CHAPTER - III
RUSSIAN FOREIGN POLICY TOWARDS COMMONWEALTH OF INDEPENDENT STATES
1. INTRODUCTION

The sudden collapse of the Soviet Union conceals one of the most important turning points in the history of the world politics. The geo-strategic and political landscape of Europe and the rest of the world have been changed. The stability inherent in the old bipolar system has been replaced by a unipolar system in which the USA remains as the only sole super power in international politics. It is in this perilous context, made even worse by a crippling economic crisis, that Russia is slowly attempting to rebuild itself from the rubble left by the Soviet era. The transformation of the former USSR’s border regions into independent states also leaves Russia without a geographic security buffer. Decision making in the foreign and security policy area was also unstructured and frequently incoherent, as various agencies of the state often pursued their institutional and even personal interests as distinct from Russian state interests in foreign as well as in domestic policy. In short, the Russian Federation (RF) was caught between conflicting pressures and memories: trying to construct a viable post-Communist society and government while also attempting to sort out its relations with the outside world.

But the emergence of ethnic conflicts in the newly independent states of former Soviet republics, and the fear of Islamic fundamentalism remained a major concern to Moscow. However, in Russia’s priority list of new foreign policy initiatives, the former Soviet republics were given low priority. A strong debate took place within and outside Russian Duma over the new foreign policy. This debate was between the ‘Westerners’ or ‘Slavophiles’ on the one hand and the Eurasianists on the other.

It was only after a consideration of the increasing flow of refugees into its borders and also an increasing threat of the ethnic conflicts spreading further in the region that Russia made changes in its policy toward the CIS. Since then, Moscow has attempted to create collective CIS peacekeeping operations as a regional
arrangement under Chapter VIII (Article 52) of the UN Charter (UN 2003: 34). Since early 1992 many Western scholars, diplomats and journalists have come to refer to the Russian foreign policy toward the CIS as a plan of Russian neo-imperialism in the post Cold War period. But the classical definition of imperialism would not call the Russian foreign policy toward the CIS as imperialist policy. Moreover, the present Russian foreign policy has its genesis in the Soviet era when the erstwhile Soviet Union began to develop a separate foreign policy and diplomacy some time before the collapse of the Soviet Union at the end of 1991.

This chapter examines the emergence of a new geo-political environment in the former Soviet republics and will attempt to answer some of these questions: how crucial was the new geo-political situation to the formulation of the new Russian foreign policy? How much was the threat to its national security from the post Soviet ethnic conflicts in neighbouring states (Central Asia, Southern Caucasus and Moldova) and increasing influence from other regional powers along with the expansion of NATO responsible for the development of Russia’s new foreign policy towards the CIS? What are the major characteristics of Russian foreign policy and how crucial are they for peacekeeping?

The chapter further evaluates Boris Yeltsin’s foreign policy toward the former Soviet republics and the changing nature of Vladimir Putin’s foreign policy in the 21st century. It goes on to examine Russian diplomatic efforts towards the ethnic conflicts in Southern Caucasus and the civil war in Central Asia.

2. BACKGROUND OF THE RUSSIAN FOREIGN POLICY: Before and after the Soviet Union Break-up

During the last phase of Michael Gorbachev’s regime, Moscow had loosened the authoritarian control over society, facilitated and fueled the airing of national grievances in the republics under his policies of glasnost and demokratizatsiy. As the peoples of the Soviet Union began to assert their respective national characters, they clashed with ethnic minorities within their republics and with Soviet authorities. As early as 1985, reports of clashes between Estonian and Russian students began seeping into the West. By 1987 the Baltic republics all had
developed popular fronts and were calling for the restoration of their independence. Lithuania and Latvia followed with their own declarations of sovereignty in May and July 1989, respectively. By the end of 1988, Georgia had developed its own popular front as well. After all, the rise of nationalist and new political parties became common characteristics in most of the former Soviet republics.

Hence, ethnic violence became a frequent occurrence throughout the Soviet Union – in Uzbekistan's Fergana Valley between Uzbeks and Meskhetian Turks, and in Georgia, when that republic's Abkhazian Autonomous Republic and South Ossetian Autonomous Oblast sought the status of separate Soviet republics. Most of these former Soviet republics got their independence by early 1991. However, the ethnic conflicts and civil war remained a common phenomenon in these republics due to weak political power at the centre and lack of potential armies to control it. Since, the Soviet Union collapsed the existing political vacuum in Central Asia and Caucasus attracted other regional powers to intervene into the region (Allison 2001; Nuriyev 2001: 6-7). Further, the strategic and geo-economic significance of the region remains unchanged in the post Cold War environment. This new environment of former Soviet republics, directly or indirectly, had posed a threat to Russian national interests as well as to its security (Ibid: 452). This development compelled Russia to develop a new foreign policy which would regard the former Soviet republics as separate sovereign independent states.

It was in this background that the Russian government and its policy makers were looking for a new direction in its foreign policy and its priorities areas. Since the late 1980's, Russia started investing its priorities towards Central and Western Europe, the Far East, the Mediterranean and Black Sea regions, and the United States. To that list of priorities Russia needed to include the newly independent countries, which became the subject of constant debate among the Russian leaders and its policy makers in early 1990's.
3. RUSSIA'S FOREIGN POLICY: Soul Searching

The demise of the Soviet Union in December 1991 and the establishment of three Slav states – Russia, Ukraine, and Belarus highlighted the prevalent mood among the nations of the Soviet Union: all wanted to pursue an independent mode of existence (Webber 1993: 245-47), or, at best, to be in a union with those who were close historically and ethnically. The divergence of opinion over the formation of the new union was a common feature among the newly independent countries. Hence, leaders of the Newly Independence States (NIS) were looking toward other countries with great expectation that they would help them join the "civilized world."

The struggle between various Russian political elites paralysed the political life of the country. At this juncture, Foreign Minister Andrei Kozyrev, from 1974 to 1990, an officer of the International Organisations Directorate of the Soviet Foreign Ministry, came out with a pro-west policy (Saikal and William Maley (eds.) 1995: 104). The dominance of pro-western groups was clear from the Russian Foreign Ministry statement which was repeatedly made in early 1992 that Russia wanted to enter the club of the most dynamically developing democratic countries (Malcolm 1994: 29). Olga Alexandrova called this situation a stage of neurotic search for self identity (Alexandrova 1993: 364). Meanwhile, the Baltic States were re-establishing their North European identity, and Central Asians were experiencing the second wave of Islamisation balanced, to a degree, by re-invention of their Turkic or Iranian roots. It seemed, the centrifugal forces that were the immediate cause for the Soviet Union's break-up would endure and nothing would ever bring the fifteen nations together.

3.1. Debate between the “Westerners’ and ‘Eurasians’"

Around this time, intense public debates took place over whether Russia should orient itself toward the West or the East. This development clearly shows the lack of clarity in many aspects of its foreign policy. This emerging struggle in post Soviet Russian policy-making has been described by Alexie Arbatov (Arbatov 1993, 18 (2)) as the debate between the moderate liberals and moderate
conservatives. But this debate presented what came to be known in the West as "Eurasian" and "Atlanticist" or "Westerners" approaches to Russian foreign policy.

