in key strategic areas of the country.⁷⁹⁹

Russia's increased military involvement in the Tajik civil war during the Autumn and Winter of 1992 seems to have resulted above all from a deterioration of the situation on the ground and a willingness to bring violence to an end, rather than from an attempt to bring Tajikistan under Russia's sphere of influence, despite the fact that Russia's involvement eventually brought Tajikistan under Russia's sway. Although Russia could have opted for a complete retreat from the region, Russian leaders refused to envisage this option, considering it too dangerous for Russia's own security. Russian leaders, in fact, increasingly perceived the deterioration of the situation in Tajikistan as representing a real threat to Russia's own security. As Foreign Minister Kozyrev explained, 'Russia's total withdrawal from Tajikistan would be detrimental to Russia's national interests.....The protection of Russia's borders requires that political stability be achieved in the states of Central Asia.'⁸⁰⁰ Kozyrev tried to make it clear that Russia was acting as a peacemaker, not in order to create a sphere of influence, but in order to protect its own borders.⁸⁰¹ However, the line between neutral peacemaking and direct intervention proved to be a very thin one, and a month later, the Russian army got directly involved in the war by providing

⁷⁹⁸ Igor Rotar 'Dva dnya Andreyi Kozyreva', *Nezavisimaya gazeta*, 7 November 1992, p.3.

⁷⁹⁹ Cheslav Putovskii, 'Chto takoe narodnyi front Tadjikistana?', *Nezavisimaya gazeta*, 16 December 1992, p.1,3.

⁸⁰⁰ Igor Rotar, 'Moskva pytaetsya pogasit' tadjikskuiu mezhdousobitsu', *Nezavisimaya gazeta*, 11 November 1992, p.1,3.

⁸⁰¹ *ibid.*

military support not to Iskandarov, with whom Russia had signed the agreement, but to the new pro-Communist, Leninabad-Kulyab oriented Rakhmonov regime.

Russia's decision to support Rakhmonov was most probably a result of the belief that the latter had better chances than the Democratic/Islamic parties of imposing peace and stability in the country. The Nabiev and Iskandarov pseudo-democratic governments had been unable to unify and pacify the country, allowing Tajikistan to plunge into chaos. The Rakhmonov regime was also considered more pro-Russian than the opposition, besides the fact that it enjoyed the overt political military support of Uzbekistan.⁸⁰² The Uzbek leadership had cast its lot with the Uzbek pro-Communist faction, mainly because it feared the spread of Islamic and Democratic ideas from Tajikistan into Uzbekistan, given the presence of a large Tajik community in Uzbekistan. Russia's intervention in support of Rakhmonov opened a new phase in Russia's policies towards the region based on Russia's almost unconditional backing of the Rakhmonov regime, not only in military terms, but also in financial and economic terms.

c. Russia's Open Support for Rakhmonov's Regime

During the Spring of 1993, Russia strengthened its ties with the Rakhmonov regime. On 25 May 1993, Presidents Yeltsin and Rakhmonov signed a series of documents on assistance and military co-operation, officially sealing Russia's alliance with the Tajik regime and laying the grounds for further Russian military involvement in the region.⁸⁰³ However, this did not produce the desired effect on the ground. In July 1993, the opposition launched a major attack along the Tajik-Afghan border, in which over 30 Russian soldiers were killed, precipitating a sharp reaction from the Russian leadership, especially from the Russian MOD. Defence Minister Grachev demanded that the Russian Parliament approve an increase in the number of Russian troops in Tajikistan and requested that the forces of the 201st MID be granted the right to provide full-scale assistance to the Russian border

⁸⁰² Personal Interview with Sergei Solodovnik, Moscow, November 1996. On Uzbek military support: Oleg Panfilov, 'Dushanbe zakhvachen novym ministrom vnutrennykh del', *Nezavisimaya gazeta*, 11 December 1992, p.1,3; Igor Rotar, 'Tashkent pomogaet antiislamistam Dushanbe ?', *Nezavisimaya gazeta*, 11 December 1992, p. 3; Khudonazar Usmanov, 'Tadzhikistan: Komu - soizuznik, komu - zhandarm', *Moskovskie novosti*, 24 January 1993, p.12.

⁸⁰³ Vera Kuznetsova, 'El'tsin i Rakhmonov podverzhaiut vzaimnoe raspolozhenie', *Nezavisimaya gazeta*, 26 May 1993, p.2.

guards along the Tajik-Afghan border.⁸⁰⁴ The Russian parliament, for once, sided completely with the government and immediately approved the additional sending of troops, and ratified the Friendship Treaty with Tajikistan. The Russian leadership justified its increased involvement in Tajikistan on the grounds that Russia's vital interests were at stake in the region. Attacks by Tajik mujahideen along the border and Afghanistan's inability to restore control over the common border, were considered a threat to Russia's own security. Moreover, Russian leaders felt it was their duty to protect the local Russian-speaking population.⁸⁰⁵

The exacerbation of the situation in Tajikistan and the increased involvement of Russian forces in the area lead to a heated debate in Russia. On the one hand, leading democrat figures, such as Gavriil Popov, Elena Bonner and Konstantin Borovoi, condemned Russia's extended participation in the region, expressing fears that Russia would get bogged down in another 'Afghan quagmire'. They argued that Russia lacked the adequate experience and capacity, as well as the appropriate mandate from the international community, to conduct such an operation.⁸⁰⁶ They also criticised the fact that Russia was supporting an authoritarian regime which was very critical of the democratic leadership in Moscow.⁸⁰⁷ Military commentators, in turn, highlighted the flaws of Russia's military involvement, and pointed out the difficulties faced by Russia in stabilising the country and effectively protecting the Tajik-Afghan borders from guerrilla attacks.⁸⁰⁸ On the other hand, journalists close to government circles argued that control over the Tajik border was essential, since an open Tajik border would lead to a stream of refugees, weapons and narcotics, a flood of crime pouring into other CIS countries and Russia. The alternative, building a new border along Russia's new external borders, was considered too costly.⁸⁰⁹ The Russian leadership, in fact, faced a serious dilemma. Although it was clear that Russia

⁸⁰⁴ Aleksandr Karpov and Viktor Litovkin, 'Sotni pogibshikh - rezultat provokatsii modzhakhedov na tadjhisksko-afganskoi granitse', *Izvestiya*, 15 July 1993, p.1; Pavel Felgengauer, 'Pervoe porazhenie rossiiskoi armii na granitse s Afganistanom', *Segodnya*, 16 July 1993, p.1.

⁸⁰⁵ Yeltsin on the need to secure the borders: Ivan Rodin, 'Parlament predlozhit kozyrevu vozobnovit peregovory s Afganistanom', *Nezavisimaya gazeta*, 16 July 1993, pp.1,3. Grachev on the need to defend the Russian-speaking population: Oleg Panfilov, 'Parlament predlozhit Kozyrevu vozobnovit peregovory s Afganistanom', *Nezavisimaya gazeta*, 16 July 1993, pp.1,3.

⁸⁰⁶ 'Pavel Grachev povyshayet golos - A Gavriil Popov prizyvaet ne zhertvovat' Rossiyanami', *Segodnya*, 20 July 1993, p.1; Vladimir Ivanidze, 'Partiya ekonomicheskoi svobody protiv veonnogo prisutstviya Rossii v Tadjhikistane', *Segodnya*, 23 July 1993, p.2.

⁸⁰⁷ Aleksei Malashenko, 'Islam Nepobezhdennyi', *Nezavisimaya gazeta*, 21 July 1993, p.1,3.

⁸⁰⁸ Vladimir Makartsev, 'Afganskii sindrom, uvy, stanovitsya real'nost'iu', *Izvestiya*, 24 February 1993, p.5.

⁸⁰⁹ Aleksander Aleksandrov, 'Dolzhna li Rossiya vyvesti voiska iz Tadjhikistana?', *Rossiiskie vesti*, 22 July 1993, p.1.

was getting dragged into a new war, retreat from Tajikistan meant the opening of a great gap along Russia's southern borders. The options available were therefore quite limited. Either Russia retreated and built up a new border - a very expensive enterprise with no total guarantee of success- or it stayed and ran the risk of getting increasingly involved in the fighting. Although support from other CIS countries was also a possibility, it did not really represent a realistic option, since these countries proved unable to provide any significant support.⁸¹⁰

Russian leaders opted for an increased military involvement, and in the Summer of 1993, progressively increased the number of Russian border troops and peacekeeping forces. By August 1994 Russia's presence in Tajikistan totalled over 20,000 men.⁸¹¹ Moreover, in September 1993, Russia obtained the backing from the other CIS states to form joint CIS peace-making forces (*mirotvorcheskie sily*) on the basis of Russian, Kazakh, Uzbek, Kyrgyz and Tajik forces, to be sent to Tajikistan for a six-months period.⁸¹² The agreement, however, remained very vague. No particular areas of deployment nor mandate were specified. In fact, Russia's initial intention had been to establish collective defence forces (*kollektivnye sily oborony*), probably within the framework of the Collective Security Treaty, to defend the border from attacks originating in Afghanistan. But, on Kazakhstan's insistence, the troops were named 'peacemaking forces.' A CIS agreement signed in April 1994 finally detailed the mandate of the troops and extended their presence for another six months. Besides assisting in the delivery of humanitarian aid, the troops were assigned the task of stabilising the situation along the Tajik-Afghan border and creating the conditions for dialogue in order to reach a political settlement of the conflict.⁸¹³ Kyrgyzstan, Uzbekistan and Kazakhstan eventually sent battalions to reinforce Russia's forces, but their small numbers - each national contingent did not surpass 350 men - resulted in Russia carrying the bulk of the burden of the peacekeeping operation.⁸¹⁴

The absence of truly multinational peacekeeping forces as well as the broad nature of the peacemaking mandate, led many Russian and Western analysts to view Russia's

⁸¹⁰ Irina Zviagelskaya provides details of the debate in her monograph *The Russian Policy Debate on Central Asia*, The Royal Institute of International Affairs, London, September 1995.

⁸¹¹ Pavel Baev, *The Russian Army in a Time of Troubles*, p.132.

⁸¹² 'Soglashenie o kollektivnykh mirotvorcheskiykh silakh i sovmestnykh merakh po ikh materialno-technicheskomu obespecheniiu', 24 September 1993, *Sodruzhestvo*, 1993, 4, pp.54-65.

⁸¹³ 'Reshenie o sroke, prebyvaniya, sostave i zadachakh kollektivnykh mirotvorcheskiykh sil v Respublike Tadzhikistan', 15 April 1994, *Sodruzhestvo*, 1994, 2, pp.141-143.

⁸¹⁴ Roy Allison, *Peacekeeping in the Soviet Successor States*, p.15.

peacemaking activities in Tajikistan as a fig-leaf for the operations of the Russian army and the Ministry of Defence, and even as a mantle for Russia's neo-imperialist aspirations.⁸¹⁵ There is little doubt that Russia was eager to obtain a CIS mandate for its troops in order to obtain additional legitimacy and to establish the CIS as a regional partner of the UN in peace operations. However, Russia's desire to create CIS peacekeeping forces in Tajikistan was also driven by Russia's willingness to obtain additional military support from other CIS neighbouring countries. For example, at a meeting of CIS Defence Ministers in July 1994, Russian Defence Minister Grachev reacted angrily when other CIS states refused to contribute military personnel and funds to CIS peacekeeping operations.⁸¹⁶ As opposed to the relatively small peacekeeping operations conducted by Russia in other areas of the CIS, the Tajik operation was of a large scale, involving a far higher number of Russian troops. Moreover, it could also be argued that Russia did not need an additional mandate for its presence, given that the November 1992 agreement, to a great extent, legalised the presence and the operation of its troops in Tajikistan. However, Russia's operations did not fall within the traditional concept of peacekeeping, even of an extended type, given that the forces actively supported one side of the conflict. The Tajik operation tended in fact to resemble counter-insurgency or low-intensity warfare, rather than traditional peacekeeping, and this explains, to a great extent, why it was perceived as neo-imperial. By 1993, Russia was most probably not just motivated by a desire to put an end to violence, but also by an eagerness to keep a military presence in what it considered was an area of key strategic significance. Nevertheless, it seems that the CIS peacekeeping agreements were not primarily intended to provide a mantle for Russia's operations, but were conceived above all as a means of obtaining military support from the CIS states.

Russia complemented its military involvement with an active diplomatic campaign aimed at reaching a political settlement. In July 1993, Foreign Minister Kozyrev insisted that diplomatic efforts be conducted and pressure be put on President Rakhmonov so that he opened dialogue with the moderate Tajik opposition.⁸¹⁷ Kozyrev and his deputy Anatolii

⁸¹⁵ *ibid.* p.10; Pavel Baev, *The Russian Army in a Time of Troubles*, p.113, Hans-Georg Ehrhart, Anna Kreikemeyer and Andrei Zagorskii, 'The Commonwealth of Independent States (CIS)' in *Peacekeeping and the Role of Russia in Eurasia*, eds. Lena Jonson and Clive Archer, p.162.

⁸¹⁶ Roy Allison, *Peacekeeping in the Soviet Successor States*, p.15.

⁸¹⁷ Kozyrev, however, made it clear that dialogue had to be conducted only with those factions of the opposition which were ready for compromise, and not with those which used violence. (Konstantin Eggert, 'Moskva stavit zaslon na puti musul'manskogo ekstremizma v Srednei Azii', *Izvestiya*, 11 September, 1993, p.3).

Adamishin held various meetings with both the Tajik government and the opposition in September 1993 and March 1994, which prepared the ground for a series of five rounds of talks held between April 1994 and July 1996, between the Tajik government and the opposition, under both Russian and UN aegis. Although Russia launched the talks, it showed from the very beginning a readiness to actively involve the UN as well as other regional countries, such as Afghanistan, Iran, Pakistan, Turkmenistan and Kazakhstan in the negotiations. After the first round held in Moscow, the following meetings were held in Tehran, Islamabad, Alma-Ata and Ashgabat respectively, and all meetings were co-chaired by Russia and the UN. Moreover, at the 9 August 1993 summit in Moscow, between Russia and Central Asian leaders, Adamishin clearly asked the UN for assistance in terms of humanitarian aid, observers and peacekeeping forces, and suggested that the CIS forces protecting the Tajik border be granted UN status, if a UN force failed to materialise.

Russia's willingness to co-operate with the UN did not prevent it from becoming deeply involved militarily in the conflict during 1994-1995. As fighting extended to the Gorno-Badakhshan section of the Tajik-Afghan border and to the internal regions of Garm, Tavildaria and Gorno-Badakhshan, the Russian 201st MID and border troops intervened on the side of the Tajik government. Not only did the Russian border troops repel attacks along the Tajik-Afghan border throughout 1994 and 1995, they also actively participated in several military operations conducted by the Tajik government, particularly during the Khorogh offensive of April 1995. Moreover, Russian troops belonging to the 201st MID helped the Tajik regime to neutralise the opposition inside Tajikistan during 1993-1995, and provided the government with substantial support in the Tavildaria offensive in late November 1995.⁸¹⁸ Russia's open support for Rakhmonov and its regular condemnation of the opposition's military attacks, significantly discredited Russia's ability to act as a neutral and effective negotiator. Therefore, in April 1995, the leading role in the intra-Tajik negotiations was taken over by the UN, whose special representative Roberto Piriz Ballon brokered an extension of the cease-fire in August 1995, and conducted intensive diplomatic efforts aimed at advancing dialogue among the parties. However, very little was achieved. Regular violations of a cease-fire agreement reduced the chances of brokering a lasting political settlement.

⁸¹⁸ Igor Rotar, 'Ocherednoe mirotvorchestvo Moskvy v Tadzhikistane', *Nezavisimaya gazeta*, 20 November 1993, pp.1,3; Boris Vinogradov, 'Tadzhikskaya oppositsiya ob"yavlyayet "dzhikhad" Rossiiskim pogrannichnikam', *Izvestiya*, 11 April, 1995, p.1; Said Amir, 'Mezhtadzhikskie peregovory prervany', *Segodnya*, 6 December 1995, p.8.

The arrival of Evgeny Primakov to the leadership of the Russian Foreign Ministry did not significantly modify Russia's policies towards Tajikistan. In spite of the diplomatic setbacks, Russia remained the dominant player, because of the military and economic support it provided to the Rakhmonov regime. Although at the CIS summit on 19 January 1996, Yeltsin for the first time made it clear that 'Russia was not ready to carry Tajikistan in its arms for ever,' Russia's policies essentially did not change; they simply acquired a new impetus.⁸¹⁹ Primakov emphasised that Russia's own security interests and regional stability required an active military presence in Tajikistan, which had to be combined with effective mediation efforts. As violence escalated during December 1995-January 1996, Russia decided to put increasing pressure on Rakhmonov so that he make the necessary concessions to the opposition.⁸²⁰ However, by July 1996 the situation on the ground remained highly volatile. Although the UN negotiated a cease-fire in early March 1996, it was violated in late May 1996. Russia's military presence and its diplomatic efforts did not manage to settle the conflict. Although Tajikistan remained well-anchored in Russia's sphere of influence, Russia had not succeeded in fulfilling its main objective: securing peace in the region.

3. Assessment of Russia's Policies

Russia's military participation in support of the Rakhmonov regime, its assistance in the creation of the Tajik Army, as well as its economic and political backing of the Tajik government, transformed the Tajik regime into a sort of 'vassal' of Moscow.⁸²¹ By the end of 1993, it had become clear that the Tajik government was able to survive only thanks to Russia's military and economic support. The perpetuation of hostilities and the difficulties Russia experienced in putting an end to the violence prolonged Russia's presence in Tajikistan, making it increasingly difficult for Russia to extricate itself from the region. Russia's continued presence in Tajikistan and its military and economic backing of the Rakhmonov regime, resulted in Tajikistan falling under Russia's sphere of influence, whether or not this had been the initial intention of policy-makers in Moscow. In 1992

⁸¹⁹ Oleg Panfilov, 'Ministry RF edut v Dushanbe', *Nezavisimaya gazeta*, 27 January, 1996, p.15.

⁸²⁰ *ibid.*

⁸²¹ Russia provided substantial economic and military backing to Tajikistan. See: Gulnara Khasanova, 'V Tadzhikistane, kotoryi polnost'iu zavisit ot pomoshchi Moskvyy, skoro ne ostanetsya ni odnogo russkogo', *Izvestiya*, 6 May 1994, p.3; Yurii Golotiuk, 'S Rakhmonovym svyazyvaiut i nadezhdy, i opaseniya', *Segodnya*, 16 November 1994, p.4; 'Emomali Rakhmonov vstretilsya s prezidentom i prem'erom Rossii', *Segodnya*, 8 September 1995, p.1. On Russia's recognition of Rakhmonov's Presidential victory in November 1996 as legitimate see Yurii Golotiuk, 'S Rakhmonovym svyazyvaiut i nadezhdy, i opaseniya', p.4.

