

November 1994

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### Recommended Citation

McIntosh, Daniel (1994) "Russian Intervention and the Commonwealth of Independent States," *Journal of Political Science*: Vol. 22 : No. 1 , Article 6.

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# Russian Intervention and the Commonwealth of Independent States

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It is a rare event when a state ceases to exist while the elements which made it up endure. The fall of the Soviet Union, and the effort to build a new Commonwealth of Independent States out of its component republics and institutions, presents an opportunity to consider the role of local preferences and old state structures in setting rules for collective security and intervention.

The concept of "intervention" has been stretched to cover a large set of dissimilar acts. Depending on context, intervention "appears to be synonymous with imperialism, aggression, colonialism, neocolonialism, war, and other such gross terms that are used to designate the noncooperative interactions of nations."<sup>1</sup> A more limited definition is required. In international law, intervention is "the dictatorial or coercive interference, by outside party or parties, in the sphere of jurisdiction of a sovereign state."<sup>2</sup> Operationally, two characteristics are necessary to distinguish intervention from other acts: it "constitutes a sharp break with the then-existing forms" of behavior and is "directed at changing or preserving the structure of political authority in the target society."<sup>3</sup>

The contest of conventions and authorities associated with intervention are clearly present in modern Eurasia. The collapse of the Soviet Union left in its wake a set of new independent states based on the Union Republics of the USSR, as well as the personnel and resources of the remaining "all-Union" institutions, most notably the Soviet Army. In the scramble to divide the assets of the USSR—a process still under way—the Russian Federation emerged with the greatest share. Other nations with military expertise, in particular Ukraine, have been able to consolidate and gain the allegiance of troops on their soil. Still others, particularly in Central Asia, remain dependent on Russian military assistance to guard their borders. Deep structural contradictions exist with both the CIS and its constituent

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<sup>1</sup>James Rosenau, "Intervention as a Scientific Concept," *Journal of Conflict Resolution* vol. 13 no. 2 (June 1969): 153.

<sup>2</sup>Hedley Bull, "Introduction," in *Intervention in World Politics*, ed. Hedley Bull (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1984): 1.

<sup>3</sup>Rosenau, "Intervention as a Scientific Concept" (1969): 161.

states that have pulled security policy in several directions at once. How these contradictions are resolved will determine whether the CIS will exist as a cover for Russian nationalism, as a genuine alliance of sovereign states, or whether it will exist at all.

For Russia, the fall of the USSR was the end of three centuries of empire. This legacy will not fade overnight. Russia finds itself affected by disorder in the new neighboring states, and rising nationalism at home. Taken together, the Russian Federation has had a strong incentive to find new institutional mechanisms to share the cost of maintaining order in its perceived sphere, while avoiding any significant loss of control.

The Commonwealth of Independent States grew out of that need. In the months following the coup of 1991, as Boris Yeltsin and Mikhail Gorbachev each worked to build a personal power base at the center, Yeltsin presented the CIS to the senior military leadership as a more viable alternative than a Union reborn. In those same months, the crisis at the center gave many of the old federal units the power and the inclination to turn formal sovereignty into true independence. As it developed, the struggle over the peacekeeping and collective security missions of the Commonwealth of Independent States traced the tension between the Russian goal of a relatively inexpensive means to remain the center of control, and the goal of other states (exemplified by Ukraine) to maintain their independence. In that struggle, the CIS has met the expectations of neither side. Neither the focus for Russian control nor the guarantor of local sovereignty, it has become a forum in which the tension between the center and periphery continues to play itself out.

It is a tension that can be seen in the creation and implementation of doctrines for military intervention involving Russia and the Commonwealth. The Western standard of "peacekeeping" as expressed in the practice of the United Nations, is not shared in its entirety by either Russia or the CIS. Rules of engagement have authorized Russian troops to use much more force than one would find in a UN-sponsored peacekeeping operation. Yet the official peacekeeping doctrine of the CIS, which consists of agreements between member states, is composed of broad statements that usually adhere to international standards.