3.1.1. Eurasian School of thought

The term ‘Eurasians’ was first used in March 1992 by Yeltsin’s foreign policy advisor Sergei Stankevich who led a school of thought, which argued that all the newly independent states belonged to Russia’s sphere of influence. Moreover, Yeltsin’s claims of a special role for Russia as the peacekeeper in the borderlands indicate the ascendancy of this point of view. Leaders like the St. Petersburg Mayor Anatoliy Sobchak, secretary of the Constitutional Commission, Oleg Rumyantsev, head of the Parliamentary Committee on International Affairs and Foreign Economic Policy, Yevgenily Ambartsumov, and even Kozyrev’s own adviser and media liaison, Galina Sidorova, were associated with this view (Dawisha and Bruce Parrott 1994: 200-201). The Speaker of Parliament Ruslan Khasbulatov and Vice – President Alekandr Rutskoy held views similar to that of Sergey Stankevich and they strongly argued that the protection of the interests of ethnic Russians in the former republics of the Soviet Union should be the central task of Russian foreign policy.

In addition, this school of thought emphasised the need for Russian to maintain a strong relationship with Asia. They wanted to retain its big power status along with a special responsibility toward CIS (Alexandrova 1993: 365-367). The Eurasians gave an emphasis on the geo-strategic significance of the former Soviet republics. They did not subscribe to the east-west antagonism which existed during the Cold War as an ideological confrontation.

3.1.2. The Westerners School of thought

The ‘Westerners’ school of thought on the other hand, advocates that Russia should establish a society based on democracy and market economy. They call for an uncompromising Europeanisation of Russia, which they regard as the precondition for the ability to overcome social, political and economic backwardness. The Westerners further view the West as Russia’s natural ally both
with regard to internal political and economic transformation as well as to structuring of a 'new international order' (Ibid.: 364).

The debate continued along the lines started by the Slavophiles,¹ and the Westerners in the early 19th century about the choices Russia had in its internal development. The Atlanticists or Westerners never defined Russia as an exclusively European country. One common underlying fact in both schools of thought was their desire to obtain a big power status for Russia in international politics.

In short, the Atlanticists vs. Eurasians debate was about Russia's future. Both wanted their country to become an economically advanced democracy based on the rule of law. Both realized that victory or failure in achieving this goal would be measured, first, by success in domestic reforms and, second, by Russia's ability to build her relations with the newly independent countries on the principles of international law and respect for their independence. The Atlanticists were especially emphatic in their rejection of the idea that Russia could develop democracy at home while using strong-arm tactics with its neighbours. Finally, Kozyrev came out with his 'Foreign policy guideline towards the end of 1992- "Draft of Foreign Policy Guideline," (The Current Digest of Post-Soviet Press 1992: 14-15) which was reflected in the "Concept of the Foreign Policy of the Russian Federation." Addressing the November 1992 joint meeting of the Foreign Ministry Collegiums and the Council for Foreign and Defence Policy, Andrei Kozyrev shifted the emphasis of the Russian policy goals in the CIS to the following tasks:

1. preservation of Russian military presence;
2. joint defence of CIS borders;
3. formation of common economic space;
4. protection of the rights of Russians and Russian-speakers in the newly independent states.

¹ The Slavophiles have stressed the preservation of Russian values from foreign adulteration. (Nicholas V. Riasanovsky 1995).
The Concept did not differentiate Russian policy in the CIS by country nor mentioned any specific goals or special interests Russia had in Central Asia. Those were outlined by policy-makers and analysts in the media and included, above all, stopping an increasing flow of refugees from the region, and combating drugs and illegal arms trafficking (Roy 2001: 453). In addition to that, the Concept did reflect Kremlin's particular alarm with the increasingly important role of Islam in the political life of Central Asia (Ibid). Moscow feared that "Islamisation" was inspired from abroad by countries that sought to replace Russian influence in the region with that of their own. Foiling such plans and preserving Russia's leading position in the region, thus, became another goal of Russian policy in Central Asia. These concerns influenced the formulation of the 'near abroad' policy and its evolution.

Meanwhile, in the West many of the leading mass media and scholars described the Russian policy toward the ‘near abroad’ as a neo-imperialist policy. For instance, the noted Sovietologists, Zbigniev Brzezinski once reported to Newsweek magazine the imperial intentions of Russia toward the CIS (Brzezinski 1994: 78). These arguments point as evidence to the continuing or restored presence of former Soviet forces, now under Russian jurisdiction, on the territories of former Soviet republics, and to the involvement of some of these forces in local conflicts. In support of their argument, they further point to Russian leaders’ calls for greater integration of the ‘near abroad’ under the rubric of the CIS.

However, it would be very doubtful to presume this thesis as correct. There are various factors which made Russia get involved in CIS conflicts and retain its military presence. For instance, 25 million of ethnic Russians reside in many of the former Soviet republics since the Soviet era (Webber 1993; Bakshi 1999a: 1579). Thus, to protect these ethnic Russians from the emerging crisis is one of the important factors behind their involvement. Further, Russia continued to provide security to many of the CIS states on their request. These factors were the main reasons behind the above debate within the Russian Duma in early 1990s. The Russian government was also well aware of the western criticism to its policy toward CIS. For instance, in April 1994, a joint statement issued by the Russian Foreign and Defence Ministries read:
"...Of late, statements by certain political leaders in foreign countries, items in the foreign mass media, and debates at international forums have sometimes voiced the idea of 'ambiguity' of Russia's peacekeeping mission on the territory of a member of CIS countries. Talk of Russia's 'neo-imperial' ambitions is becoming increasingly current."


The break up of the former USSR was followed by the creation of many newly independent states. Most of these states were governed by the communist dominated political elites. The increasing political fragility in Central Asian states and the Transcaucasus was a common feature which not only destroyed the economy but also caused a high casualty among the massive populations. Under these circumstances, Boris Yeltsin followed a western oriented foreign policy under Kozyrev’s 1992 foreign policy guidelines. Toward the CIS, Yeltsin followed a policy of co-operation and co-ordination both in terms of military and economy. Hence, in reality it seemed that Russia had neglected the former Soviet republics despite his diplomatic efforts to continue the presence the Russian army in the region as well as to protect the ethnic Russians.

The relocation of tactical and strategic nuclear weaponry, which were installed in various parts of the former Soviet republics, to Russia was also one of the major concerns in its foreign policy priority in 1992. Kazakhstan continued to refrain from giving an unambiguous commitment to remove strategic nuclear weapons on its territory, while Ukraine raised a series of conditions relating to financial compensation and security guarantees which imperilled the prospects of an orderly transfer (Webber 1993: 255-256). But Russia successfully negotiated with Belarus for the transfer of strategic weapons to Russia. In early 1993, Russia’s stance on the disarmament was further strained by the refusal to sign the Nuclear
Non-Proliferation Treaty (NPT) both by Kazakhstan and Ukraine. Moreover, Ukraine had still to complete the process of START 1 ratification.2

Another main priority of its foreign policy toward CIS was the protection of the numbers of some 25 million ethnic Russian populations residing in the newly independent states (Ibid: 256). Yeltsin and Kozyrev initially ruled out the use of military forces for the safeguard of the ethnic Russians. For instance, Russia’s initial indifference to the pro-Russian 14th Army in the Transdniestria region of Moldova. But it was solved subsequently by cooperating with Moldova, Ukraine and Romania (Ibid: 259). However, domestic politics placed increasing pressure on this pro-Western policy. Fighting took place within the Duma between the legislative and executive wings. There were massive public debates too over the western oriented foreign policy. In this period, conflict and confusion exacerbated or triggered foreign policy problems with Ukraine to a breaking point particularly with the dispute over the ownership of Crimea and the famous Black sea port of Odessa, which is in fact, also the headquarters of the once prestigious and mighty Soviet Black Sea fleet. Ukraine claimed the naval fleet in the Black Sea and contended that the port of Odessa was in Crimea (Iman and N.V. Romanovsky 2002: 175). In May 1997, the two governments finally agreed that Ukraine would lease to Russia Sevastopol naval base for 20 years and Russia was to provide for compensation of ships and equipments of the Black Sea Fleet, received from Ukraine. In the same year, an agreement was arrived at on the Crimea issue too. Russia finally agreed that Crimea should continue to be part of Ukraine, with a marked degree of autonomy.