Russia had intervened in Tajikistan mainly to put an end to violence; by 1993-1994, the Russian leadership, both military and diplomatic circles alike, increasingly perceived developments in Tajikistan as vital to Russia's own security. The Russian military, although over-stretched, still seemed eager to preserve a military presence in that country, not only to protect Russia, but also to prevent the spread of regional instability. Although Russia had not instigated the violence in order to perpetuate its presence - on the contrary, its efforts had been aimed at putting an end to the conflict - its active involvement on the government's side, to a great extent, exacerbated the situation. However, Russian leaders also seemed eager to involve international organisations in peacemaking activities. In May 1996, Russia urged the UN Security Council to undertake a peacekeeping operation in Tajikistan under UN auspices. However, the UN reacted coolly, concerned about the potential losses of lives and the lack of financial resources.⁸²² Although imperialist motives were probably not behind Russia's initial behaviour, once Russia got deeply involved, its behaviour acquired an increasingly neo-imperialist character, despite its willingness to work in collaboration with the UN.

4. Conclusion

The Tajik war represents the only case of the four ethnic conflicts analysed, where Russian forces in the ground became massively involved in the fighting in support of one of the factions of the war, with the probable exception of the 14th Army in Transdniestria during the Spring and Summer of 1992. Russia's involvement however, should not be attributed only to an attempt to keep the country under Russia's sphere of influence at any cost, but should also be seen as a response to the escalation of violence on the ground. Russia did not actively participate in the exacerbation of the violence, on the contrary, it had every reason to want it to stop. The war in Tajikistan was having an extremely negative effect on Russia and on the Central Asian region: spread of weapons, illegal trade, refugees, and general instability which prevented the development of the economy. Russia, however, could have decided to retreat from the region and set up its own border in order to protect itself from the negative impact of the Tajik war. This was a very expensive option, and there was no guarantee that the effects of the war would not have filtered into Russia anyway. However, the fact that the Russian leadership did not even consider the possibility of retreating from the region shows that Tajikistan was considered an 'natural sphere' of

⁸²² 'Boris Vinogradov, 'Neitralitet do pervogo vystrela?', *Izvestiya*, 24 May, 1996, p.3.

Russia's interest and therefore that no one but Russia would be able to impose peace. Moreover, as Russia got deeply involved in Tajikistan, the conviction increasingly gained ground that Tajikistan represented a sphere of vital Russian interests and that Russia should not retreat from the area. In other words, as with Abkhazia and Transdniestria, once Russia got involved in the conflict, the perception that these areas were vital to Russia grew, and the efforts to keep an 'informal empire' increased.

VI. General Conclusion

Russia's policies regarding the ethnic conflicts in Abkhazia, Nagorno-Karabagh and Tajikistan show that Russia was ready to take an active role, either in terms of mediation or peacekeeping in order to bring about an end to violence. Russia considered these areas as its own sphere of influence and was determined that no other country play a dominant role in the region, least of all introduce its armed forces as peacekeepers. However, Russia also had a legitimate interest in finding a solution to these conflicts, since instability along its southern borders, however far they were, was seen as having a negative impact on Russia, in terms of refugees and illegal trade. Moreover, Russia was the country the best placed to persuade the warring factions to reach an agreement, and the most willing to take an active role and send in its own forces. These factors determined that Russia ended up being the chief negotiator and the main peacekeeper in the region. The Russian Ministry of Defence on the other hand, was willing to keep a military presence in the former Soviet states, and therefore tried to take advantage of the wars in Abkhazia, Transdniestria, Tajikistan and Nagorno-Karabagh in order to impose its own agenda. It succeeded very well in Georgia where Russia managed to keep key military bases, but it failed in Nagorno-Karabagh. In Transdniestria it managed to perpetuate its presence despite the opposition of the Moldovan government. In Tajikistan, Russia managed to keep a military presence, but at a very high cost, since its troops were constantly involved in the fighting, and thus suffering many casualties. Moreover, in Tajikistan, Russia's military presence proved the least effective in bringing an end to violence. The Russian Ministry of Foreign Affairs, although displaced from most of the negotiations by the Ministry of Defence, still managed to impose the view that the territorial integrity and inviolability of borders of the new independent states had to be respected, and that the secessionist movement should only strive for some sort of regional autonomy. This shows that although Russia was willing to keep these areas under its influence, it still regarded these countries as sovereign and

independent, not least because any change of borders in the former Soviet states could trigger similar demands among its own autonomous units.

Although Russia pursued quite legitimate state interests in its intervention in the conflicts, in many occasions its involvement had 'informal empire building' aspirations. In fact a very fine line divided security-building from neo-imperial building, and most often than not, Russian leaders found themselves conducting assertive actions which fitted the neo-imperialist pattern. This resulted to a great extent from the difficulties Russian leaders had in totally discarding Russia's imperial legacy, and from the lack of experience of both the military and the diplomats on conflict resolution. The Russian military adopted quite heavy-handed tactics in their settlement of the conflicts, tactics which very much resembled intervention in low intensity conflicts. The Foreign Ministry's inability to settle the conflicts by mediation only resulted in their eventual support for more assertive methods.

Chapter 4 : Russia's Energy Trade with the Former Soviet States

The current chapter will examine Russia's policies towards the former Soviet states in the energy sector. During the period under examination, Russia remained the biggest producer and the main supplier of energy to those former Soviet states that had insufficient energy resources to cover their own needs, in particular the Baltic states, Moldova, Ukraine and Belarus. It also controlled the export lines of those republics with abundant energy resources, such as Kazakhstan, Azerbaijan and Turkmenistan, which wanted to export their energy supplies to world markets. The chapter will attempt to determine whether Russia's advantageous position as the main producer and supplier of energy, and as the centre of the post-Soviet energy export network, allowed it to exert substantial pressure on FSS states in order to bring them into Russia's sphere of influence; or whether instead, Russia's energy policies towards the FSS followed purely economic interests. In other words, whether policies reflected an attempt to correct the artificially unfavourable terms of trade inherited from the Soviet era, and to follow the natural trend of internationalisation and expansion, or whether instead, Russia's policies were primarily motivated by geopolitical considerations.

The energy trade was chosen as a topic of examination for various reasons. First, because of the significance of energy inputs in a country's economy in general, and in the former Soviet Union in particular, given the energy-intensive character of Soviet industry - a result of the availability of plentiful energy resources at heavily subsidised prices. Second, because of Russia's disproportionately high share of oil and gas exports in intra-republican and CIS trade. In this respect, the energy trade is particularly enlightening because a country's control over energy resources and energy flows allows it, if so desired, to exert strong influence over those countries that are dependent on its resources. Third, because of the dominant role played by the energy sector within the Russian economy itself. During most of the period under examination, tax revenues from the energy complex covered more than half of the Russian state budget, and the energy industry's foreign-exchange receipts accounted for more than 70 percent of Russia's total export earnings.⁸²³ Such high dependence by the Russian economy on the energy complex implied that its interest could not always be ignored. In fact, very close links developed between Russian energy industries and the government, as reflected in the appointment of Viktor Chernomyrdin,

⁸²³ Aleksandr Bekker, 'TEK zadavlen gruzom neplatezhei', *Segodnya*, 21 January 1993, p.2.

previously head of the Soviet gas conglomerate, as Russian Prime Minister, and of Yurii Shafranik, who had directed a major oil-production association, as Minister of Fuel and Energy.

After examining the main traits of the Russian energy complex and its relations with the Russian government, the chapter will analyse Russia's energy policies towards those states with insufficient energy resources and highly dependent on Russia, such as Ukraine and Belarus. Then it will proceed to examine Russia's policies towards those republics with significant energy resources, such as Kazakhstan and Azerbaijan in the Caspian region.

I. The Russian Energy Complex

The Russian energy complex comprises the natural gas monopoly Gazprom - a joint-stock company with 40 percent state participation - and about a dozen oil conglomerates, Lukoil, Surgutneftegas, Yukos and Rosneft being the largest. Lukoil and Rosneft were privatised between 1992 and 1995, but the ownership structure of the oil industry remained murky, given that companies regularly swapped shares, and formed subsidiary companies. In 1995, two major Russian banks, ONEKSIMbank and Menatep bank, obtained majority shares in Sidanco and Yukos respectively, and Imperial bank acquired a 5 percent share of Lukoil.⁸²⁴ The close ties between the energy complex and the highest echelons of power in Russia raised two major inter-linked questions. On the one hand, whether or not Russian leaders used the energy industry as an instrument of foreign policy, especially within the former Soviet space. On the other hand, to what extent did the policies of the Russian government actually reflect the particular interests of the energy lobby. The fusion of government structures and semi-independent private entities, which characterised the Russian energy sector during this transitional period, resulted in both entities mutually influencing each other. The energy companies, in particular Gazprom, 40 percent of which belonged to the state, were not purely commercial enterprises. The companies' behaviour often reflected the policies of the Russian government, which set the broad lines and conducted the overall energy policy of Russia towards the FSS. On more than one occasion, the interest of the government and of the energy companies coincided, especially as far as the expansion of the energy sector in the FSS is concerned. However, as the process of privatisation gathered speed, the views of the energy companies and those of the

⁸²⁴ Peter Rutland, 'Russia's Energy Empire Under Strain', *Transition*, 3 May 1996, p.7.

government tended to diverge. Gazprom, Lukoil and Yukos increasingly became independent actors, often approaching the development of the Russian gas and oil markets exclusively from the point of view of corporate gain.⁸²⁵ As energy companies became more powerful, their influence over foreign policy in a way consistent with their own economic interests grew. The companies' ability to earn vast amount of much needed hard currency and their ability to act as powerful players beyond Russia's borders resulted in an increasingly influential behaviour. Efforts were conducted by the Russian leadership, especially after 1994, to ensure that the operations of the energy companies coincided with the interest of the Russian state. To that effect, Chernomyrdin was charged in 1995 with the task of making the activity of the oil and gas companies consistent with 'Russia's state interests.'⁸²⁶ The relations between the government and the energy industry were, therefore, extremely complex. As the chapter will show, certain decisions followed primarily the interests of the energy companies, whereas others tended to reflect the predominance of state interests over those of the energy conglomerates.

II. Ukraine and Belarus

Both Ukraine and Belarus were very much dependent on Russia's energy supplies when the Soviet Union collapsed in 1991.⁸²⁷ Belarus drew all of its gas supplies from Russia and

⁸²⁵ Igor Khuripunov and Mary Matthews, 'Russia's Oil and Gas Interest Group and Its Foreign Policy Agenda', *Problems of Post-Communism*, May-June 1996, p.40.

⁸²⁶ ANI Report, 'Premier to Make Decision on Oil Companies' Structure', *Segodnya*, 5 July 1995, in *ibid.* p.40.

⁸²⁷ The literature on Russia's energy trade with Ukraine reveals the following arguments: Margarita Mercedes de Balmaceda and Oles M. Somlansky argued that Ukraine's economic dependency on Russia significantly reduced Kiev's ability to conduct an independent foreign policy, and opened Ukraine to Russian blackmail. According to Balmaceda and Smolansky, Russia took advantage of its dominant position to obtain political concessions, as far as CIS integration and the Black Sea Fleet are concerned. However, Balmaceda noted that divergent interests coexisted within the energy sector and that the positions of the Russian government and the energy companies did not always coincide. Although not explicitly supporting the neo-imperialist argument, Balmaceda and Smolansky tend to disregard the 'national interest' elements which was usually present in Russian behaviour in this field. (Margarita Mercedes Balmaceda, 'Gas, Oil and the Linkages between Domestic and Foreign Policies: The Case of Ukraine', *Europe-Asia Studies*, 50, 1998, 2, pp.257-286; Smolansky, Oles M., 'Ukraine's Quest for Independence: The Fuel Factor', *Europa-Asia Studies*, 47, 1995, 1, pp. 67-90) Igor Khripunov and Mary M. Matthews similarly argued that the oil and gas industries were viewed by the Russian government as a major tool to reintegrate the former Soviet republics. (Igor Khripunov and Mary M. Matthews, 'Russia's Oil and Gas Interest Group and its Foreign Policy Agenda', *Problems of Post-Communism*, 43, May-June 1996, 3, p.41.) Gwendolyn Sasse instead, argued that despite Russia's considerable potential leverage over Ukraine, Moscow did not manage to achieve any concrete foreign policy goals, because of Russia's dependency on Ukraine for the transport of its energy resources to European markets. (Gwendolyn Sasse, 'Fuelling Nation-State-Building: Ukraine's Energy Dependence on Russia', *Central Asian and Caucasian Prospects*,

imported most of its electricity from both Lithuania and Russia. It only produced 10 percent of its oil consumption, the rest being imported from Russia.⁸²⁸ Ukraine found itself in a slightly better position. Although it depended on Russia for 60 percent of its gas and almost 90 percent of its oil, it produced some 20 percent of its own gas needs, and obtained another 20 percent from Turkmenistan.⁸²⁹ Its five nuclear power stations produced about one-third of the country's electricity. Ukraine also had a large coal mining industry in the Donbass. In all, Ukraine provided approximately one-third of its own energy needs.⁸³⁰

1. Russia's Energy Trade with Ukraine

a. Facing up to Higher Prices and Reduced Supplies

After the end of the USSR, Russia sharply cut down oil supplies to Ukraine and progressively increased oil and gas prices. Whereas on average, Russia had supplied Ukraine with 57 million tons of oil a year, in 1991 it only provided Ukraine with 41 million tons, and in 1992 supplies dropped even further to 33.5 million tons.⁸³¹ During 1992, Russia's oil and gas prices to Ukraine remained heavily subsidised - 35 percent of the world market price for oil and 12 percent for gas. However, the bill was still up from previous years, making it extremely hard for Ukraine to meet payments on time. Delays in payments prompted Russia to reduce the amount of gas supplied in October 1992, decreasing Ukraine's meagre energy reserves even further.⁸³² The situation worsened in the winter of 1992, when President Yeltsin announced that those former Soviet states that withdrew from the ruble zone - Ukraine being one of them - would be charged world prices for energy and would be required to pay in hard currency.⁸³³ Tough negotiations followed

Briefing Paper, The Royal Institute of International Affairs, London, 17 April 1998, p.7) A similar point has been raised by Peter Rutland, who argued that although certain elements in Russia were keen to use the energy factor to restore a sphere of influence over the FSS, mutual dependency limited Russia's ability to extract concessions. (Peter Rutland, *Lost Opportunities: Energy and Politics in Russia*, p. 26-27.)

⁸²⁸ Ustina Markus, 'Heading off an Energy Disaster', *Transition*, 14 April 1995, p.10.

⁸²⁹ 'Ukraine: Deal with Iran Poses Market-sharing Questions', *Petroleum Economist*, March 1992, p.55; Isabel Gorst, 'Neighbours Tussle over Energy Matters', *Petroleum Economist*, April 1993, p.16.

⁸³⁰ Ustina Markus, 'Energy Crisis Spurs Ukraine and Belarus To Seek Help Abroad', *Transition*, 3 May 1996, p.14.

⁸³¹ Vladimir Mikheev, 'Ukraina vybiraet vneshne-ekonomicheskikh partnerov po printsipu nadezhnosti', *Izvestiya*, 11 February 1992, p.5.

⁸³² Moscow Radio, 19 October 1992, in *FBIS-SOV-92*, 21 October 1992, p. 35 and Moscow Radio, 21 October 1992, in *FBIS-SOV-92*, 22 October 1992, pp.40-41.

⁸³³ Oles M. Smolansky, 'Ukraine's Quest for Independence: The Fuel Factor', *Europa-Asia Studies*, 47, 1995, 1, pp.72-73.

in 1993, as Russian leaders became committed to raising progressively energy prices to world levels. In June 1993, it was agreed that Russia would provide Ukraine with a substantially reduced supply of oil for the rest of 1993 - 15 million tons - at double the price previously charged - \$80 per ton. As far as gas is concerned, Russia agreed to supply a total of 60 billion cubic metres of gas for the whole of 1993, at \$40 per 1,000 cubic metres, a fivefold increase from the previous price.⁸³⁴ Such high prices and reduced volumes, especially as far as oil was concerned, severely hit Ukraine's already collapsing industrial production, thus further reducing its capacity to cover energy costs.

Ukraine's inability to pay for the agreed deliveries at the prices stipulated prompted Russia to temporarily suspend oil supplies in July 1993 and to substantially reduce gas supplies in late August 1993. By the end of the summer, the energy situation in Ukraine had become so critical - the total energy debt to Russia reached \$2.5 billion - that at the Russian-Ukrainian summit in Massandra on 3 September Ukrainian President Kravchuk seemed ready to transfer half of the entire Black Sea Fleet to Russia as payment for Ukraine's outstanding debts. But pressure from the Ukrainian opposition forced Kravchuk to immediately revise his position, and the proposal was immediately shelved. Ukraine's potential 'economic capitulation' to Russia, was not only the result of Ukraine's scarce energy resources, it was also very much related to the collapse of the overall Ukrainian economy. The total absence of macroeconomic stabilisation, the lack of structural economic reform, and the external terms of trade shock had provoked a sharp fall in industrial output, a serious deterioration of Ukraine's balance of payments, an upsurge of hyperinflation and a severe decline in living standards.⁸³⁵ In 1993, real GDP fell by 15 percent, bringing the cumulative fall in output since 1989 to 40 percent.⁸³⁶ By the end of the summer of 1993, the Ukrainian economy was in a shambles.

⁸³⁴ Erik Whitlock, 'Ukrainian-Russian Trade: The Economics of Dependency', *RFE/RL Research Report*, 29 October 1993, p. 39; Ustina Markus, 'Debt and Desperation', *Transition*, 14 April 1995, p. 15.

⁸³⁵ Francoise Le Gall, 'Ukraine: A Trade and Exchange System Still Seeking Direction', in *Trade in the New Independent States*, eds. Constantine Michalopoulos and David G. Tarr, IMF, Washington DC, 1994, p.66.

⁸³⁶ *ibid.*; Vladimir Mikheev, 'Ukraina vybiraet vneshne-ekonomicheskikh partnerov po printsipu nadezhnosti', p.5.

b. Negotiations on Ukraine's Gas Debt

Despite Ukraine's difficulties in meeting payments, Russia resumed energy supplies. In December 1993, a new agreement was reached, whereby Russia committed itself to supply its western neighbour with 60 billion cubic metres of gas, at \$60 per 1,000 cubic metres - \$20 less than initially stipulated - and 25 million tons of oil at \$75-\$80 per ton, also down \$20.⁸³⁷ However, prices were still extremely high for a Ukrainian economy on the verge of collapse. Aware of Ukraine's inability to pay, Russian Deputy Premier Aleksandr Shokhin expressed Russia's preference for 'non-traditional' methods of payment, 'including the participation of Russian enterprises, primarily Gazprom in the privatisation of Ukrainian production capacities.'⁸³⁸ Russia was specifically interested in obtaining a '30-40 percent share' in the Kremenchuh refinery as well as the Khartzyzsk pipe-making plant.⁸³⁹ The Ukrainian leadership initially refused to hand over state property. But faced with an exorbitant energy debt, which in March 1994 reached \$3.2 billion, the Ukrainian government granted Gazprom a 51 percentage of the authorised capital in Ukraine's gas transport infrastructure and a 50 percent share in a number of factories of interest to Gazprom. These included gas pipelines across Ukraine to Europe, underground storage facilities and the Odessa port installations.⁸⁴⁰ However, the Ukrainian parliament refused to approve the agreement, arguing that the earmarked facilities be excluded from privatisation because of their national strategic significance.⁸⁴¹

As agreements were only partially implemented, Ukraine's gas debt continued to rise, reaching \$1.5 billion in June 1994.⁸⁴² Aware that Ukraine faced serious difficulties in settling debts, Gazprom's chairman, Rem Vyakhirev, demanded a share in Ukrainian state property and exemptions from licenses, quotas, and taxation on exports whose earnings went towards gas payment. In June 1994, the Ukrainian government agreed to sign over to Gazprom 15 to 30 percent of Odessa's port facilities. However, as before, opposition

⁸³⁷ Ustina Markus, 'Debt and Desperation', p.15.