The first public comments on CIS peacekeeping forces were made by Marshal Shaposhnikov, as associate of Yeltsin, in February 1992. The doctrine of the CIS Joint Armed Forces (JAF) Staff, developed as interventions continued, listed that one mission of the CIS armed forces is "the prevention of conflicts and the maintenance of peace inside the Commonwealth," to be achieved by "utilizing collective peacekeeping forces and groups of military observers." Refusing to play favorites, the permanent CIS peacekeeping forces would act to "neutralize the

conflict detonators."<sup>4</sup> Yet from the start, the uncertain status of the CIS and the conflict between national and supranational aspirations have made implementation difficult. Questions about the legal validity of the CIS military oath, for example, prompted some units to delay taking it.<sup>5</sup>

The March 1992 CIS summit in Kiev produced the first formal statement of peacekeeping doctrine, an agreement on "Groups of Military Observers and Collective Peacekeeping Forces in the CIS," signed by 10 of the 11 states then belonging to the Commonwealth.<sup>6</sup> The agreement specified that a decision to use peacekeeping forces required a request made by all the sides in a conflict, and that forces could only be committed on the provision that an agreement between the parties "on the cessation of firing and other hostile actions" be made before the peacekeepers are sent. The agreement also called for forces to be assembled by voluntary agreement, with the exception of the sides involved in the conflict. No such forces have yet been assembled.

In mid-May 1992, a draft agreement on CIS Joint Armed Forces was produced by Shaposhnikov and the CIS JAF Staff to construct a true supranational force in several stages. Mobile units capable of suppressing small border conflicts were to be formed by late 1994. Between 1995 and 1996 there was to be the formation of a true Joint Armed Forces, although with the subordination of the republics' armies to JAF command only in times of war. Russia rejected this arrangement, arguing that it imposed a disproportionate share of the cost of the alliance on Russia while failing to put enough Russians in key positions of authority.<sup>7</sup>

In May, as a means of circumventing some of the more independent members of the CIS, a "Treaty on Collective Security" was adopted by representatives of the Russian Federation, Tadjikistan, Uzbekistan, Krygyzstan, Kazakhstan and Armenia.<sup>8</sup> An ambiguous

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<sup>4</sup>Cited in Greene, "The Peacekeeping Doctrines of the CIS," (1993): 158.

<sup>5</sup>For example see the appeal of a heavy bomber regiment based in Ukraine, "Hear Our Voice: We Want to Delay Taking the CIS Oath," *Narodnaya Armiya* (16 January 1992), tran. JPRS-UMA-92-005 (20 February 1992): 13-14.

<sup>6</sup>Turkmenistan did not sign the agreement. Ukraine signed with the provision that its parliament would decide each case as it arose. Other member states were the Russian Federation, Belarus, Tajikistan, Uzbekistan, Turkmenistan, Armenia, Azerbaijan, Kazakhstan, and Kyrgyzstan.

<sup>7</sup>Arminas Norkus, "Generals' Games: Where Will Russia's Joint Armed Forces Impose Order?" *Lietvos Aidas* (29 June 1993), trans. FBIS-SOV-93-134 (15 July 1993): 2.

<sup>8</sup>"Treaty on CIS Collective Security," *RFE/RL Research Report* vol. 2 no. 25 (18 June 1993): 4-5.

declaration, Ukraine was unwilling to accept it as written. In parallel with the regional agreement, Russia formally established a Ministry of Defense and an independent Russian Army, matching a move by Ukraine at the first of the year.

How were these acts to be reconciled with the call for a CIS supranational force? The Moscow summit of 6 July 1992 again called for joint forces to be assembled as soon as possible, but this was followed by a protocol at Tashkent on "Temporary Procedures for the Formation and Function of Military Peacekeeping Forces," signed by four Central Asian republics, Moldova, Armenia, and the Russian Federation. The protocol again emphasized that the decision to use peacekeeping forces would be made by consensus among the Council of CIS Heads of State and required each signatory to train forces for peacekeeping operations. At the same time it allowed peacekeepers to not only use force in self-defense, but also to separate hostile factions.