Since mid-1993, Russian policies took a sharp turn toward the CIS as a fundamental Russian priority. In order ensure its national security, it became

2 Russia itself had entered into the NPT by virtue of its adherence to treaty obligations of the former Soviet Union while in November, 1992, the Russian parliament ratified START 1. Under the Lisbon protocol signed with the USA in May, 1992, the former Soviet strategic nuclear powers became signatories to START 1 and agreed to make such arrangements among themselves as are required to implement the treaty's limits and restrictions. START 1's full implementation would involve removal of all strategic nuclear weapons from Ukraine, Belarus, and Kazakhstan by the end of the century (Joachim Krause 1992: 354).
apparent that priority should be accorded to the protection of the multi-ethnic character of the society with special emphasis on stability in the southern borders as well as the protection of the rights of Russians abroad. The 1993 foreign-policy concept called for strengthening a "unified military strategic space" in the CIS and protecting Russia's major interests there. The development of this new concept was not only the result of the increasing pressure from the various nationalists but also from the realisation of the strategic and geo-political significance of the region in the post Cold War environment. Russia had warned that the presence of any third states military-political in the CIS, or actions among the CIS states such as creation of an economic or religious bloc of Central Asian states, caused a threat to Russia's (Kozyrev 1993: 1).

The primacy of relations with the CIS was strengthened after the December 1993 Russian legislative elections, in which nationalist factions expanded their power base. So, Russian foreign policy began to harden and Russia’s relations with the outside world became more strained. However, this change in Russian policy was not as far reaching or as threatening as has been suggested. In the same year, President Yeltsin appealed to the international community to recognise Russia with the special powers as the guarantor of peace and stability on the territory of the former USSR (Zagerski 1994: 267). Apart from this, efforts were made by Russian diplomacy to legitimate Russia’s peacekeeping operation activities in the former Soviet republics through the UN and other regional organisations and to provide Moscow with additional resources to finance its military operations in the regions. As a result, during the CIS meet in Moscow in April 1994 (Iman 2001: 15), the Russian government successfully came into an agreement on enlargement of the CIS economic union. And by the end of 1993 and early 1994, Moscow reversed its earlier position and came out decisively against NATO’s enlargement (Marantz 1997: 347). It opposed any alliance policy toward Serbia and criticized American actions toward Iraq and Libya.

4.1. Yevgeni Primakov: New Turn

By the second half of the 1994, the problem of Chechnya’s separatist movement further caused turmoil in the political life of the country. Inside and outside the
Duma, Kozyrev's total orientation towards the West was strongly criticised. Following massive dissatisfaction, President Yeltsin dropped Kozyrev as Foreign Minister and replaced him with Yevgeni Primakov, a leading Soviet expert on Islam and the Middle East and a Kremlin veteran, in January 1996 (Selezneva 2003: 11-27). Before becoming the Foreign Minister, Primakov headed Russian Foreign Intelligence Service. In that capacity, he became actively involved in CIS affairs.

Since Primakov came to power, a significant shift took place in Russian diplomacy from a Western oriented foreign policy to Eurasian oriented approach. Hence, Russia came to adopt a two-pronged foreign policy (balance between East and West). In actual practice, however, the Eurasian model could not be completely achieved except for a little more emphasis in the near abroad. Primakov's concept of the near abroad policy was corroborated by Prime Minister Victor Chernomyrdin, whose political clout grew amidst concerns over Yeltsin's durability. Opening a policy conference of Russian ambassadors to CIS states on July 29, 1996, Chernomyrdin termed the Commonwealth a "zone of vital Russian interests ... not only economic but also long-term military-political interests" (Gretsky 2003). Primakov initiated policy changes with regard to Central Asia. In order to counter-balance the western influence in Central Asia, he initiated developing friendly cooperation with other non-western countries, like India, Iran, China and Syria.

He further tried to ensure closer cooperation with Central Asian and other former Soviet republics through creation of multilateral cooperation organisations that could help in the pursuit of Russian interests. For instance, the creation of 'Group of Four' – Russia, Belarus, Kazakhstan and Kyrgyzstan, played a significant role in Russia maintaining closer relations with these countries. This further led to the setting up of a custom union which was signed on 29 March 1996 between above mention four republics (Bakshi 1999a: 1579-82). Tajikistan joined the treaty later in February 1999. Primakov stressed not only the economic, but also the political and military importance of such multilateral cooperation for Russia, and efforts were made for the formation of a confederation among CIS. In addition to this, with his appointment, the CIS headquarters was moved to
Moscow, a step indicative of a more determined intention to go ahead with the doctrine of closer relationship. Also, Primakov procured Yeltsin's decree giving the Foreign Affairs Ministry a coordinating role in the implementation of Russian foreign policy, the near abroad included. In a ministry reshuffle, handling relations with the CIS was transferred to a newly organized CIS directorate which replaced a system under which desks for individual CIS countries were scattered through various directorates.

4.2. Russia’s Policies into Central Asian

The break-up of the Soviet Union caught Central Asians unaware, but it did not cause an identity crisis. Despite more than a century of incorporation into the Russian empire and then the Soviet Union, the Kazakhs, Kyrgyz, Tajiks, Turkmen, and Uzbeks lost neither their Asian nor Islamic identities. Perestroika followed by independence gave a remarkable boost to revival and cultivation of these identities. This development was linked to the restoration of close ties with the Islamic world, where they belonged civilizationally.

Although the maintenance of the unity of the territory of the former USSR became the key task for Russia, it primarily followed a policy of wait and watch till 1992 (Zagerski 1994: 266-270). However, amidst the fear of the possibility of another “great game” between Russia and Britain of the 19th century, the increasing influence of Turkey and Iran in the region became a major concern particularly among the Eurasians. As a result, there was an intense debate between the Pro-westerners and Eurasians both within and outside the Russian Duma in 1992. Besides, the realisation of the strategic significance of Central Asia soon after the increasing presence of the other regional players forced Russia to make a change in its foreign policy towards Central Asia.

Yet another factor behind the change in Russian foreign policy towards Central Asia after 1994 was the emergence of an ultra-nationalistic movement in Russia. These ultra-nationalists wanted Russia to establish a dominant position in the region so that it could assume the role of protecting ethnic Russian as its responsibility. In fact, during the Soviet period many of the Russian industries
relied on Central Asian natural resources. The collapse of the USSR and creation of the several independent states made it difficult for Russian industries to access Central Asian natural resources. Meanwhile, many western countries like the USA and China tried to exploit the natural resources of Central Asia which naturally had an impact on Russia’s geo-strategic economic interests.