⁸³⁸ Moscow Radio, 18 November 1993, in *FBIS-SOV-93-*, 19 November 1993, p.7.

⁸³⁹ Maria Starozhitskaya, 'Svobodnye profsoiuzy Ukrainy prizivaiut podderzhat' predstoyashchuiu zabastovku', *Izvestiya*, 25 December 1993, p.3.

⁸⁴⁰ Rustam Narzikulov, 'Ukraina soglasilas' pogasit' dolgi "Gazpromu" ', *Segodnya*, 11 March 1994, p.1.

⁸⁴¹ Reuters, 16 August 1994 and Interfax, 14 April 1994, cited in Ustina Markus, 'Debt and Desperation', p.17.

⁸⁴² Ustina Markus, 'Debt and Desperation', p.18

within the legislature, effectively nullified the transfer.⁸⁴³ Other debt-rescheduling agreements followed in July and September 1994, but as before, they were never implemented because of their unrealistic payment schedules. As the winter approached, and new threats of supply cuts resurfaced, Ukraine's new leader, President Leonid Kuchma, approached the international community for support. The G-7 leaders agreed in October 1994 to grant Ukraine \$1.2 billion in assistance, on condition that Russia and Turkmenistan defer Ukraine's gas debt, to which they agreed.⁸⁴⁴

Despite the agreement, Gazprom again cut deliveries in November 1994, as arrears continued to accumulate, reaching a peak of \$1.48 billion by the end of the year.⁸⁴⁵ In January 1995, the IMF helped to broker another agreement which rescheduled Ukraine's debts and softened payment terms. Ukraine would repay up to 50 percent of its debt and interest accrued in the form of goods, and the other half in freely convertible currency.⁸⁴⁶ Moreover Russia granted Ukraine another deferment on payments on its main debt and on state credits. The agreement also foresaw the establishment of joint Russian-Ukrainian oil-refining and timber-processing complexes, the creation of joint financial groups and companies, and the conversion of enterprises of mutual interest into joint-stock companies. However, the Ukrainian government once again prevented the swaps, concerned that Ukraine's sovereignty would otherwise be undermined. Throughout 1995, Ukraine made semi-regular payments to Gazprom largely through its foreign credits. Still, in September it was reportedly \$160 million in arrears for the year to Gazprom, besides its \$150 million debt to Turkmenistan. The situation worsened when in November 1995, Gazprom raised gas prices from \$50 per 1,000 cubic metres to \$80 for 1996, which was roughly equal to prevailing world prices.⁸⁴⁷

c. Oil Supplies and Transit Fees

Russia's external oil prices had reached world levels as early as January 1994, when Russia started charging \$100 per ton for its oil deliveries. Despite the price increases Ukraine's oil debt never reached the levels of its gas debt, partly because Russia could

⁸⁴³ 'Dolgi za gaz Ukraina budet vozvrashchat' kvartirami', *Izvestiya*, 9 June 1994, p.1; Ustina Markus, 'Energy Crisis Spurs Ukraine and Belarus To Seek Help Abroad', p.15.

⁸⁴⁴ *ibid.*, p.16.

⁸⁴⁵ IEA, *Energy Policies of Ukraine. 1996 Survey*, Paris, p.155.

⁸⁴⁶ Leonid Velekhov, 'Rossiya i Ukraina reshali, kak byt' s dolgami', *Segondya*, 26 January 1995, p.1.

⁸⁴⁷ Ustina Markus, 'Energy Crisis Spurs Ukraine and Belarus To Seek Help Abroad', p.16.

more easily cut off oil deliveries. Ukraine paid its oil debt by a combination of barter deals and promises of shares in oil production facilities, as well as with transit fees for the pumping of 28 million tons of Russian oil to Central Europe across Ukraine via the Druzhba pipeline. Throughout 1993-1995, Ukraine charged Russia lower than world market prices for the transit of both Russian oil and gas across Ukrainian territory. Russia paid \$0.75 for one ton of oil per 100 km, and \$0.75 for 1,000 cubic metres of gas per 100 km. World prices fluctuated between \$1.30 and \$3.00 per 100 km. However, in November 1995, the gas transit fee was raised to \$1.75 per 1,000 cubic metres,⁸⁴⁸ and in January 1996, the oil transit fee was increased by 75 cents to \$1.50. Although no formal agreement was reached, many Russian companies started to pay the Ukrainian fee.⁸⁴⁹

d. Russian Subsidies to Ukraine

Despite the low fares and the progressive increases in energy prices, Russia effectively subsidised Ukraine during 1992-1995, not only through reduced gas prices, but also through lower interest rates on Russian loans to cover Ukraine's energy debts, which by the end of 1995 amounted to \$5 billion. Despite Russia's own shortage of funds, its loans to Ukraine carried interest rates lower than the alternative costs of borrowing to the Russian or Ukrainian governments. The 1991-92, 1993 and 1994 energy debts, carried interest rates ranging from 0.5 to 1 percent. Russia instead was borrowing capital at 10 percent in the world market.⁸⁵⁰ Moreover, in March 1995, a major rescheduling of the gas debt took place, under pressure from the IMF.⁸⁵¹ A 12-year schedule of repayment based on the LIBOR rate plus 1.5 percent was devised for \$1.14 billion of Ukraine's debt to Russia, with a grace period of two years.⁸⁵²

⁸⁴⁸ Viktor Zubanyuk, 'Ukraine will have gas, but not Gaztransit', *Kommersant-daily*, 9 November 1995, p.9, in *CDPSP*, XLVII, 1995, p.18.

⁸⁴⁹ Margarita Mercedes Balmaceda, 'Gas, Oil and the Linkages between Domestic and Foreign Policies: The Case of Ukraine', *Europe-Asia Studies*, 50, 1998, 2, p.269.

⁸⁵⁰ Gregory V. Krasnov and Josef C. Brada, 'Implicit Subsidies in Russian-Ukrainian Energy Trade', *Europa-Asia Studies*, 49, 1997, 5, pp.834-836.

⁸⁵¹ Vladimir Abarinov, 'MVF budet posrednikom mezhdru Ukrainoi i Rossiei', *Segodnya*, 14 March 1995, p.2; Natalya Kalashnikova, 'Ukraine and International Financial Organisations: IMF Promises to help Kiev settle accounts with Moscow', *Kommersant-daily*, 14 March 1995, p.4, in *CDPSP*, XLVII, 1995, 11, p. 23.

⁸⁵² Vladimir Skachko, 'Svoi dolgi Rossii Ukraina budet vyplachivat' dolgo', *Nezavisimaya gazeta*, 23 March 1995 p.1; Gregory V. Krasnov and Josef C. Brada, 'Implicit Subsidies in Russian-Ukrainian Energy Trade', p.828.

Analysts Gregory Krasnov and Joseph Brada estimated that total Russian subsidies for 1992-1995 amounted to about \$9.2 billion, if Ukraine subsidies for low transit fees, Russia's subsidies for oil and gas prices, and Russia's credit subsidies are taken into account.⁸⁵³ Bilateral subsidies in terms of prices and transit fees were brought to an end in early 1996. Russia began selling both oil and gas at world prices, and Ukraine imposed world prices for transit fees across its pipelines. As far as credit subsidies were concerned, the Ukrainian government stopped centralised gas imports for industrial consumers, importing gas only for the general population and state organisations. It granted eight independent wholesale importers regional monopolies to buy gas from Russia directly with suppliers.

2. Assessment of Russia's Energy Trade with Ukraine

During 1992-1995, Russia's energy trade with Ukraine was characterised by a substantial reduction in Russian oil supplies when compared to Soviet times, as well as regular disruptions and cut offs in both oil and gas supplies. Moreover, Russia progressively increased oil and gas prices, which reached world levels in 1994 and 1996 respectively. Was Russia's behaviour an attempt to put pressure on Ukraine in order to bring it under Russia's sphere of influence? The evidence available seems to indicate that Russia's decision to raise energy prices was linked above all to a desire by the Russian energy sector to correct the artificially unfavourable terms of trade inherited from the Soviet era. Before the end of the USSR, Russia sold its energy to the other Soviet republics at an average 5 percent of world market prices. The lack of credit to finance new investments in the gas sector and the sharp fall in Russia's oil production most probably determined Russia's efforts to divert exports to more profitable markets and to raise energy prices. During 1991-1996, the Russian government tried to achieve a measure of stability in the economy and to successfully conduct market reforms, and this argued in favour of ending subsidised prices. Moreover, Russia lacked a political incentive to sell energy at preferential prices to Ukraine. After the disintegration of the Soviet Union, Russia's relations with Ukraine sharply deteriorated as the latter adopted a strongly anti-Russian stance, reading imperial intent in each Russian effort to deepen CIS integration. Ukrainian leaders adhered to the CIS Economic Union only as associate members and refused to join the Customs Union. Ukraine also ruled out participation in the Collective Security Treaty and constitutionalised

⁸⁵³ *ibid.*

its commitment to the concept of an all-European collective security by declaring itself a neutral country staying outside blocs.⁸⁵⁴ Its leaders continually rejected the notion of joint military border protection and refused to provide CIS troops with military bases in Ukraine. Throughout 1992-1996, relations were exacerbated by the lack of progress on the dispute over the Black Sea Fleet, and its basing at Sevastopol. It therefore can be argued that Russia had economic reasons for charging higher prices and no political incentive for providing a preferential treatment.

Similarly, Russia's decision to reduce the supply of oil and gas also followed primarily economic interests. During 1991-1996, the Russian energy sector underwent a major crisis, as oil production fell by 10 percent in 1991, by a further 13 percent in 1992, by 11 percent in 1993, and by 8 percent in 1994, and gas production stagnated. The substantial decline in Russia's oil output and the fall in energy world market prices, which had been taking place since the late 1980s, forced Russian leaders to reassess the cost of exporting energy to the former Soviet states. Russian leaders decided to re-orient oil and gas exports away from the CIS to hard-currency markets. Although the total amount of Russian oil exports did not fall, exports to CIS countries decreased substantially during 1991-1996.⁸⁵⁵ By late 1995, non-CIS countries accounted for 79 percent of Russia's total oil exports. Similarly, the CIS share of Russian gas exports shrank to 37 percent.⁸⁵⁶ Despite the re-orientation of trade to hard currency markets, the situation of the Russian oil companies did not improve substantially. Although oil and gas industries generated huge revenues, they suffered from what Peter Rutland described 'poverty amid plenty'.⁸⁵⁷ The energy industry owned vast reserves of fuel and supplied high volumes of produce. Still, it lacked much needed capital investment. The government hardly provided the companies with capital, and imposed periodic price freezes on energy producers. Domestic energy prices were still between 20 and 35 percent of world market levels in 1994. Moreover, domestic consumers had accumulated large arrears. In fact, they were Gazprom's largest debtors, owing the company \$1.6 billion in May 1994.⁸⁵⁸ These factors most probably explain Russia's decision to reduce oil supplies to Ukraine.

⁸⁵⁴ Interfax, 16 October 1995, in *FBIS-SOV-95-200*, 17 October 1995, p.53.

⁸⁵⁵ Interfax 9 February 1995, cited by Ustina Markus, 'Heading Off an Energy Disaster', p.10. Although oil production in Russia continued to decline, petroleum products accounted for a steadily growing proportion of Russian exports. Their share increased by 25 percent between 1987 and 1992. (Elena Kolokol'tseva, 'OPEK obespokoeno rostom eksporta nefi iz Rossii', *Segodnya*, 17 August 1993, p. 2.)

⁸⁵⁶ Peter Rutland, 'Russia's Energy Empire Under Strain', p.11.

⁸⁵⁷ *ibid.*, p.9.

⁸⁵⁸ *The Economist*, 11 March 1994, cited by Ustina Markus, 'Debt and Desperation', p.19.

There seems to be little hard evidence indicating that Russia increased energy prices and cut off supplies in order to force Ukraine into joining the CST or become closely allied to Russia, despite the fact that Russian leaders were strongly favourable of a *rapprochement* between the two countries, for historical, emotional and economic reasons. Ukraine's support for the May 1993 CIS declaration of intent to form an economic union, its participation in the 'Slavic' Economic Union and its associate membership in the September 1993 CIS Economic Union, resulted primarily from Ukraine's desire to join a union with Russia, which, it was hoped, would guarantee cheap energy supplies, and not from open pressure from Russia. Ukraine's *rapprochement* with Russia indicated an awareness by Ukrainian leaders that Ukraine had no choice but to try and develop an accommodating relation with Russia, based on co-operation instead of confrontation. As Kravchuk put it in June 1993, 'If we take the road of confrontation, this means an end to our prospects.'⁸⁵⁹ When it became clear that the economic union was not intended by Russia as a means of providing cheap energy to its members, support from Ukraine and other CIS states dwindled. Only Belarus continued to press for a political solution to its severe energy crisis by expressing strong support for economic and political unification with Russia.

Oles Smolansky argued, however, that in 1995 Moscow put pressure on Ukraine so that it join the Russian-Belarusian-Kazakh customs union by imposing an oil excise duty.⁸⁶⁰ But a close examination of the sources reveals that, first, export taxes had been in place long before Russia, Belarus and Kazakhstan signed the customs union.⁸⁶¹ Moreover, export taxes on crude oil were actually lowered in February 1995 from 30 to 23 Ecu per tonne, and again from 23 to 20 in April 1995.⁸⁶² In April 1996, Russia's export tax on oil was again reduced from 20 to 10 Ecu per tonne, and on 1 July 1996, the taxes were eliminated altogether.⁸⁶³ Second, Russia reduced export taxes with Belarus and Kazakhstan after they

⁸⁵⁹ Kiev Radio, 17 June 1993, in *FBIS-SOV-93-116*, 18 June 1993, p.40.

⁸⁶⁰ Oles Smolansky, 'Ukraine and the Fuel Problem: Recent Developments', *The Ukrainian Quarterly*, LII, Summer-Fall 1996, 2-3, p. 144. Somlansky wrote 'the Kremlin has vowed to leave the excise tax intact until Ukraine joins it.' His sources argue that, in early 1995, Russia imposed an export duty of 30 Ecu on every ton of oil exported from Russia. (Kiev Ukrinform, 21 March 1995 in *FBIS-SOV-95-055*, 22 March 1995, p.53). However, a close examination at Russia's export tax system reveals that Russia actually lowered export taxes during the first quarter of 1995. (*Russian Economic Trends (RET)*, 3, 1994, 4, p. 71, *RET*, 4, 1995, 1, pp.77-78.)

⁸⁶¹ See Chapter 2.

⁸⁶² *RET*, 3, 1994, 4, p. 71; *RET*, 4, 1995, 1, pp.77-78. Taxes were also reduced on petroleum products.

⁸⁶³ *RET*, 5, 1996, 1, p. 82; *RET*, 5, 1996, 2, p. 93.

joined the customs union, in accordance with the agreements reached, and in order to give effect to the union.⁸⁶⁴ Third, it would be hard to imagine that Russia would have eliminated its export duties unless Ukraine joined the customs union, given that such an action could have nullified the benefits of the union. It created the risk of the emergence of another 'corridor', besides the Belarussian one, where goods, in particular fuel, could flow out of the customs union without any tax payment. Strong pressure on Ukraine to join the union was exerted not by Russia, but by the Ukrainian enterprises located in Eastern Ukraine, which were strongly dependent on Russian supplies of fuel. Ukrainian leaders apparently hoped that Russia would lift customs duties without Ukraine joining the union, but such expectations were in vain.⁸⁶⁵

The evidence strongly suggests that disruptions in the energy trade were mostly related to the accumulation of large arrears, and were often used as leverage in negotiations over prices and volumes. The overall reduction in oil supplies was directly linked to the fall of oil production in Russia. Russian Economics Minister Andrei Nechaev explained the sharp cuts in terms of 'the continuing decrease in oil drilled in Russia.'⁸⁶⁶ Russian gas, instead, continued to be supplied at usual volumes. Nevertheless, the use of the 'energy weapon' for the extraction of political, economic or military concessions cannot be totally ruled out, given that Ukraine had valuable assets coveted by Moscow, such as the Black Sea Fleet, the naval installations and support facilities situated mainly in Crimea, and the enterprises engaged in the transport and processing of fuel and gas. Although hard evidence is lacking, there is substantial circumstantial evidence indicating that Russia put economic pressure on Ukraine in order to obtain a major share of the Black Sea Fleet. In the Spring of 1993, then Prime Minister Kuchma explained Moscow's intractability in the negotiations on prices for fuel and energy in terms of Russia's determination to extract 'practical political concessions' with respect to the Black Sea Fleet and Sevastopol.⁸⁶⁷ At the September 1993 summit in Massandra, Yeltsin almost managed to get the approval of Ukrainian leader Kravchuk for a transfer to Russia of the fleet in exchange for Ukraine's debt. A week before the summit, Gazprom reduced gas supplies to Ukraine by 25 percent citing non-payments as a reason. Eventually, vessels of the Black Sea Fleet were indeed

⁸⁶⁴ Border controls with Belarus were removed on 15 July 1995, and the border with Kazakhstan was opened in the summer of 1996. (*RET*, 4, 1995, 3, p. 72; *ibid.*, 5, 1996, 1, p.84.)

⁸⁶⁵ Konstantin Levin, 'CIS Economic Problems', *Kommersant-daily*, 26 July 1995, p.3, in *FBIS-SOV-95-144*, 27 July 1995, p.5.

⁸⁶⁶ Moscow Radio, 31 August 1992, in *FBIS-SOV-92-170*, 1 September 1992, p.8.

⁸⁶⁷ Moscow Radio, 21 March 1993, in *FBIS-SOV-93-053*, 22 March 1993, p.80.

used as payment for debts. The June 1995 agreement on the Black Sea Fleet initially divided the fleet on a 50 percent basis. But the November 1995 final agreement on the division of the fleet, granted 81.7 percent of the vessels to Russia and 18.3 percent to Ukraine. Some of the vessels that went to Russia were in fact written off against the Ukrainian debt to Russia.⁸⁶⁸

Similarly, Russia used Ukraine's energy dependency and large accumulation of debts to obtain economic concessions. However it did not prove very successful. Gazprom pressed hard to obtain valuable energy assets which would have allowed it to obtain control over the Ukrainian gas supply system, but Ukraine refused to sign over its energy assets. Gazprom's strategy of obtaining assets in exchange for debts was primarily dictated by economic factors, namely acquiring ownership of local companies, which would allowed it to control the distribution and the transit of its products. Gazprom had an interest in acquiring control over the industry's facilities it had lost as a result of the collapse of the Soviet Union, and therefore was eager to 'restore' the former Soviet energy complex. These objectives coincided with those of the Russian government which saw the energy industry as an adequate instrument for the reintegration of the CIS states. The 1993 restructuring programme *Fuel and Energy* envisaged the expansion of oil and gas exports in 1996-2000, and the use of these products as mechanisms of integration within the CIS.⁸⁶⁹ Similarly, the document *Energy Strategy of Russia* approved by the government on 7 December 1994, promoted 'the use [of] energy systems as the most important means of integration of the regions of Russia and countries of the CIS.'⁸⁷⁰ Russia's energy policy, according to the document, was aimed at developing CIS integration in the energy sector, which was understood as the joint exploitation of the energy production systems and control over the export routes.⁸⁷¹ Yeltsin's May 1995 decree no. 472 on *The Main Lines of Development of Energy Policy until 2010* also stated that Russia's energy policies were to promote 'mutual co-operation of the Russian Federation and the CIS states.'⁸⁷² In January 1996, a new

⁸⁶⁸ James Sherr, *Russia and Ukraine: Towards Compromise or Convergence?*, Conflict Studies Research Centre, August 1997; Tor Bukkovoll, *Ukraine and European Security*, London, The Royal Institute of International Affairs, 1997, pp.67-68.