At the summit of 25 September 1992 the seven signatory states of the CIS collective defense treaty agreed that, following a decision by individual states to participate in an action, operational command would be the responsibility of the CIS Joint Armed Forces command. Taken together, the JAF staff numbered about 300 officers and 400 persons, including 29 generals, 253 officers, 19 warrant officers, and 85 other employees. This was still in no way comparable to the hundreds of generals and several thousand officers in the former USSR Ministry of Defense, or even to the command element of the Belorussian Military District.<sup>9</sup> Since the problem of command (and training) ran directly into questions of sovereignty, no standing force has been created. When a force was sent to Tadjikistan a little more than a month later, it was organized on an ad hoc basis.<sup>10</sup>

One year after the birth of the CIS Joint Armed Forces Main Command, there were more than 100 documents on the creation of unified forces, but no forces to command, and virtually no prospect that any forces would ever exist.<sup>11</sup> Shaposhnikov, Commander of the CIS Joint Armed Forces, lost that position in June 1993 when his post was abolished in a decision of the CIS Defense Ministers.<sup>12</sup> The implication, as one contemporary headline noted, was that "The CIS Joint Armed Forces Were Not and Will Not Be Created." The CIS was

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<sup>9</sup>Viktor Litovkin, "The Joint Armed Forces Commissariat Keeps No Secrets from Us," *Izvestiya* (9 July 1992), trans. JPRS-UMA-92-029 (5 August 1992): 4.

<sup>10</sup>Greene, "The Peacekeeping Doctrines of the CIS," (1993): 156.

<sup>11</sup>Dmitry Kholodov, "Presents for the High Command," *Moskovskiy Komsomolets* (7 July 1993), trans. FBIS-SOV-93-128 (7 July 1993): 1.

<sup>12</sup>Andrey Naryshkin, "Decision to Reorganize Joint Armed Forces Command," *Moscow ITAR-TASS in English* (24 August 1993), in FBIS-SOV-93-163.

clearly not to become the institution visualized by Russia, and Shaposhnikov moved on to become secretary of the Russian Security Council.<sup>13</sup> On the fifteenth of June the Joint Military Command of the CIS was abolished, effective by the end of 1993.<sup>14</sup>

In addition to the failure to create a true joint command, the doctrines of the CIS have been ignored or circumvented by Russian practice.<sup>15</sup> From the first, the fortunes of the Russian Ministry of Defense rose as those of the CIS Joint staff declined. Nevertheless, there were also problems with creating a unified security policy in Russia. The peacekeeping and intervention doctrines of the Russian Federation were fragmented, held together by only the most general operational and political guidelines.<sup>16</sup> To correct that fragmentation became the new priority, and in his new role as Secretary of the Russian Security Council, Marshal Shaposhnikov called for a "coordinating body. . .that would base its decisions on a true picture of the state of affairs in security, and on a scientific approach to solving problems." This he argued, could be achieved by a scientific research center under the Security Council.<sup>17</sup>

The science of military doctrine often had to take a back seat to more immediate issues. Shaposhnikov's call for clarity had little effect in a country divided by factionalism, ideology, and constitutional uncertainty. Moreover, the Russian military has had to deal with the collapse of empire. Russian troops continue to be withdrawn from the territories of the former USSR and Warsaw Pact. The Russian conscription system is marked by massive noncompliance. Weapons and training have suffered from a lack of support. In response to limited resources, the Russian Federation has moved to consolidate formal and informal ties to maintain influence in key strategic regions.

When possible, the Russian Federation has used the CIS to provide an institutional framework. When it has not been possible to work through the CIS, Russia has found other ways to take action. When allied with other states' forces the Russian Federation has maintained the position of first among equals. Its officers still dominate the forces of the CIS. Its peacekeeping troops have been more professional than

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<sup>13</sup>Arminas Norkus, "Generals' Games: Where Will Russia's Joint Armed Forces Impose Order?" *Lietvos Aidas* (29 June 1993), trans. FBIS-SOV-93-134 (15 June 1993): 2-3.