It was only after the replacement of Kozyrev by Primakov as a Foreign Minister that Russia became closer to Central Asia in practical terms. Moreover, the aims and objectives of Russian policies towards CIS in general and Central Asia in particular were becoming clearer. It is noteworthy that Primakov’s first visit abroad as foreign minister was to Tajikistan. Unlike the former foreign minister, Primakov preferred the use of the good offices both for negotiations as well as for the use of force for maintaining peace and stability in the region where Russia’s interests were deeply entrenched. Perhaps it was the main reason behind his reiteration that Russian troops would not leave these countries in order to prevent instability and chaos from spilling into Russia. At the same time, his assertion that the interests of the United Tajik Opposition (UTO) should be taken in consideration in the resolution of the Tajik civil war may be interpreted as an act in pursuing his policy of conflict negotiations.

Primakov initiated increasing friendly cooperation with other non-western countries (Bakshi 1999b: 1775-78). Its objective was to win the support of those countries in Russia’s effort to stop the spread of the influence of the USA and its NATO allies in the region. It arose out a larger strategic imperative for Russia to counter-balance an increasing threat of intrusion by the West. Moreover, he established closer cooperation with Central Asian and other former Soviet republics through establishment of multilateral cooperation organisations to ensure and strengthen Russia’s position in the region.

4.2.1. Strategic Concerns in Central Asia

But the geo-strategic significance of Central Asia, previously known as ‘Soviet Middle Asia,’ remains unchanged even after the disintegration of USSR. As a result, many regional players like Iran, Turkey, Pakistan and the great powers like
the USA and China had begun to fill the vacuum created by the collapse of the USSR (Roy 2001; Nuriyev 2001: 6-7). Of special importance was the role of Turkey and Iran, which are connected to the region ethnically and culturally. Moreover, Moscow had formulated no clear cut foreign policy towards Central Asia despite close cultural, historical and political ties. On the other hand, some of the Central Asian countries sought Russia’s help in a smooth transition of their countries into new independent nations. However, the increasing influence from these countries, particularly an increasingly visible presence of Turkey and Iran in the region became a threat to the pluralist society of Russia and its national interests toward the CIS.

In such a scenario, the problem of security in the former Soviet borders of Central Asia and the Caucasus became an important issue particularly after the Taliban had achieved major successes in the Afghan civil war, bringing them closer to the borders of Tajikistan and Uzbekistan. By that time, Tajikistan was already in the midst of its own civil war. Hence, the conflict situation in Transcaucasia, Georgia and Dagestan was no less alarming for Russia (Iman and Romanovsky 2002: 175-176). As a result, with the realisation of the geo-strategic and geo-economic significance of the region in post Soviet environment, Moscow made change in its foreign policy and warned any third country from building up its political and military presence in the CIS. The warning made in the Concept was an early indication that Moscow intended to preserve its influence in the post-Soviet space.

As part of the change in its policy, Russia concluded a treaty of collective security with four other Central Asian states in August 1992, under which forces were deployed to protect the Tajik-Afghan border to keep the Islamic militants at bay. Russia also deployed its 201st Motorised Rifle Division in Tajikistan (Bakshi 1999a: 1582). Besides this collective security agreement, it established bilateral mutual security arrangement with all the central Asian states for ensuring their security against outside threats. Russian troops were later deployed in Kazakhstan’s Baikonour space station, in Kyrgyzstan-China border and in Turkmenistan-Iran border. However, the principal logic behind these arrangements
was the Russian policy to obtain the right for presence of its troops in the region in order to bring about a desired new world order.

4.2.1.1 Economic Concerns

After the collapse of the Soviet Union, Russia came into the grip of an economic crisis, a major factor that led to the adoption of a pro-west policy by Kozyrev in the post Soviet environment (Malcolm 1994: 29). As a result of the crisis, Russia was not in a position to shoulder the burden of aid to the Central Asian states despite their geo-economic relevance. However, the increase in economic ties of the Central Asian states with the outside world because of their abundant oil and gas reserves directly or indirectly caused a threat to Russia's effort of becoming a regional power in the post Cold War international system. It was the time when many of the Central Asian states further concluded multilateral financial treaties with the other regional powers. The fact was that Russia was loosing ground economically in these countries. As a result, there was a sharp decline in overall trade with these countries (see the Table 4) (Klotsvog 1998; Bakshi 1999a: 1585). This decline in trade as well as in financial condition directly affected its military policy. Therefore, Russia entered a Custom Union treaty with two other Central Asian states, viz., Kazakhstan and Kyrgyzstan, in 1996 including Belarus. It was soon followed by a trilateral economic and defence union in July 1994 between Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan and Uzbekistan.

Russia has had both economic and political interests in this part of the Central Asia. Safeguarding Russian economic interests has been one of the most important objectives of Moscow's foreign policy in Central Asia. Kazakhstan is the second largest oil producer after Russia in the former Soviet Union. The control over its energy resources and their means of transportation provides Russia tremendous strategic and economic leverage. Besides, Kazakhstan has been a close ally of Russia in Central Asia. It has been the single most important country for

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3 Russia was not in a position to shoulder aid burden to the Central Asian states. Most of the Central Asian states had begun to establish their economic ties with the outside world. USA and other industrialised countries had started to invest capital and technology in the region as well as Central Asian states also looking towards West-dominated multi-lateral financial institutions like the World Bank, IMF (International Monetary Fund), EBRD (European Bank of Reconstruction and Development) (Bakshi 1999: ).
Russia, both politically and economically. It was the home of significant Soviet defense and industrial facilities including the Baikonour space launch complex and a nuclear weapons testing facility. Since the Soviet period onward, Russian enterprises have depended on cotton imports from Uzbekistan.

Table 4. Fall in over all Foreign Trade of CIS (as %)

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The interdependence in the economic sector between Russia and Central Asian states cannot be exaggerated. The region possesses enormous reserves, making it important for Moscow to pursue its economic interests while simultaneously fulfilling the strategic role of ensuring Russian control in the sphere of oil and gas production and transportation in its near abroad. In addition, Russian government avoids the Soviet Union policy of economic isolation by building new pipelines across its territory. The activities of Russian oil and gas companies in Central Asia are growing in Kazakhstan, where the struggle for control of oil exports was already started.
4.2.2. Toward Tajikistan

The civil war in Tajikistan took an ugly turn soon after the defeat of the opposition forces by the government forces in December 1992. Many opposition forces crossed the border and took shelter in Afghanistan, where they were trained (Orr 1998:153-154). These forces later launched hit and run tactics from across the Tajik-Afghan border (Ibid). As a result of the civil war by mid-1993, in a country of under 6 million, an estimated 50,000 people, mostly civilians, had been killed, some 600,000 had been displaced internally, and an additional 60,000 had crossed the border into northern Afghanistan (Bakshi 1999a: 1585-87). Many others had fled to neighbouring Central Asian republics and to other countries in the Commonwealth of Independent States (CIS).