⁸⁶⁹ *Delovoi Mir*, 27 January 1996, p.1, cited by Gwendolyn Sasse, 'Fuelling Nation-State-Building: Ukraine's Energy Dependence on Russia', *Central Asian and Caucasian Prospects*, Briefing Paper, The Royal Institute of International Affairs, London, 17 April 1998, p.6.

⁸⁷⁰ 'Energy Strategy of Russia', Moscow, 1995, in *Energy Policies of the Russian Federation, 1995 Survey*, IEA, Paris, p.278.

⁸⁷¹ *ibid.*, p.305. This was understood as 'the exploitation of the objective benefits of the joint work of energy production systems,' and 'the improvement of the reliability of transport systems linking Russia with Europe and crossing the CIS and the Baltic States.'

⁸⁷² *ibid.*, p.266.

government decree again called for the energy and fuel to foster 'good-neighbourly relations with CIS states.'⁸⁷³ In other words, integration of the CIS energy sector was seen as a step towards further CIS integration. It can therefore be argued that both elements - the internationalisation and expansion of the energy sector - as well as the desire to achieve deeper CIS integration played a role in Russia's attempts to acquire energy assets in Ukraine. However, to equate such policies with neo-imperialism would probably be an exaggeration, especially since there is hardly any indication that Russia prevented other foreign companies from acquiring assets in Ukrainian companies. Although neo-imperialist intent might have influenced the government's policies, pragmatic considerations seemed to have played a predominant role in Russia's decisions. The policies seem to rather to fit the pattern of 'economic interdependence' which characterises economic blocks.

Despite Russia's decision to increase energy prices and to reduce energy supplies to Ukraine, Russia still continued to provide energy, particularly gas, at subsidised prices, despite the accumulation of such a high energy debt. The evidence available seems to suggest that Russia's decision was not motivated by a desire to keep Ukraine in Russia's sphere of influence. Instead, extremely pragmatic factors seem to have determined such decisions. First, Ukraine hosted the major export pipelines which carried 95 percent of Russia's oil and gas to hard currency markets in Europe, and this gave it significant leverage.⁸⁷⁴ A complete energy cut-off to Ukraine meant cutting deliveries to Russia's European clients as well. Natural gas exports to Europe accounted for 6 to 8 percent of Russia's annual GDP, 25 percent of the federal budget and 60 percent of state export revenues.⁸⁷⁵ Any major interruptions, therefore, would have provoked severely negative repercussions on Russia's already fragile economic and financial situation. Several times Ukraine stopped the flow of gas to obtain better supply conditions, or as a result of a dispute over transit fees, thus bringing to light Russia's dependence on transit routes across Ukraine.⁸⁷⁶ Moreover, Ukraine often siphoned off gas, which was destined to Europe, to Ukrainian industrial consumers, especially when shortages of energy from Russia

⁸⁷³ *Delovoi Mir*, 27 January 1996, p.1, cited by Gwendolyn Sasse, 'Fuelling Nation-State-Building: Ukraine's Energy Dependence on Russia', p.6.

⁸⁷⁴ Ukraine's pipelines included the Soyuz system, which transported gas from the Urals region, the Urengoi-Uzhgoud system, which carried gas from Siberia, and the southern branch of the Druzhba oil pipeline.

⁸⁷⁵ *Financial Times*, 10 June 1997.

⁸⁷⁶ Ukraine's interruptions of oil deliveries to Hungary and Czechoslovakia in 1992 and of gas supplies to Bulgaria, Turkey and Romania in 1994, were aimed at obtaining better supply conditions.

occurred.⁸⁷⁷ Cut-offs in supplies to Europe compelled Russia to pay fines to its Western clients and also created the risk of losing key lucrative markets.⁸⁷⁸ Therefore, in order not to disrupt its supplies to the West, Moscow kept pumping gas through Ukraine, guaranteeing Ukraine some 50 to 80 million cubic metres of gas daily as payment for its transit fee.

Second, Ukraine was also the main producer of oil field equipment, which was essential for Russia's oil industry, as long as the country remained unable to afford Western technology. Interviewed by *Komsomol'skaya pravda*, on 22 September 1992, Chernomyrdin explained why Russia was not ready to cut off supplies to Ukraine completely. 'Making such a step is even more senseless given the fact that a large number of machine-building plants are located outside Russia - [particularly] in Ukraine and Azerbaijan. Economic warfare does not give us or them anything - co-operation is more fruitful.'⁸⁷⁹ In fact, the inter-linkage of both economies in general, and of the former Soviet energy sector in particular, compelled Russia to reach some sort of compromise. Russia had a vested interest in Ukrainian economic stability, and in avoiding a total collapse of its economy. A sharp decline in economic conditions in Ukraine would most probably have resulted in an exacerbation of regional tensions and a potential break up of the country along an east-west divide. Russian leaders were particularly eager to preserve stability along Russia's periphery and to protect Russian minorities. In November 1995, Chernomyrdin stated that there were no plans to cut off energy supplies to Russia's neighbours. 'We will not abandon anyone, we will support them all. After all, there are 11 million Russians in Ukraine, and in Kazakhstan half of the population consists of Russians.'⁸⁸⁰

⁸⁷⁷ In October 1992, Ukraine diverted to its domestic industries part of the gas that Russia had earmarked for export to Germany. As a result, Germany was suddenly confronted with a reduction of almost 50 percent in deliveries of natural gas from Russia. (Elmar Guseinov, 'Sryv postavok rossiiskogo gaza v Germaniiu', *Izvestiya*, 20 October 1992, p.1; 'Gaz vnov' poshel v Evropu. Odnako ugroza sryva postavok sokhranyaetsya', *Izvestiya*, 22 October 1992, p.5.)

⁸⁷⁸ Similarly, in March 1994, Ukraine retaliated to Russian shortages by diverting to its own industries gas supplies that were destined for Western Europe. Mikhail Leontiev, 'Gazprom prekrashchaet postavki gaza na Ukrainu', *Segodnya*, March 3, 1994 p.1.

⁸⁷⁹ *ibid.*

⁸⁸⁰ E. Anisimov, 'Tseny - na mirovoi uroven', a nas po miru?', *Komsomol'skaya pravda*, 22 September 1992 p.1. In January 1993, Chernomyrdin suggested that if Ukraine was prepared to invest directly in developing Russian oil resources more oil might be made available. (Isabel Gorst, 'Neighbours Tussle over Energy Matters', *Petroleum Economist*, April 1993 p.16.)

⁸⁸⁰ Itar-tass, 23 November 1995, cited by Peter Rutland, 'Russia's Energy Empire Under Strain', p.10

Third, Russian leaders decided to keep subsidising Ukraine in order to maintain inter-republican trade and thereby support domestic industry. As Mikhail Berger correctly pointed out, an excessively high price for gas would have led, not to an increase in export revenues, but to a reduction in purchases, which combined with the equally excessive transit rate for Russia that Ukraine would have imposed in response, would have resulted in very great losses for the Russian economy.⁸⁸¹ Moreover, the Russian energy companies had much to gain from an economic improvement in the CIS states. As Rem Vyakhirev, Gazprom's chairman, noted 'Economic recovery, stabilisation and growth in the CIS will boost future demand for Russian gas. Natural gas based energy conservation will help CIS countries resolve their social and economic problems.'⁸⁸² Last but not least, Russia found itself under increasing pressure from the international community to continue supplying Ukraine's energy needs. Ukraine had managed to summon Western support on the issue of Russian energy deliveries in return for a promise to surrender strategic missiles to Russia. Moreover, the international community had made its aid to Russia conditional upon a re-scheduling of Ukraine's energy debts. It can therefore be concluded that Russia's policies did not really follow a clear neo-imperialist pattern, and seemed to have been motivated primarily by pragmatic state interests.

3. Russia's Energy Trade with Belarus:

a. Dealing with the 'Energy Shock'

Like Ukraine, Belarus was severely hit by shortages in Russian energy supplies and dramatic price increases throughout 1992-1996. Although in 1992, Belarus received 20.6 million tons of oil from Russia, which represented almost 94 percent of Belarus' yearly quota, Russia progressively increased oil prices, from 2,816 rubles per ton in the first half of 1992, to 20,000 rubles per ton in late 1992. In 1993, Russia began insisting on the payment of oil and gas at prices closer to world market levels.⁸⁸³ In July 1993, Minsk paid 15,600 rubles per 1,000 cubic metres of gas, and in August 1993, the price went up to 42,000 rubles.⁸⁸⁴ Although energy prices in 1993 were raised substantially, they were still

⁸⁸¹ Mikhail Berger, 'Ukraina budet poluchat' Rossiiskii gaz po samym nizkim tselam', *Izvestiya*, 18 March 1993 p.1.

⁸⁸² 'Planning the Rebuilding of the Russian Gas Industry', *Petroleum Economist*, March 1996, p.5.

⁸⁸³ *Belarus: Country Report*, Economist Intelligence Unit (EIU), 2nd Quarter, 1993, p.32.

⁸⁸⁴ Interfax 8 September 1993, cited by Ustina Markus, 'Heading off an Energy Disaster', p.12.

lower than market levels. Nevertheless, Belarus' inability to pay outstanding energy debts resulted in severe oil and gas shortages in the summer of 1993. Russian supplier Gazprom cut off natural gas deliveries for nine days in August 1993 paralysing much of Belarussian industry, already severely hit by chronic oil shortages. For two months in a row, fuel supplies from Russia were just 60 percent of the promised delivery volumes. Belarus' two oil refineries - Mozyr and Novopolotsk - were forced to operate at 20 percent of their capacity.⁸⁸⁵ Unable to cover its debts, Belarus removed customs fees on oil imports from Russia, and promised to soften oil import-export laws as a concession to Russia. The government also promised to settle part of its gas debt by signing over shares in Beltranshaz, the company which operated Belarus' gas transport facilities, to Gazprom. The agreement on Beltranshaz, however, failed to win the support of nationalists and hard-line conservatives in the Belarussian parliament.

Belarus's energy situation was slightly alleviated in the second half of 1993, when the country received a \$98 million IMF credit for economic reform, which Belarussian leaders mostly used to pay the country's energy debt. But, in November 1993, Belarus again experienced severe difficulties in obtaining oil supplies from Russia, because of delays in payments. By the end of 1993, Belarus' debt to Russia amounted to 150 billion rubles for gas and 200 billion rubles for oil.⁸⁸⁶ The situation severely deteriorated in early March 1994, when strikes by gas workers in Siberia over unpaid wages led Gazprom to cut off supplies to both Ukraine and Belarus, in an effort to obtain prompt payment of debts, which, in the case of Belarus, amounted to \$240 million. Part of the bill was immediately settled with cash and manufactured goods. Another part of the debt was cancelled, by granting Gazprom ownership of shares held by Belarussian debtor enterprises in authorised funds of private business and joint-stock companies. Belarussian leaders also managed to negotiate a lower gas price - from \$80 per 1,000 cubic metres down to \$50, and to reduce Belarussian debt by 46 billion rubles in exchange for the construction of homes for Russian gas industry workers.⁸⁸⁷

⁸⁸⁵ Mikhail Shimanskii, '10 tysyach rublei za litr benzina', *Izvestiya*, 27 August, 1993 p.2.

⁸⁸⁶ *Belarus: Country Report*, EIU, 1st Quarter 1994, p.32.

⁸⁸⁷ Itar-tass, 4 March 1994; Reuters, 5 March 1994.

b. Efforts to Find a Political Solution to Belarus' Energy Shortages

The lack of transformation in the economy, as in the case of Ukraine, significantly curtailed Belarus' ability to pay for its energy supplies and diversify its energy sources. As a result, the country became more and more dependent economically on Russia, and in the spring of 1994, Belarussian leaders opted for economic integration with Russia as a means of ensuring cheap energy supplies. At the discussions on monetary union, between January and April 1994, Belarus insisted on paying the same energy prices as Russian consumers, that is, well below world market prices. The preliminary agreement on monetary union, signed in mid-April 1994, did envisage reduced prices for Russian oil and gas supplies in exchange for the free transit of Russian goods, including oil and gas, across Belarus, and the free stationing of Russian troops in Belarus. However, the monetary union never saw the light of day. Although export-import procedures between Russia and Belarus were simplified, and Russian duties on oil exports to Belarus were abolished in 1994, Belarus' energy prices remained relatively high, reaching approximately 70 percent of world prices.⁸⁸⁸

By the end of 1994, as oil arrears continued to accumulate, and supplies faltered, Belarus' new President Aleksandr Lukashenko reached a new agreement with the Russian oil companies Lukoil and Rosneft. In exchange for oil supplies, the companies were granted shares in Belarussian oil refineries and petrochemical enterprises. Furthermore, in May 1995, a joint stock-company - Slavneft - was set up to supply crude oil to the Mozyr refineries in Belarus. The debt situation in the gas sector looked much grimmer. In July 1994, as debts to Gazprom amounted to \$335 million, the company reduced supplies and threatened further cut-offs if debts were not promptly paid. In August 1994, a new agreement on debt payment was signed with Gazprom, but Belarus proved unable to meet the unrealistic payment schedules.⁸⁸⁹ Unable to solve an essentially structural problem, President Lukashenko again sought political integration with Russia as means of obtaining cheaper energy, by joining Russia and Kazakhstan in a Customs Union in January 1995. Belarus hoped that the agreement would guarantee Russia's domestic rates for energy supplies, but the hopes soon turned out to be unfounded. In the spring of 1995, Russia

⁸⁸⁸ *Belarus: Country Report*, EIU, 3rd Quarter 1994, p.36.

⁸⁸⁹ Interfax, 1 February 1995, cited by Ustina Markus, 'Energy Crisis Spurs Ukraine and Belarus to Seek Help Abroad', p.15.

increased its oil prices from \$75 to \$112 per ton, which amounted roughly to the world price.⁸⁹⁰

In a further effort to clear its energy bill, in February 1996, Lukashenko signed a 'zero option' deal with Russia, whereby the latter agreed to cancel Belarus' \$800 million energy debt, as well as another \$400 million owed for credit received. Belarus, in turn, declined to claim compensation for plutonium and other valuable materials contained in the nuclear missiles removed from Belarus to Russia, agreed not to demand compensation for ecological damage caused by Russian troops, and not to charge for the stationing of these troops.⁸⁹¹ Three months later, Lukashenko signed two other integration agreements with Russia. Although the Treaty on Deepening Economic Integration did envisage the establishment of common energy and transport systems, it did not address the question of energy supplies. Neither did the second treaty, which set up a Community of Sovereign States between Russia and Belarus, envisage any special energy treatment for Belarus. By mid-1996, therefore, Belarus had failed to find a lasting solution to its chronic energy dependence on Russia. Swapping assets for debts remained the only realistic short-term option available. In early 1996, Lukoil and Yukos signed an agreement on taking control of the Naftan company, formerly the Novopolatotsk oil refinery. Two joint ventures were to be set up, with Lukoil, Yukos, Naftan and Belneftprodukt, the Belarus state-owned petroleum product suppliers, as co-founders. Russia obtained a 75 percent stake in the first company and a 51 percent in the second. Russia companies were to supply 7 million tons of oil a year to Naftan, whose products would be sold both in Belarus and abroad. Belarus would benefit from guaranteed oil supplies, and Russian companies would control a major oil refinery, located close to Western markets.⁸⁹²

4. Assessment of Russia's Energy Trade with Belarus

Russia's energy trade with Belarus very much resembled that with Ukraine. Throughout 1992-1996, Russia progressively raised energy prices until they reached world levels, resulting in Belarus accumulating large arrears, especially towards Gazprom. Although Belarus experienced frequent disruptions in supplies, Russia did not totally cut off its energy supplies to Belarus, and continued subsidising Belarus' energy purchases by

⁸⁹⁰ *Belarus, Country Report*, EIU, 3rd Quarter 1995, p.13.

⁸⁹¹ Itar-tass, 1 January 1996.

⁸⁹² *Belarus, Country Report*, EIU, 1st Quarter 1996, p.12.

providing easy-term credits and lower than world market prices. In an effort to pay for its astronomical energy bills, and to obtain 'preferential treatment' for energy supplies, Belarus opted for economic and political unification with Russia. However, Lukashenko's strategy of reunification with Russia did not prove very effective, as Russian leaders raised energy prices and procrastinated over economic unification. Still, they did not cut off supplies completely. Russia's decision to subsidise Belarus' energy purchases and to continue providing energy resources, at prices lower than the world market, despite the accumulation of arrears, and the decline in Russia's own energy production, was determined by various factors. First, Russia's unwillingness to let Belarus' economy collapse completely. Very close industrial links existed between Belarus and Russia, and a collapse of Belarus' economy would have entailed losses for the Russian industry. Second, Belarus was considered a key strategic ally on Russia's western borders, both in terms of economic as well as military co-operation, especially in view of the deteriorating relations with Ukraine, and the pro-western orientation of the Baltic countries. Belarus hosted the pipelines carrying gas deliveries to the Baltic states and Poland, as well as the Northern Lights pipeline carrying gas to Ukraine.⁸⁹³ Repeated arguments between Moscow and Kiev about gas transit fees, which more than once had driven Ukraine to cut off supplies to European customers, encouraged Gazprom to plan a new export pipeline corridor through Belarus to Poland. The 'Yamal pipeline' project was intended to carry Russian gas from the new developments in western Siberia's Yamal Peninsula to consumers in Europe. An agreement to that effect was signed by Gazprom and the Polish Industry Ministry in March 1993.⁸⁹⁴ Belarus thus became a key transit area for the future transport of Russian energy supplies to the West.

Belarus also became Russia's key military ally in the region. Belarus was Russia's only western neighbour to have signed the Collective Security Treaty. Moreover, Belarus allowed Russia to jointly patrol its western borders with Lithuania, Latvia and Poland, and to operate Belarus' air defence system.⁸⁹⁵ Furthermore, in December 1995, a major agreement on military co-operation was reached between the two countries, subsequently expanded in May 1996.⁸⁹⁶ Last but not least, as part of the 'zero option' deal reached in

⁸⁹³ David Cameron Wilson, 'Remote Gas resources evolve into world's biggest gas industry', *Petroleum Economist*, September 1993, p.8.

⁸⁹⁴ Isabel Gorst, 'Pipeline Plans Proliferate', *Petroleum Economist*, June 1993, pp.6-8.

⁸⁹⁵ Anna Ostapchuk, 'Boris El'tsin otdaet Belorusii prioritet', *Nezavisimaya gazeta*, 23 February 1995, p.1.

⁸⁹⁶ see Chapter 2.