<sup>14</sup>"CIS Joint Command Abolished," *RFE/RL Research Report* vol. 2 no. 25 (18 June 1993): 8.

<sup>15</sup>Greene, "The Peacekeeping Doctrines of the CIS," (1993): 156.

<sup>16</sup>Greene, "The Peacekeeping Doctrines of the CIS," (1993): 156.

<sup>17</sup>*Moscow Mayak Radio Network* (16 July 1993), trans. FBIS-SOV-93-136 (19 July 1993): 27.

their allies, and the Russian Federation had maintained control over the joint commissions established to oversee peacekeeping operations.<sup>18</sup>

The first two of these "peacekeeping" or "peacemaking" operations to involve Russian and other CIS forces began in mid 1992 in South Ossetia and Eastern Moldova. In each case, the intervention was structured and justified by a trilateral agreement between two warring parties and the Russian Federation.<sup>19</sup> The third intervention, beginning in early December 1992, was in Tadjikistan. In this case, the action was justified in terms of CIS collective security and peacekeeping agreements.<sup>20</sup> Yet in each case the intervention has involved a predominantly Russian force, led by Russian officers. In the field, unable to wait for a final answer on military doctrine, those Russian forces have taken the lead in each region. Rather than a doctrine set from above, a set of general principles has emerged in action and has begun to be translated into formal rules.

The first operational principle in all interventions by Russian troops has been a preparedness to use a high degree of force. In South Ossetia, for example, Russian troops were able to separate local parties, and announced they would open fire thirty minutes after the beginning of hostilities between those factions.<sup>21</sup> In the words of Russia's formal military doctrine, set after the intervention has already taken place and based in part on the lessons drawn, the armed forces' mission is "operational containment of an area of tension and the termination of military operations at the earliest possible stage, in the interests of establishing preconditions for a settlement of conflict by peaceful means and on terms that are in keeping with Russian interests."<sup>22</sup>

To better accomplish this task in the future, the Russian Ministry of Defense announced in September 1992 its reorganization of the military to include new mobile forces. These units, organized on the pattern of corps-brigade-battalion, rather than the larger armies and divisions of the past, are to be ready by 1995. The mobile forces, in turn, are divided into two components: the Immediate Reaction Forces (airborne troops, on constant alert to land in designated areas in less than 24 hours) and the Rapid Deployment Forces (requiring up to 72 hours to come to full strength).<sup>23</sup> A new "peacekeeping" division has

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<sup>18</sup>Greene, "The Peacekeeping Doctrines of the CIS," (1993): 157.

<sup>19</sup>James M. Greene, "The Peacekeeping Doctrines of the CIS," *Jane's Intelligence Review* (April 1993): 156.

<sup>20</sup>Greene, "The Peacekeeping Doctrines of the CIS," (1993): 156.

<sup>21</sup>Greene, "The Peacekeeping Doctrines of the CIS," (1993): 157.

<sup>22</sup>Cite by Roman Zadunaisky, "Military Doctrin Adopted," *Rossiiskiy Vestnik* (5 November 1993): 2, translated and reprinted in *The Current Digest of the Post-Soviet Press* vol XLV no. 44 (1993): 12.