Tajikistan has occupied a very important geo-strategic location in Central Asia since the early periods and played a significant role in the development of Russian national security. Hence, the civil war in the country starting in the early 1990s was a major concern to Moscow. During the Tsar period, this part of Central Asia was maintained as an external security zone from the influence of the other powerful countries. This significance remained undiminished even during the period of the USSR, except that it was converted into an internal security zone. Hence, Russia's foreign policy toward this country was not only economic oriented but also security oriented. In addition, the protection of ethnic Russians and Russian-speaking people as well as the re-settlement of the massive displacement caused by the civil war formed another objective of the Russian policy toward Tajikistan. The objective behind this was to continue the presence of the Russian army as border guards which directly or indirectly support in its efforts to become a regional power. In November 1993, the Governments of Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, the Russian Federation, Tajikistan and Uzbekistan established the CIS Collective Peacekeeping Forces in Tajikistan ("Tajikistan: the collective peacekeeping forces in Tajikistan," URL: http://www.iasps.org./strategic/socor4.htm). The forces had the following mandate:

(a) to assist in the normalization of the situation on the Tajik-Afghan border with a view to stabilizing the overall situation in Tajikistan and creating conditions conducive to progress in the dialogue between all
interested parties on ways of achieving a political settlement of the conflict.

(b) to assist in the delivery, protection and distribution of emergency and other humanitarian aid, create conditions for the safe return of refugees to their places of permanent residence and guard the infrastructure and other vitally important facilities required for the foregoing purpose.

After Primakov resumed as foreign minister, Russia departed from Kozyrev's way of handling the Tajik issue. The former minister never attended the peace talks nor demonstrated personal awareness of the UTO's proposals at resolving the conflict. Primakov also invited the Opposition for peace talk as he believed that the settlement of Tajik conflict had a potential to provide Russia greater leverage in Tajikistan and helped to maintain Russia's position in Central Asia. His intention to make the peace process a priority got further confirmation after it was reported that he obtained Prime Minister Victor Chernomyrdin's commitment to participate in a "summit" of Emamoli Rahmonov and Saidabdullo Nuri, the UTO's leader, originally slated for November 1996. It took place in late December 1996 in Moscow and Chernomyrdin was, in fact, present at the signing ceremony.

The two documents that were signed by Rahmonov and Nuri constituted a major breakthrough in the peace process. One of them declared a permanent ceasefire for the entire duration of the peace talks. The other established a National Reconciliation Commission (NRC) as a temporary organ which was headed by a UTO representative (Zviagelskaya 1997: 25). The NRC worked together with President Rahmonov in reforming three branches of government to incorporate members of the UTO, (Opposition's military units included), in returning and re-integrating refugees, as well as in bringing the country to free and multi-party parliamentary elections in one to one and a half years.

The breakthrough in the talks became largely possible due to Primakov's active intervention in the peace process, which was necessitated by the
developments in Afghanistan that were unfavourable to the Russians (ouster of President Barhanuddin Rabbani from power by the Taliban and prospects of them reaching the border with Tajikistan and Uzbekistan). In Primakov's absence – he was paying a visit to Tehran-- his right hand, Boris Pastuhov, first deputy Foreign Minister, exerted pressure on the government of Tajikistan to make them more receptive to the proposals of the UTO. The round held in Tehran in January 1997 (Ibid.: 23), in the wake of the December summit failed to finalize the particulars of the Moscow agreement, especially the quotas for representation in the NRC upon which the quotas in the new (coalition) government were contingent. Though the issue was resolved at the subsequent Rahmonov-Nuri meeting in Mashhad in February 1997, where the sides agreed to a 50-50 representation, it in fact reflected the failure to agree on the participation of the Khujandis in the peace process.

At the same time no unanimity was achieved on the issue of which countries would act as guarantors of this and other agreements signed in the course of the peace talks. The government argued that there was no need for additional international force beyond the Russian military stationed in Tajikistan as the CIS peace-keepers, the Russian border guards, and Kazakh, Kyrgyz, and Uzbek battalions deployed in the country within the framework of the CIS agreement on the joint protection of borders were already on the ground to guarantee and oversee implementation of the agreements under the UN supervision. For its part, the UTO pointed to the fact that the Russian troops, especially those which made the CIS peace-keeping force, were stationed in the country without the Opposition's consent and had not kept neutrality. It insisted on international participation in the observer force and suggested to add Iranian and Pakistani contingents, i.e., of two other observer countries at the peace talks, to those of the four CIS countries.

In the final analysis, Russian policy in Tajikistan demonstrates a departure from the initial principles of the near abroad policy: respect for independence of the newly independent states, relations based on international law, not diktat. It was also clear that in the hierarchy of policy priorities, preservation of the Russian military presence tops the list as it has proved to be the most effective instrument in projecting Russian power and ambitions throughout the CIS. In addition, currently, Central Asian countries either guard their borders themselves
(Kazakhstan, Turkmenistan, and Uzbekistan) or had signed bilateral agreements with Russia on the joint protection of their borders (Kyrgyzstan). Only the Tajik borders are completely controlled by the Russian border guards, though Tajikistan hosts two battalions one from Uzbekistan, other from Kazakhstan, and Kyrgyzstan assigned to the protection of the Tajik-Afghan border under the CIS agreement on joint border protection. Further, one of the concerns Russia repeatedly cited to justify its right to patrol the southern borders of the CIS was drug trafficking.

4.2.3. Kazakhstan

Kazakhstan was the only Central Asian state with which Russia had a good and close relationship since the initial period. In May 1992, bilateral treaty on ‘friendship, cooperation and mutual assistance,’ was signed between Kazakhstan and Russia. Kazakhstan became the first post soviet Central Asian Republics who have had concluded a bilateral treaty (of its kind) with Russia (Warikoo 2006: 26). Hence, Russia’s policy towards this part of the Central Asia was to develop a friendly and cooperative relation. The good relations allowed Russia to pursue its policy of blocking the entry of other player into the region. In fact, both countries agreed in May 1992 bilateral treaty for formation of a “united military and strategic zone and jointly use the military bases, test sites and other military infrastructures.” (Itar-Tass 1992). In October 1998, Russia and Kazakhstan concluded treaties which included fight against trans-border terrorism, drug trafficking which were signed by President Boris Yeltsin and Kazakh President Nursultan Nazarbayev (Mohapatra 2002: 11). Moreover, Kazakhstan’s ethnic composition of 38 percent ethnic Russians as against 40 percent Kazakhs was also one of the factors behind the successful relations between the two countries. From the strategic point of view, Russia considered Kazakhstan an important strategic location since the famous Baikonour cosmodrome is located in the latter. Presently, Russia is renting this famous space launching centre at $ 115 million per annum. In the economic sphere too, since 1994, Russia had successfully got a share in Tengiz oil and Karachaganak gas fields of Kazakhstan (Imam 2001: 93). Though, in 1997 the relationship with Kazakhstan got strained soon after adoption of the Kazakhstan President, Nazarbaev’s policy of the ‘Kazakhization’ by promoting Kazakh language and culture (Bakshi 1999a: 1586). The fact was that hundreds of
thousands of Russians started leaving the country and took refuge in Russia (see Table 5).