February 1996, Russia was allowed to station Russia troops in Belarus for free. These close military ties, most probably argued in favour of keeping Belarus economically afloat. Still, Russian energy companies were eager to charge world prices for its products, and to have energy supplies paid back. This explains why efforts were conducted to obtain shares in Belarus' major energy assets, such as the Novopalatosk and Mozyr oil refinery, and the Beltranshaz gas distribution company. Although in 1993 the Belarussian parliament vetoed the transfers, in late 1995 and early 1996, the situation changed and Russian companies were able to strike major deals with the Belarussian leadership, which allowed them to obtain stakes in Belarus's energy complex. Lukoil and Yukos took control of Novopalatosk refinery, and Lukoil and Rosneft obtained shares in the Mozyr refineries and other petrochemical companies.

The evidence available seems to indicate that Russia's efforts to obtain shares in the Belarussian energy complex were primarily motivated by economic factors. Russian oil and gas companies had vested economic interests in controlling the major export pipelines, not only because of the financial advantages involved, but also because they wanted to secure a reliable export route. Moreover, the energy companies had an interest in acquiring control over the industry's facilities which they had lost as a result of the collapse of the USSR, and therefore were eager to restore the former Soviet energy complex. Such moves fitted more the pattern of 'economic interdependence' than the model of 'economic neo-imperialism.' The Russian government, in turn, saw the energy industry as an adequate instrument for the reintegration of the CIS states. Such an approach, however, was not aimed at brining Belarus back into Russia's sphere of influence. When Belarus' leaders tried resolve the energy question by joining in an economic and political union with Russia, they did not get much support from Russian leaders. Although Belarussian moves were often perceived as being part of a Russian neo-imperialist strategy, in reality, Russian leaders remained wary of becoming entangled in a tight economic relationship with Belarus. Russia itself was struggling with a deep economic crisis, and therefore was not eager to have to deal with Belarus' own economic difficulties. Russia's reluctance to unite with Belarus provides an additional proof that Russia was not pursuing a neo-imperialist strategy. When the occasion of creating a neo-empire in Belarus presented itself, the Russian leadership did not embrace it.

III. Russia and the Caspian Sea Oil

The energy-rich states of the Caspian region, namely Azerbaijan, Kazakhstan and Turkmenistan, had sufficient resources not only to eliminate their dependence on Russian deliveries of oil and gas but also to become major exporters of oil and gas to the world markets.⁸⁹⁷ However, at the time of independence, all these countries had some major handicaps which limited their room for manoeuvre. On the one hand, they lacked the necessary infrastructure and capital investment to exploit and export their own resources, and on the other hand, being land-locked countries, they were dependent on their closest neighbours for the export of their energy supplies. Moreover, all the export routes crossed Russian territory, which was not only very costly in terms of transport and transit fees, but also very inconvenient in the sense that these countries were left very much at Russia's mercy. When Azerbaijan and Kazakhstan began negotiations with major Western oil

⁸⁹⁷ The main literature on Russia's policies in the Caspian region reveal the following viewpoints: Stephen J. Blank, Suha Bolukbasi, Robert V. Baryliski and Rosemarie Forsythe claimed that Russia was primarily interested in maintaining a sphere of influence over the Caspian region, thus clearly supporting the neo-imperialist argument. Forsythe also highlighted the existence of divisions within the Russian government, primarily between Primakov and Kozyrev on the one hand, and Chernomyrdin and the oil-industry officials on the other - the first group viewing oil as a central instrument for maintaining influence, whereas the second openly supporting Western involvement in the region. However, according to Forsythe, the general trend of Russian policy has been to strengthen its influence in the region. (Stephen J. Blank, *Energy, Economics and Security in Central Asia: Russia and its Rivals*, Strategic Studies Institute, US Army War College, 10 May 1995; Suha Bolukbasi, 'The Controversy over the Caspian Sea Mineral Resources: Conflicting Perceptions, Clashing Interests', *Europe-Asia Studies*, 50, 1998, 3, pp.397-414; Robert V. Baryliski, 'Russia, the West, and the Caspian Energy Hub', *Middle East Journal*, 49, Spring 1995, 2, pp. 217-232; Rosemarie Forsythe, *The Politics of Oil in the Caucasus and Central Asia*, Adelphi Paper, 300, London, 1996, pp. 13-17.) Peter Rutland, instead, argued that the differences of opinion within the Russian government resulted in weak coordination of policies, therefore making it difficult for Russia to restore its influence over the region. (Peter Rutland, *Lost Opportunities: Energy and Politics in Russia*, The National Bureau of Asian Research, NBR Analysis, 8, 1997, 5, pp. 26-27) Similarly, Pavel Baev argued that the contradictory and confused character of Russia's policies in the region were not a disguise to support long-term strategic interests. Instead, confusion reflected the 'dynamic mixture of various interests, bureaucratic lobbying and personal ambitions'. (Pavel Baev, *Russia's Policies in the Caucasus*, The Royal Institute of International Affairs, London, 1997, pp.33-34) Vladimir Razuvaev also stressed the different positions of the various actors involved in policy making in the region, and concluded that this resulted in the absence of an agreed policy. He argued that although some officials - especially within diplomatic circles - thought that Russia should enjoy unquestionable dominance over the Caspian region, Lukoil was motivated solely by economic interests. (Vladimir Razuvaev, *Russian Interests in the Caspian Region*, Stiftung Wissenschaft und Politik, Ebehausen, May 1996.) Rajan Menon instead argued that the contradiction of policies and views within the Russian government was only apparent. According to Menon, policies reflected a desire by the Russian leadership to assert Russia's interests whenever considered necessary, while at the same time participating in the energy deals whenever possible. (Menon, Rajan, *Treacherous Terrain: The Political and Security Dimensions of Energy Development in the Caspian Sea Zone*, The National Bureau of Asian Research, NBR Analysis, 8, 1997, 7, pp.10-11).

consortiums on the exploitation of their oil and gas resources, Russia became extremely concerned with the prospect of being left aside and of losing its dominant economic and political position in the region. Hence, Russian leaders began exerting major pressure on the countries concerned in order to obtain shares in the lucrative oil and gas deals that were under negotiation, and also to ensure that Caspian oil and gas was exported through the Russian pipeline network system.

1. Azerbaijan

a. The Azerbaijani Consortium and the Caspian Legal dispute

In 1991, a group of foreign energy companies - Amoco, British Petroleum, McDermott, Pennzoil, Ramco, Unocal, TPAO of Turkey and Statoil of Norway - began negotiating with Azerbaijan for the development of the Azeri, Chirag and Guneshli fields off the Azeri coast in the Caspian sea, with estimated 4 billion barrels of reserves.⁸⁹⁸ The companies were about to sign an agreement with Azerbaijani President Abulfaz Elchibey in June 1993, whereby Azerbaijan's state oil company (SOCAR) retained a 30 percent share of the consortium project, when Elchibey was suddenly overthrown from power. As a result, the companies found themselves back at the negotiating table with a new government headed by Geidar Aliev.⁸⁹⁹ The renewed negotiations were painful and slow, not only because the Azeri government was keen to obtain a higher share of the profits but also because Russia put pressure on Azerbaijan for a share in the consortium.⁹⁰⁰ Apparently, Russian pressure had persuaded Baku to dissolve its contract with the Western consortium in the first place, and to show a readiness to change the direction of the pipeline to run through Russia, hoping that Russia would broker a settlement of the Karabagh conflict in Azerbaijan's favour.⁹⁰¹

⁸⁹⁸ Aidyn Mekhtiev and Valekh Rzaev, 'Zakavkaz'e: energetichskii golod', *Nezavisimaya gazeta*, 10 September 1992, p.1.

⁸⁹⁹ Hugh Pope, 'Russians claw back control of unstable Transcaucasus', *The Independent*, 1 July 1993, p.5; Steve LeVine, 'Azerbaijan cancels big oil contract', *Financial Times*, 28 June 1993, p.2.

⁹⁰⁰ Hugh Pope, 'Returning to Russia's fold?', *Middle East International*, 24 September 1993, p.13.

⁹⁰¹ Vladimir Yemelyanenko, 'Nagorno Karabagh: On the eve of tough measures', *Moscow News*, 28 November, 1993, p.11.

i) Agreement is Reached

In October 1993, a preliminary agreement was finally reached between the Western oil companies and Azerbaijan, which stipulated the exploitation of the Azeri and Chirag fields in the Azeri sector of the Caspian sea but which excluded the Guneshli field, which had been part of previous arrangements. The new deal substantially improved the Azeri position - the proceeds were to be split with the Azeri authorities on a 20:80 production-sharing basis - but it still did not include Russia's participation.⁹⁰² In November 1993, Russia began intensive negotiations with the Azerbaijani government for a share in the exploitation of the Azeri Caspian off-shore deposits. Russian threats to block the transport of already-extracted Azerbaijani oil most probably determined Azerbaijan's decision to bring Russia into the deal.⁹⁰³ In mid-November, Russian Minister for Fuel and Energy, Yurii Shafranik, travelled to Baku and reached an agreement on co-operation in the oil sector with SOCAR. Both sides agreed to work together in the development of oil and gas resources in and around the Caspian sea, and to export Azeri oil via the Russian pipeline network.⁹⁰⁴ As a result of this visit, the Russian oil company Lukoil not only obtained the license from the Azeri government for the development of the Guneshli fields, but in early January 1994, it also succeeded in obtaining a 10 percent share in the Western-led Azeri and Chirag deal, without bringing in any capital.⁹⁰⁵

By opening the door to Russian participation in the lucrative energy deals Aliev hoped that Russia would facilitate the export of Azeri oil to world markets and above all, that Russian leaders would put pressure on Armenia in order to reach a settlement of the Nagorno-Karabagh conflict, favourable to Azerbaijan's interests in the region. During his visit to Baku, Shafranik had apparently promised that the signing of the treaty on co-operation in the energy sector would have a positive effect on the settlement of the conflict.⁹⁰⁶ However in December 1993-January 1994, Azerbaijan failed to achieve any significant breakthrough

⁹⁰² John Murray, 'Azerbaijan in Caspian Sea Oilfields Deal', *Financial Times*, 2 November 1993, p.2.

⁹⁰³ Rustam Narzikulov, 'Neftyanje zalozhniki Kaspiya', *Segodnya*, 22 September 1994, p.1.

⁹⁰⁴ Apparently, the editor of the opposition newspaper Muhalesef argued that Moscow requested permission to station Russian troops along Azerbaijani border with Iran and to establish new military bases on Azerbaijani territory. (Amalia van Gent, 'Azerbaijan: Oil, Armenians, Russians and Refugees', *Swiss Review of World Affairs*, February 1994, pp. 22-24.)

⁹⁰⁵ Steve LeVine and Robert Corzine, 'Russians Muscle in on Oil deals', *Financial Times*, 21 January 1994, p.3 ; Mekhman Gafarly, 'Rossiya snova vykhodit k azerbaidzhanskoi nefi', *Segodnya*, 25 November 1993, p.3.

⁹⁰⁶ Mekhman Gafarly, 'Rossiya snova vykhodit k azerbaidzhanskoi nefi', p. 3; Jonathan Rugman, 'Oil eases Russian plan for Karabagh peace', *The Guardian*, 22 February 1994, p.10.

in the war in Nagorno-Karabagh, partly because of the military support provided by the Russian Ministry of Defence (MOD) to the Armenians.⁹⁰⁷ Russian military support to Armenia brought to light the contradictory agendas of the Russian MOD and the MFE, and resulted in an increasing alienation of Azerbaijan from Russia. As progress in the Nagorno-Karabagh settlement stalled in the winter of 1994, Aliiev decided to array the support of those Western governments whose companies were involved in the Caspian oil deal, in particular Great Britain, to the detriment of Russia's interests.⁹⁰⁸

ii) The Caspian Legal Dispute

As negotiations progressed towards a final agreement which would also include a Russian participation, a series of incidents occurred which threatened to delay the signing of a final agreement. In June 1994, the Russian Ministry of Foreign Affairs delivered a note to the British Ambassador in Moscow questioning the legality of the Azeri oil deal, on the grounds that the Caspian sea was not divided into sectors, but instead, was to be exploited as a 'condominium'. In other words, the Caspian Sea was a landlocked body of water, and therefore all issues related to development, exploration and use of the Caspian sea resources had to be decided with the participation of all Caspian coastal states, namely Russia, Azerbaijan, Iran, Turkmenistan and Kazakhstan, and not by each country individually.⁹⁰⁹ The Foreign Ministry seemed to have been pursuing a double objective: to ensure Russia's access to all Caspian Sea energy resources - the Russian sector did not have much reserves - and to avoid foreign, particularly Western and Turkish, involvement in the exploitation of Caspian energy resources. Although this latter aim was never explicitly acknowledged, there are grounds to believe that it most probably played a role in the Ministry's behaviour. The Foreign Ministry saw with great concern Western growing involvement in the resolution of conflicts in the region, especially the Nagorno-Karabagh - an involvement which resulted to a great extent from the growing Western economic interests in the region. The Foreign Ministry, moreover, seemed to be very much concerned with the potential ecological damage that might have been caused to the Caspian Sea ecosystem as a result of the exploitation of oil resources.

⁹⁰⁷ see Chapter 3.

⁹⁰⁸ Aidyn Mekhtiev, 'Velikobritaniya obeshchaet podderzhku Geidaruu Aliievu', *Nezavisimaya gazeta*, 2 March 1994 p. 1. In March 1994, Aliiev agreed to grant British Petroleum a priority right to develop the oil deposits in the Caspian. In response the British government apparently agreed to guarantee full support for Azerbaijan's position in the international arena.

⁹⁰⁹ Gennadii Charodeev, 'Moskva ne soglasna s peredelom Kaspiiskogo morya', *Izvestiya*, 7 June 1994, p.3.

With the break-up of the Soviet Union the legal status of the Caspian Sea had been thrown into confusion. Previously, only two states - the USSR and Iran - had bordered the sea, now there were five: Iran, the Russian Federation, Azerbaijan, Kazakhstan and Turkmenistan. Whereas Russia insisted that the five littoral states should jointly own and share the development of the bulk of the Caspian resources, Kazakhstan, Turkmenistan and especially Azerbaijan insisted that the Caspian Sea should have its own waters divided up between the five littoral states according to the 'lake principle.' Russia based its claim on the Iranian-Soviet treaties of 1921 and 1940 which had determined the legal status of the Caspian Sea during the Soviet era. Russia insisted that the Caspian sea had been in the past an object of common use by all Caspian countries and that, unless an agreement on the contrary was reached by all littoral states, it should remain an international territory of water, all Caspian states having equal right as to the use of its resources.⁹¹⁰ However, independent legal expert Rodman R. Bundy, from Frere Cholmeley, showed that although the 1940 treaty stipulated for equal access to the fishing fleets of both countries, no provisions existed for equal access to oil and gas exploitation. Moreover, the practice of both Iran and the USSR with respect to petroleum activities in the Caspian did not point to a condominium-type arrangement either. Petroleum activities in the Caspian had not been conducted on the basis of prior consultation and joint sharing. Nor did Iran or the Soviet Union protest over the other's petroleum activities in the past or demand a share in the proceeds.⁹¹¹

In the Summer of 1994, the position of the Russian Ministry of Foreign Affairs hardened. On 21 July, Foreign Minister Kozyrev and Foreign Intelligence Service (FIS) Director Evgeny Primakov, convinced Yeltsin to sign the secret Directive 396 'On protecting the interests of the Russian Federation in the Caspian Sea', which called for the imposition of economic sanctions on Baku, if implementation of the oil project went ahead. Kozyrev also sent a letter to Prime Minister Chernomyrdin, in which he proposed taking measures 'of commercial, economic and financial nature that would impel Azerbaijan to respect

⁹¹⁰ Alexander G. Khodakov, Director of the Legal Department, Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Russian Federation, *Legal Framework for Regional Co-operation in the Caspian Sea*, Conference on Oil and Caviar in the Caspian, London, 23-24 February 1995, unpublished paper, p.3.

⁹¹¹ Rodman R. Bundy, *The Caspian: Sea or Lake? Consequences in International Law*, Conference on Oil and Caviar in the Caspian, London, 23-24 February 1995, unpublished paper, p.8. According to *Nezavisimaya gazeta* correspondent Aidyn Mekhtiyev, neither the 1921 nor the 1940 Iranian-Soviet treaties mentioned either oil or commercial minerals. (Aidyn Mekhtiyev, 'U Chernomyrdina pretenzii k "Kontraktu Veka" net', *Nezavisimaya gazeta*, 15 October 1994, p.1,3).

Russia's interests as well as the provisions of international law.⁹¹² Kozyrev suggested forbidding vessels flying the Azerbaijani flag from using Russia's internal waters. In other words, a blockade of Azerbaijan. However, Chernomyrdin refused to impose economic sanctions, and President Yeltsin, under pressure from the oil industry, also suspended the secret Directive 396.⁹¹³ These events brought to light the different approaches taken by Kozyrev and Primakov on the one hand, and Chernomyrdin on the other, towards Caspian energy sources. The first group, especially Primakov, tended to view oil as a central instrument in maintaining influence over the former Soviet states. Primakov warned against new Western joint ventures in the non-Russian parts of the former Soviet Union, and saw the involvement of Turkey, the USA, Great Britain and other Western countries in the Caucasus and Central Asia as a potential erosion of Russia's influence. Apparently, in July 1994, Primakov told Yeltsin that the oil contract posed a threat to Russia's national security interests.⁹¹⁴ Chernomyrdin and other oil-industry officials instead welcomed Western participation in the development of Caspian oil, as a means of ensuring access to capital and advanced technology. They worked for Russian inclusion in Western consortia in order to improve their own technology, to establish a foot in world oil markets, and to share in the profits available on those markets. These last positions were reflected in the overall energy policy of the Russian government. The document *Energy Strategy for Russia*, approved by the Russian government in December 1994, envisaged the collaboration between Russia and the CIS states in the exploitation of the rich energy reserves of the Caspian Sea, 'including the participation of third countries.'⁹¹⁵

iii) The Final Deal is Signed

Although the summer incidents threatened to further delay the signing of the deal, negotiations went ahead and on 20 September 1994, after four years of complex bargaining, a final deal was reached. The contract provided for the development and exploitation, for a 30-year period, of the Chirag and Azeri fields and the deep-water wells of the Guneshli field on the Caspian shelf.⁹¹⁶ The Russian company Lukoil obtained a 10 percent stake in the exploitation of the Azeri and Chirag fields, and was also granted a

⁹¹² Aidyn Mekhtiyev, 'Chernomyrdin i Kozyrev sporyat o Kaspiiskoi nefi', *Nezavisimaya gazeta*, 27 October 1994, p.3.

⁹¹³ *ibid.*

⁹¹⁴ Aidyn Mekhtiyev, 'Chernomyrdin i Kozyrev sporyat o Kaspiiskoi nefi', *Nezavisimaya gazeta*, 27 October, 1994 p.3.

⁹¹⁵ 'Energy Strategy of Russia', 1995, in *Energy Policies of the Russian Federation*, p.305.