<sup>23</sup>Interview with Yevgeniy Podkilzin by Dimitri Kholodov, "Hip Newspaper Congratulates Hip Troops," *Moskovskiy Komsomolets* (31 July

also been designated, with special training to deal with limited conflicts.<sup>24</sup>

The willingness to use force within the CIS has also been in keeping with Russia's calls to authorize greater force for United Nations peacekeepers. It has also been matched by Russian calls for outside funding of its peacekeeping operations. Russia's proposals to the UN have also shown some insensitivity to the political ramification of using Russian troops to police the territories of the former USSR. When approached with a request for UN funding, Secretary-General Boutros-Ghali suggested that Russian peacekeepers work outside of the former USSR and troops from overseas be sent to the states on the periphery, but the idea was rejected by Russia as uneconomic and unrealistic. "Why go to unnecessary expense," one Russian diplomat asked, "when our troops are already present there and are prepared to operate under the UN Flag?"<sup>25</sup>

The second operational principle has been to maintain an appearance of neutrality.<sup>26</sup> In practice this has proven more difficult than expected. States of the former Soviet periphery are wary of Russian promises. In addition, the actions of Russian troops, whether by protecting the enclave of the "Dneister Republic" or the border of Tadjikistan, have immediate ramifications for the local balance of power. Finally, while the constitution of the Russian Federation recognizes the "generally recognized principles of the equality and self-determination of peoples" it also "guarantees its citizens protection beyond its borders."<sup>27</sup> Considering the millions of Russians outside the borders of the Russian Federation, this guarantee can justify a wide range of interventions into the other states of the former USSR, and contribute to tension for its neighbors.<sup>28</sup>

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1993): 1, translated and reprinted in FBIS-SOV-03-146 (2 August 1993): 31; Richard Woff, "Russian Mobile Forces 1993-95" *Janes Intelligence Review* (March 1993): 118.

<sup>24</sup>John W. R. Lepingwell, "Restructuring the Russian Military," *RFE/RL Research Report* vol. 2 no. 25 (18 June 1993): 20.

<sup>25</sup>Maksim Yusin, "Who Will Finance Peacekeeping Operations in the CIS?" *Izvestiya* (29 October 1993): 3, translated and reprinted in *The Current Digest of the Post-Soviet Press* vol. XLV no. 43 (1993): 25.

<sup>26</sup>Greene, "The Peacekeeping Doctrines of the CIS," (1993): 157.

<sup>27</sup>Constitution of the Russian Federation, *Izvestia* (10 November 1993), reprinted in *The Current Digest of the Post-Soviet Press* vol XLV no. 45 (1993): 4, 7. The noninterference pledge is also found in "Basic Provisions of the Russian Federation's Military Doctrine," *Izvestia*, excerpted and translated in *The Current Digest of the Post-Soviet Press* vol. XLV no. 46 (1993): 11.

<sup>28</sup>See comments by Lt. General Ivashov on Russia's responsibility to lead and to protect Russians abroad in Vyacheslav Kocherov, "We Are



Decisions to intervene have been justified in terms of the Russian national interest. This is usually defined to include protection for significant Russian minorities found outside of the Russian Federation, but even here there can be disagreements about what constitutes a significant minority or a significant threat, and in a time of uncertainty there is an appeal to definitions that neglect the interests of others. The director of the CIS Center of the Russian Academy of Sciences, for example, wrote in mid-1992 that "[w]ithin the framework of the CIS, Russia is *de jure* and *de facto* called upon to play a special role in the entire geopolitical space of the USSR." In particular, "Russia should say openly that it is opposed to the formation of any closed military-political alliances whatsoever by the former Union republics, either with one another or with third countries that have an anti-Russian orientation. And that it will regard any steps in this direction as unfriendly."<sup>29</sup> At the same time, the chairman of the Supreme Soviet's Joint Committee on International Affairs and Foreign Economic Relations recommended

"As the internationally recognized legal successor to the USSR, the Russian Federation should base its foreign policy on a doctrine declaring the entire geopolitical space of the former Union to be the sphere of its vital interests (like the US's Monroe Doctrine in Latin America) and should strive to achieve from the world community recognition of its role as political and military guarantor of stability in the entire former space of the USSR. It should strive to achieve support from the Group of Seven countries for these functions of Russia's up to and including foreign-currency subsidies for quick reaction forces (Russian "blue helmets")."<sup>30</sup>

When formalized, Russian military doctrine added this new peacekeeping mission to the tasks of deterring and repulsing

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Strong When We Are Together," *Rossiyskaya Gazeta* (21 August 1993), trans. FBIS-SOV-93-162 (24 August 1993): 4.