Table 5. Migration from Kazakhstan to Russia

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<td>Kazakhstan</td>
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<td>49,000</td>
<td>179,000</td>
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4.2.4. Uzbekistan

Uzbekistan had a long history of association with Russia like other Central Asian states. In fact, Uzbekistan was a Russian creation in as much as it became a political and administrative centre of Russian Turkestan. After independence, Uzbekistan under the leadership of the Islam Karimov established stability in the country (Imam 2001: 94). His policies against emergence of the Islamic fundamentalism attracted Russian leaders since the rise of Islamic fundamentalism had its impact in the southern part of Russia where Muslims were dominant. Therefore, the basic policy of Russia was to establish strategic allies with Uzbekistan.

The Kremlin realized that Uzbekistan's desire for regional domination came in the way of Moscow’s post Cold War policy of becoming a regional power. Hence, by 1993 Moscow had started to separate its interests from those of Tashkent. The old system of patron-client relations became defunct. In Tajikistan, Uzbekistan asserts its influence through Khujandis. In contrast, Russia chose the Kulobis to consolidate and legitimize its power. After the November 1994 presidential election, the Kulobis, apparently with Russia's consent, began to gradually drive the Khujandis and Tajikistani Uzbeks out of the central government and local administrations throughout Tajikistan, including the Leninabad province, Khujandis' power base.
However, the Russo-Uzbekistan relationship changed from strategic allies to strategic rivalry by 1995. At the same time, Karimov aggressively pursued rapprochement with the United States as a means of counterbalancing Russia. In June 1996, he accomplished his three-year-old dream and was granted an audience with Bill Clinton at the White House (Gretshky 2003). The Uzbek president hoped that large-scale American investment in the Uzbek economy and development of a substantial network of joint business ventures would in short term provide a much needed economic independence from Moscow.

Russia achieved some success in upsetting Karimov's plans for an effective CAU and a coherent front against her policy in the region. In August 1996, it was admitted to the CAU as an observer state after a prolonged lobbying of two "weaker links" in the union: Kazakhstan and Kyrgyzstan. Those two countries entered into a customs union with Russia which forced Uzbekistan to follow suit, if only out of economic common sense. To give a measure of legitimacy to the Rahmonov's regime, Primakov travelled to Bishkek in July 1996 and persuaded President Akaev to pay an official visit to Dushanbe. Shortly after Primakov's departure Akaev went to Tajikistan, rescued Rahmonov from a de facto ostracism by regional and CIS leaders, orchestrated by the Uzbek leader.

However, despite the presence of some differences in their policy, both countries felt the same threat and heat from the fall of Kabul to the Taliban in 1996. Then, Karimov travelled to Moscow to seek a common policy to contain the Taliban. As a result, Moscow and Tashkent sponsored an alliance between ousted President Rabbani and General Dostam which managed to stop the march of the Taliban. This development highlighted Karimov's centrality to the success of Russian Central Asian policy and the resolution of the Tajik conflict in particular.

4.3. Russia’s Foreign Policy into Transcaucasus: Georgia

Since the Soviet era, Georgia has remained one of the important strategic locations for an exit to the Black Sea. Further, the historical, ethnic, and cultural links between North Ossetia in Russian Federation and South Ossetia in Georgia compelled Russia to rethink its policy since the later region became embroiled in
conflicts. This process of rethinking led to Russian efforts to convince Georgia for the permanent deployment of Russian troops in this Transcaucasus region. Thus, Moscow’s policy toward Georgia was shaped by the dynamic need of Russian national security and national interests and also by their domestic politics. For instance, President Yeltsin declared his support for the territorial integrity of Georgia while the Communist minority within the Russian Duma advocated the use of Abkhazian separatist forces to pressurise the Georgian government to join the CIS and agree to a permanent Russian military presence in Georgia (Kozhokhin 2000).

After 1993, Russia’s policy towards Georgia was aimed at formalising Georgia’s position in the CIS. Russia deployed its peacekeeping troops in the region with an international mandate to secure and maintain its interests in the country. Moscow further concluded a Treaty of Friendship and Cooperation that provided for political, military and economic cooperation between the two in 1994. The outbreak of a full scale war in Chechnya in December 1994 forced Russia to stay away from the Caucasus. But Russia sought to strengthen its relationship with Georgia by establishing a joint air defence system and by agreeing to a joint protection of the Georgian border. In the Abkhazia-Georgia conflict, the Russian government attempted to bring both sides to the negotiating table. In 1994, Russian troops were deployed as part of an international peace-keeping force under U.N. auspices. It may be said that Russia’s foreign policy towards Georgia followed a pattern of alternating between containment and cooperation till late 1990’s.

4.4. Russia and Transdniestria: with Moldova

Initially, Russia’s policy towards the Moldova was friendly despite increasing discrimination against the ethnic Russian population throughout the year 1991 (Naumkin 1997: 52-53; Litvak 1996: 223). Meanwhile, the Russian government largely dominated by Westerners had a fear of the pro-communist Dniestrian republics of Moldova and refrained itself from intervening in Moldovan affairs as it believed that such intervention could affect its anti-centrist and pro-democracy reforms. Perhaps, that explains why Russia chose to stay away from the Moldovan conflict despite the Popular Front (MPF) government’s efforts for
unification with Romania (a process which Russia strongly disapproved of) and discriminatory policies towards ethnic Russians.

However, Russia introduced changes in its policy towards Moldova in 1992. It strongly condemned the efforts at unification of Moldova and Romania and declared the protection of ethnic Russians as one of its policy priority towards Moldova. The realisation of possible threats to its post Cold War efforts at becoming a regional power were one of the main reasons behind the change. When conflicts broke out between Moldova and Transdniestria, Russia sought for a peaceful solution, although it was in favour of the later. For instance, on 21 July 1992, President Yeltsin and Moldovan President Mircea Snegur signed an accord to end the fighting (Waters 2003:147). The accord laid out details for granting special status to Transdniestria and the right to self-determination in the event of a future reunification of Romania and Moldova (Naumkin 1997: 56). The Russian government was also well aware of the possible threat to its efforts of protecting the CIS from the presence of other players in the region under conditions of continued instability and conflicts within CIS. It was, therefore, in the interest of the Russia to stop the Moldovan conflicts as soon as possible.

However, the activities of the 14th Army in support of Transdniestria were accused by the other CIS members as well as by the West as pursuit of a Russian neo-imperialist agenda (Litvak 1996: 221). The fact was that the 14th Army operation in Dniestrian in 1992 was under the direct command of General Alexander Lebed. It was the time when the Russian government faced problems with the re-structuring and re-settlement of its large armies that returned from the former posts e.g. from Eastern Europe. This class of the Russian army was known for their lack of discipline. Moreover, a large portion of its army which were deployed in former Soviet republics worked outside the direct control from Moscow. Since the 14th Army action in Moldova was neither undertaken under a Russian government plan nor was it a part of its military policy, it would be wrong to describe it as a Russian neo-imperialist plan in Moldova. Moreover, President

4 General Alexander Lebed, the commander of the 14th Army, refused the Russian Defense Minister, General Pavel Grachev’s orders. The 14th Army under him promoted its own policy. Moreover, Lebed declared that he “never served the President Yeltsin and not about to serve him easily”; he pledge to serve the Fatherland (Litvak 1996:221).
Yeltsin replaced general Lebed with Valeri Yevnevich in 1995 (Naumkin 1997: 60). It was a clever move by Yeltsin in order to clear the suspicion among the CIS members over Russia’s new foreign policy.