⁹¹⁶ Arif Useinov, '“Kontrakt veka” predstavlenn na podpis', *Segodnya*, 20 September 1994, p.5.

primary role in developing the adjacent Guneshli oil field.⁹¹⁷ The reactions in Russia were mixed. Whereas the Russian Ministry of Foreign Affairs refused to recognise the \$8 billion deal on the grounds that the legal status of the Caspian had not been defined⁹¹⁸, Stanislav Pugach, Chief of the Main Department of the Russian MFE, attended the signing ceremony in Baku, suggesting a clash of interests between the MFE and the Foreign Affairs Ministry.⁹¹⁹ The Russian Ministry of Foreign Affairs sustained the view that, in signing the contract for developing the major fields, Azerbaijan carried out a de facto demarcation of the Caspian shelf according to the 'lake' principle, which holds that coastal states' shares are determined by the length of their coastal borders.⁹²⁰ The Ministry of Foreign Affairs spokesman G. Karasin, threatened 'serious international political consequences' if the project was implemented in its present form. This view had the support of Aleskandr Shokhin, Russian Deputy Prime Minister for the Economy, who maintained that the deal would cause ecological damage to the Caspian sea environment. He insisted that Russia was entitled to a share in the lucrative oil deals because of the investment in the region conducted during the Soviet era.⁹²¹

The sharp words of Foreign Ministry officials surprised the MFE which considered Lukoil's 10 percent share in the project highly satisfactory given the fact that British Petroleum's share, which was bearing the main burden of financial investments in the project (\$7.5 billion) amounted to 17 percent, and that Lukoil was not expected to make any major investment. Lukoil officials in turn reported that Lukoil was acting on the basis of a Russian-Azerbaijani intergovernmental agreement signed on 23 October 1993, which spelled out Lukoil's right to operate on the Azerbaijani shelf and even mentioned Lukoil's future share in the consortium (10 percent).⁹²² As of 1994, the MFE was, in practice, accepting the principle of division of the Caspian when it put forward a set of maritime boundary lines concerning waters off the Russian and Azerbaijani coasts. Prime Minister Chernomyrdin sided with the MFE. In the aftermath of the 1994 agreement between SOCAR and the government of Azerbaijan, Chernomyrdin apparently told Aliiev he saw no problems with the signing of the oil contract, although he also stressed the need to 'jointly

⁹¹⁷ Steve LeVine, 'Oil Companies to sign Azerbaijan Extraction Deal', *Financial Times*, 19 September 1994, p.4.

⁹¹⁸ Gennadii Charodeev, 'Bakinsky kontrakt veka', *Izvestiya*, 22 September 1994, p.2.

⁹¹⁹ John Lloyd and Robert Corzine, 'Azerbaijan Oil Deal is Signed in Face of Russian Protests', *Financial Times*, 21 September 1994, p.2.

⁹²⁰ Rustam Narzikulov, 'Neftyanye zalozhniki Kaspiya', *Segodnya*, 22 September 1994, p.1.

⁹²¹ 'Russian Proposal for Caspian', *Financial Times*, 27 September 1994, p.2.

⁹²² Elmar Guseinov, 'Skhvatka vokrug Kaspiiskogo shelfa', *Izvestiya*, 29 September 1994, p.4.

address the ecological problems of the Caspian Sea.⁹²³ The signing of the deal represented a triumph of Chernomyrdin's and the MFE's position over that of the Foreign Ministry, which became increasingly marginalised over the issue. It indicated that the main aim of Russia's policy in this sector was not to restore influence over the Caspian region, but to make economic profits. Russia allowed Western and Turkish companies to become involved in the deal, thus reducing Russia's economic influence in the region. Lukoil also succeeded in obtaining a major participation in the Caspian International Operating Company (CIOC) which was set up in 1995 to develop the Karabagh off-shore field in Azerbaijan's sector of the Caspian sea. CIOC represented a partnership between Pennzoil (30 percent), Lukoil (12.5 percent) a Lukoil-Agip partnership (45.4 percent) and SOCAR.

b. The Pipeline Routes

Russia's attempts to enhance its economic position in the Caspian region, or to limit the economic losses caused by the collapse of the Soviet Union, by acquiring shares in the major oil and gas deals in the Caspian Sea basin were complemented by efforts to ensure that the main flow of Caspian oil and gas to Western markets used the Russian pipeline system. In its attempt to ensure continued control over the transport of Caspian oil, Russia was confronted with Turkish competition. In March 1993, President Elchibey had signed an agreement with Turkey to build an oil pipeline which would transport Azeri oil from the Caspian fields across northern Iran, Nakhichevan (Azerbaijan), Erzurum (Turkey) up to the Ceyhan terminal on the Turkish Mediterranean coast.⁹²⁴ However the ousting of President Elchibey the following June, raised serious doubts over the realisation of the Turkish export route. The new Azeri President, Geidar Aliev, felt more inclined to support a northern route across Russian territory to the Black Sea.⁹²⁵ Russia in fact had insisted that the oil pipeline pass through southern Russia to the Black Sea port of Novorossiysk.⁹²⁶ In November 1993, during the visit of Shafranik to Baku, discussions were held on the

⁹²³ Aidyn Mekhtiev, 'U Chernomyrdina pretenzii k "kontrakt veka" net', *Nezavisimaya gazeta*, 15 October 1994, p.1.

⁹²⁴ '\$ 1.4 bn Deal for Pipeline', *The Independent*, 10 March 1993, p.11.

⁹²⁵ Carl Morsihed, 'Raising the stakes to gain a better oil deal for Azerbaijan', *The Times*, 1 September 1993, p.4.

⁹²⁶ Aliev, however, did not rule out an Iranian route either. At a meeting with Iranian president Rafsanjani in October 1993, discussions were held on an eventual route across Iranian territory to the Persian gulf. (Mekhman Gafarly, 'Vizit Prezidenta Irana v Azerbaidzhan', *Segodnya*, 30 October 1993, p.4.)

possibility of transporting Azeri Caspian oil through the Russian pipeline network.⁹²⁷ A pipeline connecting the northern Caspian sea with the Russian port of Novorossiysk was already in place. All that was needed, was a short stretch of pipeline from Baku to the northern Caspian Sea. This new project provoked a strong Turkish reaction. In retaliation, the Turkish government unilaterally imposed restrictions on the passage of supertankers through the Bosphorus straits in July 1994, citing the need to improve safety and environmental controls following the disastrous collision of two Greek-owned tankers in the straits the previous March.⁹²⁸ Russia tried to circumvent the problem by signing a deal with Greece and Bulgaria for the construction of a Trans-Balkan pipeline to carry crude oil from Burgas in Bulgaria to Alexandropolis in north-eastern Greece.⁹²⁹ The participation in the Trans-Balkan pipeline of Gazprom with an equity stake of up to 50 percent ensured that Russia would still maintain its grip on oil export routes from the former Soviet Union if the Russian route to Novorossiysk was confirmed.⁹³⁰

The final signing of the Azeri oil deal in September 1994 did not specify the exact route for the transportation of the oil and consequently negotiations began between Azerbaijan and all other countries interested in having oil transported across their territory, namely Russia, Turkey and Iran. Although a variety of routes were considered, the proposals could essentially be limited to three options, all of which had a number of variants.⁹³¹ The Northern or Russian option would transport Kazakh oil, particularly from the giant Tengiz field, through southern Russia to the Russian Black Sea port of Novorossiysk. A spur from Azerbaijan could be established so that Azerbaijani crude oil could also reach external markets via Novorossiysk. The Central - or Caucasian - option would take crude oil from Azerbaijan to either the Black Sea via Georgia, or to Turkey via either Georgia or Armenia or both, and thence to a Turkish terminal on the Mediterranean. A line across the Caspian from Kazakhstan could be plugged into this option. The southern or Iranian option would

⁹²⁷ Mekham Gafarly, 'Rossiya snova vykhodit k azerbaidzhankoi nefti', *Segodnya*, 25 November 1993, p.3.

⁹²⁸ Navigation across the Bosphorus was regulated by the Montreux Convention, signed in 1936 by twelve countries including the USSR and Turkey. The Convention provided for the unhindered passage of all countries' merchant vessels through the straits and established procedures for the passage of warships belonging to the Black Sea and non-Black Sea countries. (Professor Ilya Mogilevkin, 'Transportnye svyazi Rossii pod ugrozoi', *Nezavisimaya gazeta*, 1 April 1994, p.4.)

⁹²⁹ Kerin Hope, 'Balkan oil pipeline will be a boost for Russians', *Financial Times*, 30 September 1994, p.3.

⁹³⁰ *ibid.*

⁹³¹ John Roberts, *Caspian Pipelines*, Former Soviet South Projects, Royal Institute of International Affairs, London, 1996, pp. 8-12. Roberts provided an extremely detailed and valuable account of the various pipeline options discussed for the export of Caspian oil.

take crude oil from Azerbaijan into Iran, perhaps only for a very short distance, and thence to Turkey. Again, Kazakh oil could be plugged into this option, either via a Transcaspiian pipeline or via Turkmenistan and northern Iran.⁹³²

All routes had serious disadvantages which made any choice particularly risky. The Iranian option was opposed by Western governments, mainly because of the strained relations that existed between Washington and Tehran. The Caucasian route, which was favoured by Turkey, passed through areas that were highly unstable. Georgia faced two secessionist movements - Abkhazia and South Ossetia - , and the war in Nagorno-Karabagh excluded the possibility of a route that crossed either Nagorno-Karabagh or Armenian territory. Moreover, in Turkey, the pipeline most probably had to cross the areas inhabited by the Kurdish people, who were struggling for secession from Turkey. The Russian option was certainly the cheapest, given that a 40-inch pipeline structure was already in place for most of the section from the Tengiz oil fields in Kazakhstan to the port of Novorossiysk. However, exporting oil and gas through the Russian pipeline system again made the Caspian states dependent on Russia. Moreover, the war in Chechnya had created additional insecurities. Russia was extremely keen on having the route cross Russian territory. In fact, a Transcaucasian option meant the reorientation of the entire flow of oil and gas from the Caspian region and Central Asia away from Russia and to Transcaucasian-Turkish transit, which in turn entailed a substantial reduction of Russia's economic presence and political influence in the region and the re-orientation of the three Transcaucasian republics - Georgia, Armenia and Azerbaijan - towards the West.⁹³³ Turkey was also pushing hard for a route that crossed its own territory. If agreement was reached on having the main oil pipeline running along the Baku-Tbilisi-Ceyhan route, the chances were high that Kazakh oil from the Tengiz deposit would also be transported through the same system. In such a case, not only Caspian but also Kazakh oil would flow through Turkey, and Ankara would receive transit fees of at least \$ 500 million a year. Moreover, Turkey would manage to sharply reduce its oil imports bill, by at least \$3 billion, and would gain control over regional energy-resource transportation routes.⁹³⁴ Eventually, a compromise solution was found. On 9 October 1995, the committee managing the Caspian oil deal agreed that the 'early oil' - about 80,000 barrels per day - would be exported simultaneously through

⁹³² *ibid.*

⁹³³ Azer Mursaliyev, 'Russian Government at Odds With Itself Over Oil Deal', *Moscow News*, 30 September, 1994, p.3.

⁹³⁴ Georgy Bovt, 'Caspian Oil: Not Everyone Wants What is Cheapest, Everyone Wants What is Best for Themselves', *Kommersant-daily*, 13 July 1995 p. 14, in *CDPSP*, XLVII, 1995, p.22.

Russia to the Black Sea port of Novorossiysk and via Georgia to the Black Sea port of Supsa. The decision on the transport of the 'main oil' was deferred. Oil experts in Baku said there were indications that most of the early oil from the Caspian, expected to reach 80,000 b/d by 1999, would run through Russia. Despite the Chechen war, the Russian route was nearer completion by late 1995, requiring about \$50 million worth of repairs compared with just under \$200 million for the Georgian option.⁹³⁵

Russia's efforts to control the export of Azerbaijani oil were motivated, as in the case of Kazakh oil, by the desire to obtain lucrative profits out of transit fees, as well as by the intent to control the export flows. Control of flows would allow Russia to hold substantial leverage over an extremely sensitive region. Despite the development of other alternative routes by-passing Russia, Russia succeeded in having part of the early oil from Azerbaijan transported through Russia, allowing for a partial dependence of Azerbaijan on Russia. Were Russia's policies aimed at bringing Azerbaijan under Russia's exclusive sphere of influence? Foreign Minister Kozyrev, FIS Director Primakov and the Russian Ministry of Foreign Economic Relations tended to view control over Caspian energy export routes as a means of maintaining a sphere of influence in the region. The Russian Foreign Ministry showed great concern over the erosion of Russia's influence in the Caucasus, due to the presence of foreign companies. However, the Fuel and Energy Ministry as well as Prime Minister Chernomyrdin tended to view control over transit routes as a means of obtaining profits, and restoring control over the former Soviet energy complex. The interests of both groups coincided in their efforts to ensure Russia's control over pipeline routes. It can therefore be argued that both elements were present in Russia's efforts to control export routes, and consequently that Russia's policies were partially neo-imperialist.

2. Kazakhstan

a. The Tengiz Deal

On 7 May 1992, the government of Kazakhstan and America's Chevron Corporation signed a preliminary agreement which set up a joint-venture - Tengizchevroil - to develop and exploit the Tengiz oil field in western Kazakhstan, whose reserves were estimated at about 25 billion barrels, of which 6bn-9bn barrels were presumably recoverable. Financing

⁹³⁵ Steve LeVine and Bruce Clark, 'Turkish Port to Gain From Deal', *Financial Times*, 10 October 1995, p.6.

of the oil-field's development was to be shared equally by Kazakhstan and Chevron, while 80 percent of the profits were to go to Kazakhstan. In April 1993, as a final agreement was reached on the details of the future Tengizchevroil joint venture, Russia became particularly concerned with the prospect of losing control over vast energy resources and energy export flows.⁹³⁶ The Tengiz-Chevron energy deal brought to light the decreasing economic influence of Russia in the region, and the gradual replacement of Russia's presence by Western economic interests.

Besides Western penetration, Russia was also very much concerned over the inroads that its Turkish neighbour was making in the Caspian energy market. In an article in *Nezavisimaya gazeta*, on 13 May 1993, the Russian Ministry of Foreign Economic Relations, openly expressed its concern over the creation of the Central Asian Regional Union - an intergovernmental coalition created in January 1993, uniting all Central Asian states. The Russian Ministry viewed the Union as a Turkish-sponsored organisation aimed at bringing these states out of the Russian and into the Turkish sphere of influence, by creating a 'Great Turkestan'. This would deal a serious blow to Russia's vital interests in Central Asia and the Middle East, especially in Iran. According to the authors,

'the formation of the Central Asian Union has partially fulfilled the long-nurtured strategy of Turkey, the US and Saudi Arabia of creating a 'Turkic belt' of Muslim states along Russia's southern border, with a view of completely tearing Central Asia away from Russia, in order to then direct the primary flow of energy resources from the region to the West via Azerbaijan and Turkey, [consequently] circumventing Russia.'⁹³⁷

Worries were also expressed about the recently signed agreement between Turkey and Turkmenistan to build a gas pipeline that would transport Turkmenistan's gas to Western Europe via Turkey. 'A portion of the 85 billion cubic metres of gas that Ashgabat extracts will flow west rather than south,' the article read, 'as will the surplus gas from Uzbekistan and Kazakhstan, casting doubt over the implementation of the Russian-Iranian gas and oil projects and thereby infringing upon Russia's economic interests.'⁹³⁸ The authors believed that the main objective of this neo-pan-Turkic strategy was 'to deprive Russia of profitable commercial and economic partners and access to world markets for goods and raw materials and to international shipping lines.'⁹³⁹

⁹³⁶ Sergei Kozlov, 'Kazakhstan: pravo pervoi nefti', *Nezavisimaya gazeta*, 10 April 1993, p.3.

⁹³⁷ Vladimir Iuratev and Anatoly Shestakov, Russian Ministry of Foreign Economic Relations, 'Aziatskii gaz poidet na zapad', *Nezavisimaya gazeta*, 13 May 1993, p.4.

⁹³⁸ *ibid.*

⁹³⁹ *ibid.*

In the Spring of 1994, Russia increased its pressure on Kazakhstan and its Western oil partners, in order to obtain a share of the deal, by restricting the exports of Tengiz to just over 20,000 barrels a day, claiming that the presence of corrosive contaminant mercoptan made larger shipments unacceptable.⁹⁴⁰ In June 1994, Russia went as far as cutting off most of Kazakhstan's oil exports, thus paralysing the latter's most lucrative industry. Although Russia claimed that the export of Kazakh oil reduced the amount of oil Russia itself could export, entailing a loss of \$300 million a year,⁹⁴¹ Russia's underlying aim was to obtain an equity share in the contract rather than being paid a tariff.⁹⁴² In September 1994, Russia allowed for exports to reach 50,000-60,000 barrels a day, but this was still half of the 130,000 b/d capacity which Chevron was able to export in 1994, and well below the peak of 700,000 b/d expected for the year 2010.⁹⁴³ Apparently in the winter of 1994, Russia also sharply reduced the supply of oil refined products to Kazakh suppliers of crude oil.⁹⁴⁴ As a result of this pressure, Lukoil was able to reach a preliminary agreement in April 1996 with the Kazakh government for the purchase of a stake in the Tengizchevroil joint-venture.⁹⁴⁵

b. The Karachaganak Deal

In July 1992, British Gas and the Italian oil company Agip concluded an agreement with the Kazakh government for the exploitation of the Karachaganak oil and gas fields, estimated to yield more than 20 trillion cubic metres of gas, and 2 billion barrels of oil and gas condensate.⁹⁴⁶ Further attempts by British Gas and Agip to conclude a longer-term deal were plagued by complications, arising not only from Kazakhstan's desire that foreign partners conduct substantial investment into local infrastructure, but also from the lack of a reliable export route, and above all from Russia's pressure to obtain equity shares in the

⁹⁴⁰ Steve LeVine, 'Moscow Fights for Kazakh Oil Share', *Financial Times*, 18 March 1994, p.2.

⁹⁴¹ Steve LeVine, 'Russia Blocking Oil, Say Kazakhs', *Financial Times*, 28 June 1994, p.3.

⁹⁴² Chrystia Freeland, 'Prospects in the Pipeline' *Financial Times*, 25 March 1994, p.3.

⁹⁴³ Robert Corzine, 'Chevron Upbeat on Tengiz project', *Financial Times*, 27 September, 1994, p.27; Azer Mursaliev, 'Politicheskii fontan iz neftyanoi skvazhiny', *Moskovskie novosti*, 25 September - 2 October 1994, p.4.

⁹⁴⁴ Chrystia Freeland, 'Prospects in the Pipeline', p.3.

⁹⁴⁵ Sander Thoenes, 'Mobil to Buy 25% of Big Asian Oilfield', *Financial Times*, 18 April 1996, p.3.

⁹⁴⁶ 'British Gas and Agip in Kazakhstan Deal', *International Herald Tribune*, 2 July 1992, p.2.

deal, without providing any capital investment.⁹⁴⁷ In early 1994, only weeks after it succeeded in obtaining a share in the British Petroleum-led consortium to develop off-shore Caspian Sea fields in Azerbaijan, Lukoil, increased its economic and political pressure on the Kazakh government for a share in the Karachaganak field.⁹⁴⁸ As with the Chevron deal, Russia exerted substantial pressure through its control of the export route, which from Samara crossed the Russian mainland through to the Black-Sea port of Novorossiysk.