<sup>29</sup>Professor Andranik Migranyan, "Real and Illusory Guidelines in Foreign Policy," *Rossiyskaya Gazeta* (4 August 1992): 7, translated and reprinted in *The Current Digest of the Post-Soviet Press* vol. XLIV no. 32 (9 September 1992): 1.

<sup>30</sup>From a document "Recommendations," cited by Konstantin Eggert, *Izvestia* (7 August 1992): 6, translated and reprinted in *The Current Digest of the Post-Soviet Press* (9 September 1992): 5.

aggression.<sup>31</sup> In doctrine and in practice, Russian forces have been committed to defuse or contain ethnic conflicts with a regional dimension, always with an eye to preserving the rights of Russians and the Russian Federation. The Russian draft military doctrine also includes as a "special mission" the protection of the "rights and interests of Russian citizens abroad, connected with it ethnically and culturally." In Moldova, for example, this had meant support by the 14th Army for the Russian minority. Deployment was authorized by the Supreme Soviet, in part, to shield the gains made by that minority from Moldovan counterattacks.<sup>32</sup> On the other hand in its early stages Russia refused to intervene in Nagorno-Karabakh, despite the fact Armenia invoked the CIS collective security treaty and without a meeting of CIS leaders to discuss the option. There weren't enough Russian lives at risk.

In Tadjikistan, the large Uzbek population threatened to draw Uzbekistan into an ongoing civil war. Beginning in March 1992, in excess of 20,000 had died in Tadjikistan in the first year of that war, and nearly a million fled their homes. To prevent greater losses—and to contribute to Russian interests—CIS troops from the 201st Motor Rifle Division, based in Dushanbe, intervened. But they found intervention more difficult than expected. The 201st declared that it was neutral, but came to be seen as acting on behalf of the local government. Locally-born conscripts deserted, and armored vehicles were stolen from bases. The officers, at that time 90 percent Russian, found themselves giving their primary attention to protecting their families, the Russian-speaking population, and the remaining assets of the division. CIS peacekeeping forces could not be arranged, due to vetoes of the plan by the parliaments of Kazakhstan and Kyrgyzstan. Yet the presidents of those new states agreed to reinforce the border guards, while the Russian Ministry of Defense moved to reinforce the 201st MRD with new troops from Russia. In the long run, The Defense Ministry has announced the division will be the first in the Russian Army to be manned entirely by troops on contract.<sup>33</sup>

Third, Russia has used the opportunity to deploy peacekeepers to apply pressure and to reinforce Russian forces near former Soviet borders. The best example of this is the intervention in Moldova. There, a Russian army is based on Moldovan territory without a basis in international law, backing an insurgency by local Russian communists that holds power on the east bank of the river Dniester.

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<sup>31</sup>Viktor Lovkin, commentary, *Izvestia* (4 November 1993), translated and reprinted in *The Current Digest of the Post-Soviet Press* vol. XLV no. 44 (1993): 11.

<sup>32</sup>Greene, "The Peacekeeping Doctrines of the CIS," (1993): 157.

<sup>33</sup>Michael Orr, "The Civil War in Tadjikistan," *Jane's Intelligence Review* (April 1993): 181-184.

The Fourteenth Army was already based in Moldova before the collapse of the USSR, and had a history of opposing the independence and army of the new Moldova. Today it is slowly being absorbed into—and taking over—the Republican Guard of the "Dniester Republic."<sup>34</sup> Meanwhile, the Dniester Republic has taken over the resupply of the Fourteenth Army, with the assistance of subsidies to the insurgents from Russia.<sup>35</sup> The role of the CIS in the intervention is compounded by the presence of a "peacemaking contingent" under the auspices of the Commonwealth, deployed in Moldova in August 1992 at the "request" of a Moldovan government looking to disengage from combat with the Fourteenth Army.<sup>36</sup> In practice it has served to do little more than observe and justify the actions of the Fourteenth Army.