4.5. Critical Assessment of the Yeltsin’s Foreign Policy

The post-Soviet Russian foreign policy (till 1993) was based on the illusion with the West, which was the continuation of the Mikhail Gorbachev’s pro-Western policy, which had been pursued at the end of his regime (Malcolm 1994: 29), with optimism to help in Russian economy recovery and transformation. Since 1993 onward Moscow had abandon its highly conciliatory policies toward the West and refocused its priority to the CIS. Protecting and promoting Russia’s national interests became a central point of its foreign policy toward the CIS. In 1993-1994 Russian foreign policy was hardened. Revising its earlier position, Moscow came out decisively against NATO’s enlargement although Russia, in June 1994 join NATO”’ partnership for peace programme. But in reality it further worsened the geo-political situation for Russia. At same period of time Russian foreign policy started shifting from the pro-West to a balance one (Chenoy 2001: 237-264). The growth of nationalism as well as the realisation of the strategic and geo-political significance of the region in the post Cold War environment were one of the major factor behind sudden in its policy toward the CIS. Russia adopted the policy of co-operation and policy of containment through bilateral and multi-lateral agreements with the Central Asian states as well as with Georgia and Moldova. The main objective of its policy toward the CIS was to strengthen its position in the regions.

5. VLADIMIR PUTIN’S FOREIGN POLICY

Soon after President Vladimir Putin came to power, a new foreign policy was approved on 28 June 2000 (Dr. Smith 2000), which replaces the previous Concept of 1993. This new foreign policy was more or less based on geographical considerations since Russia borders with six geo-political regions: Europe, the Middle East, the Mediterranean, Central Asia, China and the Far East. Indeed, this new foreign policy concept considers the task of ensuring reliable security of the country, preserving and strengthening its sovereignty and territorial integrity as its primary objectives.
Russian approaches to international affairs too changed from Yeltsin’s pro-West policy to Putin’s more Eurocentric approach, which was more Eastern, more economic and more focused on internal priorities (Garodetsky (ed) 2003: 14). After the 11 September 2001 terrorist attacks in New York and Washington, Putin’s foreign policy took a turn towards a more security oriented path with a new priority on its national security rather than on economic interests. Hence, the basic feature of President Putin’s foreign policy was to create a favourable external condition for progressive development of Russia. This means curbing the regions’ tendency towards centrifugalism, so that the Russian Federation can be seen as a single, coherent, political, legal and economic space.

Therefore, strengthening the statehood of the Russian Federation took precedence over any foreign policy objective. Moreover, the Russian Federation possesses the potential for ensuring itself a worthy place in the world. Further strengthening of Russia’s statehood, consolidation of civil society and the rapid transition to stable economic growth are of decisive importance in this respect. In the past decade Russia utilized additional possibilities of international cooperation that are opening up as a result of radical transformations in the country; Russia has advanced significantly along the road of integrating in the system of world economic ties (IMF and World Bank); it has joined a number of influential international organizations and institutions (UN, UNICEF). Through its intensive efforts, Russia has managed to strengthen its positions in a number of principal areas in the world arena.

A distinguishing feature of Putin’s government foreign policy is that it is a balanced one. The strategic environment surrounding Russian Federation which developed after the breakout of civil war and ethnic conflicts was apparently hostile and had a potential of threatening the weak and small armies of the newly independent states. As a result, Putin has important security concerns and interests in the CIS. The spill over of conflicts e.g. refugees from Georgia in North Ossetia and Krasnodar, the impact of the Islamic revival in Central Asia on the Muslim populations of the Volga Basin (Macfarlane 2003: 128) were some elements in the logic behind the Russian policy in the CIS.
5.1. Putin's Foreign Policy towards the CIS

Towards CIS, Putin followed the same foreign policy objectives as that of the Yeltsin government - the integration of the CIS with Russia as the dominant state. Hence, all the CIS member states were considered as strategic partners. The basic element of his foreign policy towards CIS was the establishment of cooperation both in the security and economic sphere. Efforts were made under this new foreign policy concept to interact with the CIS member states and also through associations such as the Customs Union (consisting of Russia, Belarus, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan and Tajikistan) and the Collective Security Treaty. In fact, trade between the CIS and Russia had fallen during the Yeltsin period. Hence, Putin gave emphasis on its improvement through the creation of a free trade zone and the implementation of programmes of joint rational use of natural resources.

In the meanwhile, the terrorist attacks of 11 September 2001 proved to the international community the futility of fighting international terrorism singularly by individual states as it could affect entire regions and the international community as a whole. According to Ludmilla Selezneva, it thus became necessary to think of collective mechanisms of combating terrorism (by revising domestic and foreign policy priorities in all countries) as an important part of foreign policy (Selezneva 2003: 23). Hence, Russia’s new foreign policy concept describes the anti-terrorist struggle as the most important task of its foreign policy. Accordingly, the Russian government introduced certain measures in order to ensure conformity of multilateral and bilateral cooperation with the member states of the CIS to national security tasks of the country.

In fact, even before 9/11, an anti-terrorist programme was agreed upon at the CIS Council of Heads of State summit in Moscow in January 2000. Putin also attended a special meeting of CIS Interior ministers in March 2000, where he made a suggestion for creation of a joint CIS terrorist data bank. He warned that international terrorism saw the former USSR as a key target and urged the creation of a joint anti-terrorist centre. This was done at the CIS Council of Heads of State summit in June 2000 (http://www.ppc.pims.org/Projects/csrc). The Russian initiative for the creation of the anti-terrorist cell and its participation in ‘global
war against terrorism' was perhaps taken with the aim of paving the ground to justify Russia's use of force in Chechnya in 1999 (Fawn 2003: 7). The rapid increase in violence and acts of terror in Chechnya had a potential to destroy the multi-cultural society of Russia particularly the Muslim dominated southern Russia. The presence of foreign Mujahideens, particularly from Afghanistan Pakistan, Libya and Algeria (Kartha 1995: 1560), in support of the Chechnya's separatist revolutionaries was a major concern to Russian leaders. Therefore, the Russian leadership has come to see the term international terrorism as synonymous with Islamic extremism, and has a perception of an international Islamic terrorism threatening the southern regions of the former Soviet Union and the Russian Federation itself.

President Vladimir Putin places Russia's relation with the CIS on a very important position. Due to the geo-strategic location of these former Soviet republics, Putin's policy was to establish a friendly neighbourhood with these states, as they have a potential to be a counter-balance against the NATO and thus help in Russia rebuilding itself as major power. Hence, cooperation with the CIS became the absolute priority. As Putin said, the first 20 years of the 21st century "will be a key decade to establishing a modern CIS, will be an influential regional organisation and promoting the prosperity and cooperation in the post-Soviet land focusing on countering terrorism and criminality" (Guiling 2000: 1258; and see Macfarlane 2003: 125 – 130). Besides this, Putin had reasserted some extensive diplomatic efforts in order to consolidate Russian security cooperation with other CIS member states.