In the autumn of 1994, Gazprom replaced Lukoil as the main contender for a share in the Karachaganak deal. Gazprom based its claim on the principle that it had discovered and partially developed the Karachaganak gas field during the Soviet era. Moreover, Gazprom controlled a large gas treatment centre outside the nearby Russian city of Orenburg, which had been built mainly to process Karachaganak gas.⁹⁴⁹ By late 1994, as it became increasingly clear that including Gazprom in the deal would most probably persuade the company to agree to ship Karachaganak's production through Russia's pipeline system to markets in the West, the Kazakh government put pressure on its Western partners so that they grant Gazprom a 15 percent share of their stake in the Karachaganak field.⁹⁵⁰ Finally, on 10 February 1995, after Russia apparently threatened to block exports of Karachaganak's oil and gas, and to purchase the field's output at no more than 15 percent of world prices unless Gazprom was included in the project, Kazakhstan agreed to Gazprom's participation in the deal.⁹⁵¹

What was the motivation behind Russia's behaviour? The evidence seems to indicate that Russia's attempts to obtain shares in the lucrative Tengiz and Karachaganak deals were primarily motivated by the desire to make economic profits. Lukoil and Gazprom had every interest in participating in projects which would have resulted in substantial earnings. The lack of capital and of modern technology prevented these companies from competing fairly with Western consortia. The Russian government therefore, decided to resort to rather harsh methods, such as the reduction and cut off of Kazakh exports through Russia, in

⁹⁴⁷ Mikhail Ustigov, 'Big Oil Moves in', *The Bulletin of Atomic Scientists*, October 1993, p.44; Steve LeVine, and Robert Corzine, 'Russians Muscle in on Oil Deals', *Financial Times*, 21 January 1994, p.2.

⁹⁴⁸ Steve LeVine, 'Moscow Fights for Kazakh Oil Share', *Financial Times*, 18 March 1994, p.3; Chrystia Freeland, 'Prospects in the Pipeline', *Financial Times*, 25 March 1994, p.3.

⁹⁴⁹ Steve LeVine and Robert Corzine, 'Russia's Set to Get Share of Kazakhstan's largest Gas Field', *Financial Times*, 8 November 1994, p.3.

⁹⁵⁰ *ibid.*

⁹⁵¹ Steve LeVine, 'Asian Gas Exporters Try to Bypass Russia', *New York Times*, 9 September 1995, p.1.

order to obtain shares in the deals. Although it has often been argued that Russia was primarily motivated in its assertive behaviour by the desire to keep Kazakhstan under its sphere of influence, enough evidence to sustain such a hypothesis is lacking.⁹⁵² Elements within the Russian government, such as the Ministry of Foreign Economic Relations, interpreted foreign, particularly Turkish participation in Caspian energy deals, as threat to Russia's influence in the region. However, the Russian leadership eventually proved ready to allow other foreign companies participate in the deal, as long as Russian companies were granted a share. This indicated that those sectors of the Russian government involved in energy policy - the Ministry of Fuel and Energy (MFE) and the Prime Minister - were not too worried about a potential loss of Russian influence, as long as Russian companies were involved in the energy deals.

c. The Pipeline Route

Kazakhstan's dependence on Russian export routes and the resulting pressure that Russia exerted on Kazakhstan persuaded Kazakh leaders to discuss alternative pipelines for the export of oil and gas. In 1992, Russia, Kazakhstan and Oman had set up the Caspian Pipeline Consortium (CPC) to build a pipeline to transport oil from the Caspian region to the Black Sea. The CPC original plan was to take advantage of existing infrastructure by finishing a 1,600 km pipeline that had been partially completed during the Soviet period. This pipeline would link both the Caucasian and Central Asian fields with expanded port facilities at Novorossiysk. The northern arm of the pipeline would extend from Tengiz around the northern curve of the Caspian and then continue straight across to Tikhoretsk and on to Novorossiysk. The southern arm would link up with a pipeline from Baku at the Russia- Azerbaijani border, passing through Grozny to Tikhoretsk. This would involve reversing the line from Baku to Grozny.⁹⁵³ Although this plan entailed transporting Kazakh oil through Russian territory, and consequently, continued dependence on Russia's goodwill to transport the oil, Kazakh leaders still decided to give it priority, at least for the transport of the first oil, mainly in order not to alienate Russia, and to secure the continuous transport of Kazakh oil from the already functioning Tengiz field. In early

⁹⁵² Bibliography arguing the neo-imperialist case: Stephen J. Blank, *Energy, Economics and Security in Central Asia: Russia and its Rivals*, Strategic Studies Institute, US Army War College, 10 May 1995; Suha Bolukbasi, 'The Controversy over the Caspian Sea Mineral Resources: Conflicting Perceptions, Clashing Interests', *Europe-Asia Studies*, 50, 1998, 3, pp.397-414.

⁹⁵³ Rosemarie Forsythe, *The Politics of Oil in the Caucasus and Central Asia*, Adelphi Paper, 300, 1996, p.49.

1994, however, President Nazarbaev also considered the use of three alternative routes for a new pipeline to carry oil from the new fields in western Kazakhstan and Turkmenistan. Two of the three potential routes would transit through Iran, one to reach the Mediterranean sea in Turkey, the other the Persian Gulf. A third route would go across the Caspian and the Caucasus, via Georgia, to the Turkish Mediterranean.⁹⁵⁴

Russia put a lot of pressure on Kazakhstan to follow the route of existing pipelines to the Black Sea port of Novorossiysk, a route that would allow Moscow to retain its monopoly grip on the region's oil supplies.⁹⁵⁵ But the Russian route, which was the one proposed by the CPC, required substantial investment. From 1992 to late 1994, the CPC tried to persuade Chevron to provide most of the financing for a 25 percent non-decision-making equity share. Chevron refused to accept those terms, and in the absence of alternative finance, the deal stagnated. New proposals involving Western energy companies surfaced during 1994 and 1995, but they failed to get the necessary funding. Eventually, after protracted negotiations among the original CPC shareholders and Western companies, a major agreement was reached in April 1996 on the restructuring of the CPC. The deal envisaged the construction of a \$1.5 billion pipeline from western Kazakhstan to the Russian port of Novorossiysk. Oman agreed to reduce its share from 25 to 7 percent. The Russian government obtained 24 percent of the shares while Kazakhstan obtained 19 percent, reflecting the existing assets. The remaining 50 percent was held by foreign investors (Chevron, Mobil, Oryx, British Gas, Agip), Russian companies (Lukoil (12.5 percent) and Rosneft (7.5 percent)), as well as Munaigaz from Kazakhstan (1.75 percent). Commentators believed that this agreement would not allow Russia to behave with Kazakhstan as it did in the past, because foreign investors carried significant weight.⁹⁵⁶ However, Russia obtained a major stake in the deal. It obtained a 24 percent state share, plus another 20 percent held by the Russian companies Lukoil and Rosneft. In addition, it obtained tariff revenues for the pipeline's Russian operator Transneft. Diplomats argued that the Kremlin went along for fear that Kazakhstan and Azerbaijan might otherwise speed up plans for a pipeline to Turkey that would bypass Russia altogether.⁹⁵⁷

⁹⁵⁴ 'US Will Help Kazakhstan Get Russian Guarantees on Pipeline', *European Wirelless File*, News Alert, 16 February 1994, p.2.

⁹⁵⁵ Steve LeVine, 'Oil Dealer's Row with Chevron Threatens Caspian Project', *Financial Times*, 13 May 1994, p.5.

⁹⁵⁶ Sander Thoenes, 'Russia Agrees Kazakh Oil Pipeline', *Financial Times*, 29 April 1996, p.4.

⁹⁵⁷ In addition to the Tengiz oil, the pipeline would also export 6 million tons of gas condensate a year from the Karachaganak oil and gas field, where BG, Agip and Gazprom had a production venture. (ibid.)

Russia's efforts to control the export of Kazakh energy products seem to have been primarily motivated by the desire to obtain lucrative profits out of transit fees, as well as by the intent to control the export flows. Control of flows, would allow Russia to earn substantial revenues, and also to hold significant leverage over Kazakhstan. Although Kazakhstan attempted to develop alternative routes in order to break its dependence on Russia, Russia put great pressure over Kazakhstan in order to have Kazakh oil transported through Russia. Despite the participation of foreign companies in the project, the transport of Kazakh oil through Russia, resulted in Kazakhstan's continued dependence on Russia. Did this represent an attempt to bring Kazakhstan under Russia's exclusive sphere of influence? The Russian Ministry of Foreign Economic Relations, as well as the Foreign Ministry, tended to view control over Caspian energy export routes as a means of maintaining a sphere of influence over the region. They showed great concern over the erosion of Russia's influence in the region due to the presence of foreign companies. The MFE as well as Prime Minister Chernomyrdin, on the other hand, tended to view control over transit routes as a means of obtaining profits, and restoring control over the former Soviet energy complex. For different reasons, therefore, both groups had an interest in Russia's control over pipeline routes. It can therefore be argued that both elements were present in Russia's efforts to control export routes.

IV. GENERAL CONCLUSION

During the period under examination, both Ukraine and Belarus remained very much dependent on energy supplies from Russia. Russia's energy policies to both Ukraine and Belarus were characterised by three elements. First, both countries faced a substantial reduction in supplies and regular disruptions in deliveries from Russia. Second, Russia progressively increased its energy prices up to world levels. Third, despite Russia's own shortage of funding, its leaders decided to continue subsidising Belarus' and Ukraine's energy imports. What motivated such behaviour? The evidence seems to indicate that the increase in energy prices was not aimed at strangling the neighbouring economies, but was instead a reflection of Russia's own efforts to correct the unfavourable terms of trade inherited from the Soviet Union. Moreover, as far as Ukraine was concerned, Russia lacked any political incentive for reducing prices. Ukraine had adopted a negative attitude towards the CIS, and various issue of contention tainted relations between both countries - the fate of the Crimea, the division of the Black Sea fleet, the question of nuclear weapons

- thus eliminating any desire by Russia to provide Ukraine with special treatment. Still, Russian prices remained below world markets and barter payments were accepted. Moreover, despite the accumulation of arrears Russia never cut off supplies completely. Very close economic links existed between the Russian economy and the Belarussian and Ukrainian economies. Any major disruption in supplies would have had a negative impact on Russian domestic industry. Moreover, Russia was eager to avoid the total collapse of the already fragile neighbouring economies, given the presence of large Russian minorities, and the major political instabilities which such actions might have provoked. Both countries hosted the major transportation routes which carried Russian energy to the lucrative markets of the West. Such a strategic position, strongly discouraged Russia to behave too assertively. In addition, Belarus became a key strategic ally on Russia's western borders - it joined the CST, allowed for the joint protection of its western borders, and consented to the Russian operation of its air defence system. Ukraine instead adopted during most of 1992-1996 a confrontational attitude towards Russia, causing trouble along the pipeline route. Consequently, Belarus became all the more important for Russia, and this explained Russia's willingness to subsidise its energy supplies.

The fall in energy supplies seems to have been linked above all to a fall in production, and not to an attempt to bring both countries under Russia's influence. In fact, Belarus' major efforts at reaching a political and economic union with Russia were never pursued with determination by Moscow. Moscow's reluctance to bring economic and political union into fruition indicated that its leadership was not as eager as is often assumed to create an 'informal empire' in the former Soviet space. Although Russia seems not to have used the energy tool to bring both countries under its influence, it is highly likely that Russia did use it to obtain other military or economic concessions. On the one hand, Russia apparently put pressure on Ukraine so that it hand over a major part of the Black Sea fleet and allow the basing at Sevastopol, and on the other, the energy companies tried to acquire shares in coveted Belarussian and Ukrainian energy facilities. Moreover, the evidence seems to indicate that Russian leaders viewed the restoration of the former energy complex as a step towards further CIS economic integration. There seems to be little evidence therefore pointing to a Russian desire to restore an informal empire over Belarus and Ukraine. Policies seemed to have been motivated more by economic factors rather than by attempts to create systemic dependency on Russia.

As far as the energy-rich Caspian states are concerned, Russia's policies were rather assertive. The reliance of these countries on export routes crossing Russian territory gave Russia a very strong bargaining tool which allowed it to acquire important shares in the major energy exploitation deals, almost without providing further capital investment, and to have part of the oil carried through Russian territory. In Kazakhstan, Lukoil succeeded in obtaining shares in the deal involved in the exploitation of the Tengiz oil field, whereas Gazprom obtained shares in the exploitation of the vast Karachaganak oil and gas fields. In Azerbaijan, Lukoil managed to obtain a 10 percent share in the 'deal of the century' which involved the exploitation of the Azeri and Chirag oil fields in the Azeri sector of the Caspian sea, and in the CIOC consortium, which exploited the Karabagh offshore oil fields. Moreover, Russia was able to have the early Kazakh oil from Tengiz as well as part of the early Azeri oil from the Chirag, Azeri and Guneshli fields transported via the Russian pipeline system. The evidence available seems to indicate, however, that in their efforts to obtain shares in the major energy deals, Prime Minister Chernomyrdin, the Russian MFE, and the Russian oil and gas companies were primarily driven by the desire to obtain economic profits. On the other hand, other members of the Russian government, such as Kozyrev and Primakov, tended to view Russia's participation in the oil deals within a broader geopolitical framework. Although never explicitly acknowledged, Kozyrev and Primakov tended to view control over energy developments in the Caspian as essential to keep the Caspian region under Russian influence. Both Kazakhstan, and especially Azerbaijan, were countries that held great strategic significance for Russia. Azerbaijan was involved in a war with Armenia in Nagorno-Karabagh and Moscow wanted to make sure it remained the dominant player in the resolution of the conflict. Moreover, Azerbaijan bordered the sensitive areas of the Russian Northern Caucasus and this increased Russia's desire to keep a military and economic presence in the country. Kazakhstan had a substantial Russian population and was the necessary route for access to the rest of Central Asia. Kozyrev and Primakov tended to view the participation of other countries, such as Turkey, the US and Great Britain in the Caspian oil deals, as an increase of Western influence in Azerbaijan and Kazakhstan, to Russia's detriment. They therefore were reluctant to Western economic involvement. However, they did not manage to impose their views. Chernomyrdin and the MFE agreed to the participation of Gazprom and Lukoil in energy exploitation consortia together with foreign, primarily Western energy companies - an indication that non-imperialist views predominated, and that little could be done to prevent Western companies' involvement.

Russia also had an interest in having the oil and gas carried through its existing pipeline system. Control over the export routes was motivated by both economic and geopolitical factors. On the one hand, the pipelines represented a major source of revenue, on the other hand, control over the pipelines allowed Russia to hold the key to the Caspian oil resources, and thus keep these energy-rich countries under Russia's influence. The Russian government, and in particular, Primakov and the Ministry of Foreign Economic Relations, and to a lesser extent Kozyrev viewed the loss of control over the export routes as a major blow to Russia's strategic interests in the region, and as a surrender to Western and Turkish interests in the area. They interpreted the competition for control over transit routes and flows of energy as a new struggle for power in the area. They seemed eager not to have other countries replace Russia as the dominant economic power in the region. The sectors directly involved in the deals, however, such as the energy companies, the Fuel and Energy Ministry, and the Prime Minister, were mainly concerned with the profits involved. Although the energy lobby was eager to make profits, it was ready to partially surrender the control over the export of oil, so long as it still managed to obtain profits from oil deals and pipeline revenues. The predominance of the Energy lobby over the MFA, as well as Russia's weak economic position - it did not have the necessary technological and financial capabilities required - resulted in Russia accepting that part of the oil be transported through regions other than Russia. Still, Russia succeeded without much financial effort in making important inroads in the Caspian energy sector and of having the early oil transported across Russian territory, and thus allowing it to retain strong leverage over the region. The record of informal empire building therefore remains rather mixed.

Conclusions

The current thesis intended to examine the nature of Russia's relations towards the FSS, and more specifically towards the CIS member states, after the USSR collapsed in 1991 until the end of Yeltsin's first term as President of Russia in July 1996. In particular, the aim was to examine the commonly held hypothesis that the new Russian state, having lost vast amounts of land and over 25 million ethnic nationals, would prove unable to discard its imperial legacy and establish normal state-to-state relations with the new republics; and that, instead, its leaders would attempt to restore a sphere of influence or informal empire over Russia's former colonies, as the French did in sub-Saharan Africa after decolonisation. Although the current thesis has shown that there is some support for the 'neo-imperialist' hypothesis, the evidence of such behaviour is not overwhelming. During the period under examination, Russia went through a transitional phase, which involved both handling the legacies of the Soviet era and engaging in the process of nation- and state-building. Consequently, Russia's policies in most fields, including relations with its former Soviet neighbours, did not reflect a truly consistent pattern of behaviour. It can therefore be argued that Russia's policies did not completely resemble France's neo-imperial policies in sub-Saharan Africa, which were characterised by a coherent policy aimed at keeping a sphere of influence in the region, through a network of military bases, bilateral defence agreements and preferential trade agreements; the transfer of investment and economic aid; the establishment of the Franc Zone; and the development of cultural ties. Russia's policies instead, although neo-imperial in many ways, did not follow a coherent strategy of informal empire building.

The current research work demonstrates that in certain respects, during the period January 1992 - July 1996, Russia had great difficulty in totally dismissing its imperial heritage, and instead, attempted in certain domains, to reassert its influence - though in an erratic and somehow incoherent fashion - over the former Soviet states. Russian leaders considered the post-Soviet space as a sphere of Russia's natural interests, and therefore believed that Russia had to retain a predominant position in the area. Although initially strongly anti-imperialist, the foreign policy discourse of Russian leaders underwent a major change after the Spring of 1993, and became more assertive, reflecting an increasingly neo-imperialist attitude as far as Russian policy towards the former Soviet states was concerned. In the Autumn of 1993 and Winter of 1994, Foreign Minister Kozyrev clearly talked about

Russia's need to keep the former Soviet states in Russia's 'sphere of influence', and after 1992, the Russian government gave growing priority to the settlement of conflicts in the near abroad, the protection of the rights of Russian minorities and the deepening of CIS military and economic integration. However, despite a more neo-imperialist rhetoric, Russia's neo-imperialist record remained rather mixed. Russian leaders did not pursue in practice a clearly defined strategy of 'informal empire building', aimed at the creation of an area over which Russia would have a substantial capacity to influence both external and internal developments, over which other countries would be denied a hegemonic presence, and in which countries would surrender part of their sovereignty.

The evidence provided shows that Russia's policies towards the former Soviet states in the military field, to a great extent, fitted the pattern of neo-imperialist behaviour, although legitimate state interests also played a part in Russia's decisions to act assertively. As was shown in Chapters 2 and 3, Russian leaders managed to retain a military presence in all CIS states, with the exception of Azerbaijan; to maintain control over most of the former Soviet air defence and early warning infrastructure located in the newly independent states; and to protect most of the external CIS borders with Russian troops, with the exception of Ukraine, Moldova and Azerbaijan. Moreover, Russian leaders signed bilateral treaties with most CIS states which provided for close military and military-technical co-operation between the Russian army and the armed forces of the states concerned. Some treaties went as far as envisaging the creation of joint armed forces, such as the bilateral treaty signed with Kazakhstan, in January 1995, or the development of the armed forces on the basis of common principles and a common defence policy, as the agreements signed with Belarus in December 1995 and May 1996. Russia also became deeply involved in the military conflicts that erupted in the post-Soviet space, as in Nagorno-Karabagh, Abkhazia, Transdniestria and Tajikistan, by mediating between the warring parties and by providing the main contingent of peacekeeping forces. Russian behaviour proved particularly assertive in the Transcaucasian region, where the Ministry of Defence, by providing military support to the Abkhaz, compelled the Georgian leadership to accept a long-term military presence in the country, in the form of three military bases and four naval ports. In Azerbaijan, Russian leaders pressed hard, during 1994-1996, for the re-establishment of military bases and for the introduction of a Russian-dominated peacekeeping force. Similarly, Russia managed to delay the withdrawal of the 14th Army from Transdniestria, thus perpetuating its military presence in Moldova. In Tajikistan, Russia's active military

involvement in support of the Rakhmonov regime resulted in the country becoming almost a Russian protectorate.