Deployment in Moldova serves to pressure Ukraine on a second front, and raises the issue of transit rights across Ukrainian territory. Ukrainian president Kravchuk has rejected "all attempts to turn back the wheel of history and revive the old imperial center," nor would Ukraine agree "to be subordinated to centralized CIS structures."<sup>37</sup> However the Russian forces are already there. There is no indication they will depart any time soon. By their presence, Russia maintains a tacit threat not only to Moldova but to Ukraine. Paradoxically, Russian military doctrine lists among the factors that would indicate "an immediate military danger to the Russian Federation," the "introduction of foreign troops to the territory or states contiguous to the Russian Federation," unless this is associated with the UN Security Council or a regional body that has the consent of Russia.<sup>38</sup> There is no recognition that Russia's neighbors might be justified in having a similar concern.

The interventions already under way show that there are grounds for concern. In Tadjikistan, Russian troops hold to a formal policy of neutrality that defends the government in power. In Ossetia, Russian troops have shown a willingness to use a high degree of force in order to clamp a lid on the ethnic tensions of a region dear to Russia's interests. In Moldova, the most blatant violation of international law and CIS declarations, Russian troops are growing more and more indistinguishable from the official army of the "Dniester Republic."

What is at issue are the rules which will structure relation between the Eurasian states. Depending on the rules that emerge at this

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<sup>34</sup>Vladimir Socor, "Russia's Army in Moldova: There to Stay?" *RFE/RL Research Report* vol. 2 no. 25 (18 June 1993): 42-43, 45.

<sup>35</sup>Socor, "Russia's Army in Moldova: There to Stay?" (1993): 45.

<sup>36</sup>Socor, "Russia's Army in Moldova: There to Stay?" (1993): 43, 45.

<sup>37</sup>Cited by Roam Solchanyk, "Ukraine and the CIS: A Troubled Relationship," *RFE/RL Research Report* vol. 2 no. 7 (February 1993): 10.

<sup>38</sup>"Basic Provisions of the Russian Federation's Military Doctrine," *Izvestia*, excerpts translated and reprinted in *The Current Digest of the Post-Soviet Press* vol XLV no. 46 (1993): 12.

formative period, the CIS has the potential to be an institution for international law and local rights, or a cover for the domination of the weak by the strong. The way in which the Commonwealth of Independent States, and Russia's role in the CIS, has been perceived in the world community has been a factor which may influence the direction the CIS will take. The United Nations, by calling for a Russian involvement in peacekeeping that more closely adheres to UN guidelines, sets a higher standard for future action.

The standard set by the United States has been less clear. The US and the Russian Federation have agreed to undertake joint peacekeeping exercises, with the 27th Motor Rifle division of the Volga Military District and the US Third Infantry Division designated to participate.<sup>39</sup> Care must be taken if the US is to avoid the implication that it accepts special rights for Russia in Eurasia, based solely on the legacy of the Russian empire and the USSR.

In response to limited resources, the Russian Federation has moved to consolidate formal and informal ties to maintain influence in key strategic regions. Operations in Moldova and Tadjikistan suggest one goal may be to create new "Kaliningrads" on or near the former borders of the USSR. At the end of 1993 Russia warned of "something other than persuasion" if offensives in Nagorno-Karabakh and Azerbaijan were not ended.<sup>40</sup> The issues raised in the interventions of the post-Soviet era refuse to disappear, and the contradictions of the CIS have yet to be fully resolved. Russia cannot help but have a special role in the region: geography, economic interdependence and the balance of forces make it necessary. But the suggestion that Russia has rights beyond those due to any other state under international law must be resisted if the CIS will ever be a true peacekeeping institution.

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<sup>39</sup>Barbara Starr, "Russia, USA to Train for Peacekeeping," *Jane's Defense Weekly* (19 June 1993): 1.

<sup>40</sup>Paul Beaver, "Flash Points," *Jane's Defense Weekly* (11 December 1993): 17.