Russia's policies in the energy sector towards the Caspian region also proved particularly assertive, and to a certain extent fitted the neo-imperialist pattern. Russia's control over the main energy transportation routes out of the Caspian sea basin allowed Russian energy companies to obtain participation shares in all important oil deals that Kazakhstan and Azerbaijan signed with Western oil companies, and to have part of the oil and gas transported through Russian pipelines, thus ensuring Russia's partial control over Caspian energy transportation routes. Moreover, the Russian Foreign Ministry, in contradiction to the policies of Russian Prime Minister and the Ministry of Fuel and Energy, conducted intensive diplomatic efforts aimed at ensuring the joint exploitation of the common resources of the Caspian sea by all coastal states.

The evidence provided in the thesis, however, fails to support the neo-imperialist argument completely. Russia's policies in the field of economic integration might, at first sight, be perceived as fitting a neo-imperialist pattern. As shown in Chapter 2, Russia initiated and supported most of the various attempts aimed at establishing an economic union with the CIS states. The economic union failed to materialise, but Russia succeeded in January 1995 in setting up a Customs Union with Belarus and Kazakhstan, later joined by Kyrgyzstan. Negotiations were conducted during 1993-1994 to reach a monetary union with Belarus and although the union failed to see the light of day, Russia and Belarus signed a treaty on the formation of a Community of Sovereign States in April 1996, which foresaw close economic co-ordination among the two countries and the introduction of a single currency. During early 1992-Autumn 1993, Russia held control of the ruble - the common CIS currency - and this allowed it to control, to a certain extent, economic developments in the other post-Soviet states. This was mainly the result of Russia's dominant economic position and the unwillingness of the FSS to introduce their own currencies. Moreover, Russia granted large subsidies to all post-Soviet states in order to preserve the existing trade links and avoid the collapse of post-Soviet economies, which led to a high level of indebtedness of the FSS towards Russia. This high level of indebtedness provided Russia with a potentially strong leverage over the other CIS economies, and eventually allowed Russia to obtain industrial assets particularly in the energy sector in some of the FSS, such as Belarus, Moldova and the Baltic states, in exchange for debt payments.

However, a clear examination of Russia's behaviour showed that Russia's policies in the economic sphere did not really fit the neo-imperialist pattern. Most of the integration projects failed to materialise because Russia proved unwilling to subsidise deep economic integration. Although the ruble zone was preserved for almost two years, Russia eventually abolished it altogether in the Autumn of 1993, thus eliminating the possibility of tying the economies of the former Soviet states very closely to Russia. Belarus' efforts to integrate its monetary system with Russia during 1994, and again in 1996, failed to gain Russia's support, thus attesting to a clear non-imperialist behaviour. Russia's willingness to provide huge subsidies to the CIS states resulted from the close inter-linkage of the FSS industrial, agricultural and energy complexes, and was aimed above all at avoiding the total collapse of FSS economies and of Russian industry. It was not aimed primarily at extracting military or political concessions, despite the fact that Russia eventually used the large debts to obtain, for example, a major share of the Black Sea Fleet, or shares in the CIS and Baltic states energy companies. Russia's attempts to obtain shares in the CIS and Baltic states' energy sector, were motivated mainly by economic factors, and not by efforts to restore a sphere of influence in the regions involved, especially if we consider that many of the facilities, such as the Odessa oil terminal, would have allowed CIS states, in this case Ukraine, to diversify their energy sources away from Russia, and thus reduce dependency on Russia. As with any profit-making company, Lukoil and Gazprom had an economic interest in acquiring ownership of local companies, which would have allowed them to control the distribution and transit of their products, especially given the debts that many of the countries involved had accumulated towards them.

The evidence provided indicates that as opposed to Russia's policies in the military sphere, Russian behaviour in the economic field in fact, proved to be much less neo-imperialistic and tended primarily to follow an economic logic. Successful economic transformation, including macro-economic stabilisation, had become *the* top priority of the Russian President and of the various Russian governments after October 1991. Although these policies were certainly not conducted in a coherent fashion, and at various stages the objective of macro-economic stabilisation was temporarily abandoned - for example, by increasing subsidies to Russian industry and agriculture, or by providing substantial credits to the CIS republics - the overall goal of market transformation and financial stabilisation was preserved, and no major economic sacrifices were made for the sake of political and strategic advantages, especially after 1993 and the end of 'dual power' in Russian politics.

This explains why efforts aimed at reaching economic integration failed to materialise. Although intensive negotiations on economic integration were conducted between Russia and the CIS states, no major results were ever reached, with the exception of the Customs Union, essentially because economic integration entailed great costs for Russia. The disparate level of economic development between Russia and most other CIS states meant that Russia would have had to subsidise the other countries' economies for integration to succeed, by financing their budget and trade deficits, and sustaining their national currencies. Moreover, Russia had no guarantees that the FSS would respect previously agreed economic engagements, nor could it impose economic decisions on the FSS that wanted to join the union. Therefore Russia risked paying a very high price for very uncertain economic advantages. Similar reasons explained the failure during 1994-1996, of the Russian-Belarussian economic and monetary union, and of the new-type ruble zone.

The great importance that Russia attached to economic reforms also explains why it never supported efforts to set up CIS supra-national economic institutions, where it would not enjoy a majority of the votes, since this would have meant that the other CIS states could either hinder economic reforms in Russia or impose economic policies on Russia. For example, Russia accepted a banking union and joint control over the printing press, only on condition that decisions be adopted in accordance with the shares of capital invested and not in accordance with the number of members of the banking union, putting its own economic reform programme first. Economic profit also determined the desire of the Russian energy sector to obtain shares in the giant oil contracts that were being signed by Azerbaijan and Kazakhstan and the Western consortiums, as well as the intention to sell energy to all newly independent states at world prices. Russia's policies towards the FSS were therefore determined, to a great extent, by financial constraints which often forced leaders to abandon projects of economic and military reintegration, such as the new-type ruble zone, the Belarussian-Russian monetary union, and the implementation of deep military integration projects. However financial reasons also determined the desire of Russia to preserve the common CIS border as a Russian border - since it was too expensive to construct a new one - and to restore the existing air defence system. As far as Russian minorities are concerned, the evidence indicates that Russia's policies toward the Baltic states were aimed above all at integrating Russians minorities within the Estonian and Latvian political and civil communities. Russia seems not to have used the fate of Russians to preserve a military presence in the Baltic states, nor to bring these countries under Russia's sphere of influence.

The evidence provided in the thesis thus shows that Russia's active behaviour in the former Soviet state, even in the military field, was not always the result of 'imperialistic' ambitions or an imperial 'grand design' conceived by Russian leaders. Although, generally speaking, an 'imperial' state of mind dominated the Russian elite, Russian leaders often, although not always, followed policies which would be generally regarded as legitimate state concerns. For example, the emergence of a belt of great instability along Russia's southern borders, which resulted in a massive flow of refugees, and the general indifference of the international community towards conflicts in the FSS, explains to a great extent Russia's efforts to mediate and introduce its peacekeeping forces in order to put an end to military conflicts in Abkhazia, Transdnistria, Nagorno-Karabagh and Tajikistan, and to protect the CIS external borders with Russian soldiers. The damage caused by the collapse of the USSR to Russia's advantageous military position, above all in Transcaucasia and along Russia's western borders, as well as the disruption of the common defence system, accounted for Russia's attempts to keep an important military presence in most of the newly independent states, in the form of military bases, joint border patrolling, and control over the early warning and air defence systems. The loss of vital economic resources and transportation lines explains Russia's efforts to have a stake in the profitable energy deals of the Caspian basin. The disruption of economic ties and the need to prevent the collapse of Russian and CIS industry accounted for the provision of subsidies and efforts to create a free trade zone. The violation of human and civic rights of Russians living beyond Russia's borders determined Russia's active policies, for example, in the Baltic states. However, these legitimate concerns often conflicted with similarly legitimate aspirations of the new states and consequently resulted in an infringement of the newly independent states' sovereignty.

The current research work also demonstrates that although Russia did conduct an assertive policy towards the former Soviet states, its leaders were in many occasions reacting to - rather than initiating - events occurring in the post-Soviet states. Often, mistakes made by the leaders of the newly independent states created precarious or dangerous situations, which jeopardised Russia's national interests, and which to a certain extent compelled Russian leaders to get involved in the internal affairs of the former Soviet states. This is especially true when we examine, for example, the early stages of the ethnic conflicts that erupted in the former Soviet space, during 1991-1992. The leaders of the newly independent states attempted to use force in order to silence secessionist claims and

opposition groups. Azerbaijani leaders blockaded the Nagorno-Karabagh enclave and shelled its capital, Stepanakert, between late 1991 and early 1992; Moldovan forces attacked Bender and other Transdniestrian cities in June 1992; Georgian President Zviad Gamsakhurdia abolished South Ossetia's autonomy in late 1990 and Georgian paramilitary forces shelled South Ossetia in late 1991 and early 1992; Georgian Defence Minister Kitovani stormed Sukhumi in August 1992; Tajik president Nabiev armed his own supporters in the Spring of 1992. These events led to an escalation of tension and an eruption of violence, which prompted Russia's active involvement in mediation and peacekeeping. Although there is substantial evidence indicating that the Russian government, in particular the Ministry of Defence, often provided indirect support to the belligerent parties in the various conflicts after violence erupted, the available evidence does not prove that the new Russian leadership created or instigated the ethnic conflicts, with possible exceptions perhaps in Transdniestria and Abkhazia. The evidence available seems to indicate that CIS/Russian military participated in conflicts on a voluntary basis, by providing weapons and equipment. However, once violence erupted, Russian leaders made every effort to remain the main guarantors of peace in the region. On the one hand, they introduced Russian-dominated peacekeeping forces in the various conflict zones, tried to prevent other regional players and international organisations from intervening militarily, and, in some cases, tried to marginalise international organisations from the negotiations, as in Nagorno-Karabagh. On the other hand, they tried to prolong Russia's military presence in the area by negotiating the establishment of Russian military bases, as in Georgia, or by delaying the withdrawal of forces back to Russia, as in Moldova. Although the Russian MFA collaborated with the UN and the OSCE in the negotiations aimed at reaching a settlement in Abkhazia, Tajikistan and Transdniestria, Russia tried to remain the dominant mediator, and attempted to displace the CSCE/OSCE in Nagorno-Karabagh during 1993-1994. In Abkhazia close co-operation was established between Russian peacekeepers and UNOMIG, but Russia's efforts to enlist the support of international organisations were mainly intended to provide further legitimacy to Russia's intervention.

Similar conclusions, regarding Russia's reactions to events in the former Soviet space, can be reached when examining Russia's economic policies towards the former Soviet states. The unwillingness of most leaders of the newly independent states, with the sole exception of the Baltic states, to conduct serious economic reforms, to a great extent, obliged Russia to provide easy-term credits as well as subsidised energy and raw materials, in order to

avoid a total collapse of their economies. Similarly, the reluctance of Estonian and Latvian leaders to integrate Russian minorities into their political and civic communities, explained Russia's active diplomatic efforts aimed at ensuring the protection of their rights.

The evidence also demonstrates that, especially in the early period of Russian foreign policy, from early 1992 until the Spring of 1993, Russian leaders lacked a clear foreign policy programme regarding relations with the former Soviet states, and a clear concept of the CIS. This was to be expected, since foreign policy experts and diplomats had been used to dealing with third countries and not with the post-Soviet states, and therefore had difficulties in establishing real state-to-state relations with countries that until so recently had been part of the same state, and which they still regarded as their own country. The ties that existed among these countries had been extremely tight, and were bound to remain so for a while. Consequently the Russian Foreign Ministry found it difficult to determine a clear policy line regarding the former Soviet states. The absence of a clearly defined programme regarding the near abroad became a key element in the domestic power struggle which ravaged Russian politics between early 1992 and September 1993, and this in turn, determined the incoherent and erratic fashion of Russia's policies towards the former Soviet states. During 1992 and 1993, an intensive power struggle between the President and his team on the one hand, and Parliament and the Vice-President on the other, characterised the domestic political scene. This struggle was above all the result of the contradictory and ambiguous nature of the Soviet Constitution, which Russian leaders had inherited from the Soviet era, and which did not set out precisely the exact powers of the President, the Vice-President and Parliament.

Foreign policy became an important element, together with the conduct of economic reforms, of this power struggle. The slow progress of economic reform, and the lack of a clearly defined programme regarding Russia's policies towards the near abroad, made Russian leaders increasingly vulnerable to mounting pressure from representatives of state industry, the opposition in the Supreme Soviet, and moderate as well as more extreme nationalist circles who called for an assertive policy in the post-Soviet space. The Russian government felt compelled to abandon its policy of retreat from the near abroad and replace it with a more pro-active policy. The abolition of the Supreme Soviet in September 1993 and the adoption of a new Constitution in December 1993, which granted substantial powers to the President, did not really improve the position of the Russian government. The defeat of democratic-reformist forces in the Duma elections of 1993 and 1995, the victory

of Vladimir Zhirinovskiy, and the successes of the Communist and Agrarian parties, again placed the government in a weak position, and forced it to compromise on foreign policy issues. However, the arrival of Primakov at the Foreign Ministry in January 1996 led to better foreign policy co-ordination. Primakov's ability to muster the support of most forces in Parliament allowed for a more coherent and effective foreign policy. This was indicated by Primakov's renewed and temporarily successful efforts aimed at finding political settlements in Abkhazia and Tajikistan, as well as the new integration projects signed with Belarus, Kazakhstan and Kyrgyzstan.

The lack of co-ordinated foreign policy activities was also caused by the strained relations which existed between the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and the Ministry of Defence, a result mainly of the different approaches to foreign policy by Foreign Minister Kozyrev and Defence Minister Grachev. During 1992, the main objective of Kozyrev's policy was to bring Russia back into the group of developed and civilised nations. This meant, among other things, that Russia would conduct its relations with all countries, regardless of whether they belonged to the former Soviet Union or not, on the basis of the agreed norms of international law. This view contrasted sharply with the position of the Ministry of Defence, which was above all concerned with the protection of servicemen and the preservation of military assets in the former Soviet states, as well as with the participation in peacekeeping operations, regardless of whether these aims were achieved within the generally accepted norms of international law. Kozyrev's policy of Russian withdrawal from the former Soviet space, became the object of intensive criticism from political and academic circles, who insisted on a more active Russian presence in the region, and demanded Kozyrev's resignation. This forced Kozyrev to change his policies towards a more active Russian presence in the region by mid-1993. Although his new attitude fell more into line with the positions of the Ministry of Defence, he still failed to co-ordinate his activities with those of the Minister of Defence. As a result, Russia continued to conduct an uncoordinated policy in the post-Soviet space. Relations between the Foreign and Defence Ministries improved with the arrival of Primakov at the Foreign Ministry, resulting in better co-ordination and higher success.

This research also reaches another conclusion regarding Russia's policies towards the CIS states. By the end of 1994 and early 1995, Russian leaders began to differentiate between certain CIS states and the rest of the former Soviet Union. Relations with Belarus, Kazakhstan, Ukraine, Kyrgyzstan and Armenia started to be considered more important for

Russia than relations with the rest of the CIS states, and efforts were conducted to increase economic and military integration with them. Economic, military, geographic and ethnic factors determined closer relations with Kazakhstan, Belarus and Ukraine. The close ethnic ties that existed between Russians, Belarussian and Ukrainians, the large presence of Russian minorities inhabiting Belarus, Ukraine and Kazakhstan, the geographical proximity of these three countries to Russia, and their geostrategic location, especially that of Ukraine and Belarus as transit routes to Western markets, determined Russia's efforts to reach closer co-operation with them. The willingness of most of these state, with the exception of Ukraine, to establish closer ties with Russia, also explains why Russia adopted a more pragmatic policy and attempted to increase co-operation with those countries most ready to do so. Russian leaders succeeded in establishing a customs union with Belarus, Kazakhstan and Kyrgyzstan and a close economic union was set up with Belarus.

The overall conclusion can therefore be drawn that Russian leaders managed to a great extent to discard their imperial legacy. Although they did conduct an assertive policy in the near abroad, such a policy often, although not always, resulted from the need to fulfil what are usually regarded as legitimate state interests, such as preventing the spread of instability and insecurity into Russia, stopping the bloodshed in neighbouring countries, protecting the rights of Russian minorities, or avoiding the total collapse of FSS economies. Moreover, in certain areas, particularly in the economic field and in policies towards Russian minorities, Russia's behaviour hardly resembled informal empire building. On the other hand, Russia did behave in a neo-imperialist fashion in the military field, particularly once it got involved in conflict resolution in the former Soviet states. The record on the 'neo-imperialist' question is therefore mixed. Russian leaders and the Russian population at large faced great difficulties in discarding the imperial legacy and coming to terms with the collapse of the Soviet state, and this largely explains why Russia became actively involved in the former Soviet space, often in a neo-imperialist fashion. However, Russia's policies towards the FSS were also influenced by what were perceived as legitimate state interests, such as Russia's own stability and security, as well as by the high inter-linkage of the republican economies, the presence of a large Russian population in the FSS, and the strong cultural and political ties that developed during the Soviet era. All these elements often argued in favour of conducting an active policy in the near abroad. Legitimate state interests, however, also accounted for the restraint often found in Russia's behaviour, especially when imperial over-extension was perceived as detrimental to

Russia's own interests, in particular to its domestic economic transition. Both national interests and imperial legacies, therefore, combined to shape Russia's behaviour in the former Soviet space, and this explains why policies were sometimes more restrained than is usually assumed.

However, Russia's policies were also characterised by a lack of clarity, ambivalence and disarray a result of the weak and fragmented character of the Russian state. Highly dissimilar views among the various branches of the Russian government, particularly the MOD and the MFA, as far as relations with the FSS are concerned, conflicting agendas, and the struggle for power between Parliament and the President, explain the highly contradictory and often counter-productive policies conducted towards the CIS states and the Baltic countries. President Yeltsin's weak position within Russia, especially after 1993, and his efforts to reach broad domestic compromise, resulted in extremely incoherent policies, which not necessarily reflected Russia's interests. The lack of preparedness and the absence of a clear foreign policy project determined that policies were often reactive, rather than pro-active, to events in the post-Soviet space. Imperial legacy, national interest, and incoherence, all these three elements were always present in Russia's policies towards the near abroad, and this explains to a great extent the complexities of Russia's behaviour in the former Soviet space, as well as why Russia's policies resulted in what may be called 'restrained assertiveness' - an assertive behaviour which rarely went beyond what Russia's leaders considered to be the country's interests.

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