In September 1999, Putin along with some of the CIS ministers came to an agreement for the establishing of an anti-criminal coalition during an emergency session of CIS Council of Defence Ministers in Moscow in order to handle extremists everywhere from the Caucasus to the Pamir (Golotiuk 1999: 3). At the CIS summit on 25 January 2000, it was further decided to work out an inter-state programme of joint measures to combat extremism, terrorism and organized crime. Thus, Russia became successful in revitalizing military security cooperation with Central Asian states, although many CIS states refused to cooperate at the very beginning.
5.2. The CIS Collective Security Treaty (CST)

Again, both the Russian Federation and the erstwhile Soviet republics acknowledged the possibility of active NATO role in Caucasus and Central Asia. In fact, Russian leaders already showed interests in making the CIS states as an external security buffer zone against NATO’s enlargement process. The Collective Security Treaty (CST) was signed in May 1992 in Tashkent by Armenia, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Russia, Tajikistan and Uzbekistan. Georgia, Azerbaijan, Belarus joined it later. The treaty was extended for another five years in April 1999. After the withdrawal by Georgia, Azerbaijan and Uzbekistan in 1999, the CST today consists of Armenia, Belarus, Kazakhstan, Russia, Kyrgyzstan and Tajikistan. The decision of the Georgia, Azerbaijan and Uzbekistan gave a hard blow to Russian foreign policy objectives.

In May 2000, a CST heads of state meet was held in Minsk to discuss its future. No changes in the content of the treaty were planned, but at the Minsk meeting the signatories approved a memorandum on raising the effectiveness of the CST and adapting it to new geopolitical realities (Nezavisimaya Gazeta 2000: 10). The rise of Islamic terrorist threat in the region was coined as "new geopolitical realities". Like his predecessor, Putin’s policy in early 2000’s was also directed at the creation of its southern neighbours as a buffer zone with respect to Islamic radicalism. So, to defend these bordering states of CIS from the external forces as well as from the penetration of the radical fundamentalists from the Middle East served not only the integrity of these southern neighbours but also the Russian national interests.

Therefore, the CST is one of the Russia’s diplomatic moves to deal with the threat that arose from the spill-over of the conflict in Afghanistan. It has ensured that the conflict in Tajikistan remains localised. The Southern Shield military exercises in 1999 and 2000 were largely aimed at countering an incursion into Central Asia by Taliban-like forces. The growth of such a threat led to the strengthening of security cooperation in 1999-2000 between the CST members and Uzbekistan. The CST signatories further intend to improve the efficiency of collective decision making and the CIS air defence system.
6. PUTIN'S FOREIGN POLICY IN CENTRAL ASIA

The destabilising forces of religious fundamentalism and terrorism in the former Soviet Union need to be fought in close security cooperation within the CIS members states. Both Russia and Central Asian states had felt the destabilising effects of the growth of fundamentalism and terrorism e.g. in North Caucasus in Russia, in Tajikistan and the August 1999 Islamic terrorists attacked in Kyrgyzstan (Jonson 2003: 132). All these incidents collectively contributed to make the anti-terrorism struggle a central source in Putin's foreign policy in Central Asian states. This provided the Russian government an opportunity to strengthen its military and security cooperation with Central Asian states. As a result, Putin undertook several extensive diplomatic efforts to reassert Russian dominance in Central Asia and expand its military and security cooperation. His foreign policy in Central Asia was a two pronged strategy – economic cooperation and security cooperation

6.1. Security Cooperation

By 2000, the Russian policy of military and security cooperation achieved some progress. Russian Air Force Commander Anatoly Kornukov visited Uzbekistan, Tajikistan and Kyrgyzstan and signed agreements on cooperation in air defence. He also signed a similar agreement in Kazakhstan in May 2000. In addition, the CIS joint military exercises ‘Southern Shield-2000’ (Ibid: 135), which was conducted in March-April 2000 in Tajikistan and Uzbekistan, aimed at countering a terrorist incursion. Through this development Russia bolstered its military presence in Central Asia and further demonstrated its role as a great player in its traditional sphere of influence. Through a strategy of bilateral and multilateral military agreements with the other Central Asian states, Putin and his government strengthened the presence of its peacekeeping forces and border guards troops in the region.

Following the Islamic extremists attack in Kyrgyzstan in 1999, Russia and Uzbekistan signed agreements on expanded security and military-technical cooperation in December 1999, May 2000 and May 2001. In 2000, Russia had signed a bilateral military agreement with Kyrgyzstan under the provision of which
Russia supplied military equipments at a cheaper rate. Further, during a visit by Russian President V. Putin to Kyrgyzstan in December 2002, another agreement on security cooperation was signed following the establishment of a Russian air base near the Kyrgyz capital of Bishkek. The Russian military aircraft deployed in Kyrgyzstan are to form part of the future regional Rapid Deployment Force under the Collective Security Treaty.

Russia sees Tajikistan as important to its security and national interests, citing the following as reasons to maintain troops there: the need to guarantee stability, the danger of the spread of Islamic fundamentalism, and Tajikistan’s borders being open for the transit of drugs and weapons. In 1999, it already had signed a military agreement with Tajikistan and that renewed the station of 201st MRD (peacekeeping forces) for another ten years. The Russian government also tried to expand its influence in Central Asian region through multilateral forums i.e. the ‘Shanghai Five Forum’. The Shanghai Five forum has been one of the main forums for security cooperation with Central Asia that comprises Russia, China, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan and Tajikistan. In March 2000, the meeting of the Defence Ministers of the Shanghai Five was held in Kazakhstan. At this meeting Russian Defence Minister Igor Sergeyev further highlighted the need for cooperation of all states in the region against the hostile activities of the extremists in the southern frontiers of the CIS.

Beside the security cooperation, Russian government has shown it economic interests into the region. Russia and Kazakhstan signed a 10 year economic cooperation agreement in 1998, and Putin and Nazarbayev expressed satisfaction with the fulfilment of this agreement. Agreement was also reached in June 2000 on transporting Kazakh oil through Russia. The North Caspian oil pipeline consortium, building the North Caspian Sea-Novorossiysk pipeline, was commissioned in 2001. The Russo-Kazakh relationship appears to be developing smoothly under Putin. Many of the Russian and Kazakh foreign policy perspectives are similar; both states support the concept of a multipolar world, and favour enhancing the role of the United Nations.
Kyrgyz President Askar Akayev visited Moscow in July 2000. This was the first bilateral presidential summit since Putin became president. Although Russo-Kyrgyz relations were slightly strained due to Kyrgyzstan entering the World Trade Organisation without the consent of the CIS Customs Union, this problem appeared to have been overcome by the time of Akayev’s visit.

Tajikistan remains a de facto Russian protectorate. The regime of President Imomali Rahmonov owes its existence to the presence of the CIS peacekeeping force, namely the Russian 201st Motor Rifle Division (MRD) based there, plus Russian border guard forces deployed along the Tajik-Afghan border. It was decided at the CIS summit in June 2000 that the CIS peacekeeping force would be withdrawn from Tajikistan, but that Russian military bases would be set up in the country instead. Putin said that it would be easier to deal with Tajikistan on a bilateral basis rather than through the CIS (Interfax 21 June 2000). In June 2000, Rahmonov confirmed that a Russo-Tajik treaty had been signed, giving Russia the right to establish military bases in Tajikistan. At the Shanghai Five summit in Dushanbe in July 2000, both Putin and Rahmonov spoke out in favour of a Russian military presence in Tajikistan.

6.2. Russia and Central Asia after 11 September 2001

A new geo-political environment came into existence in the former Soviet Union with the establishment of US military base in Central Asia. Russia had shown a change in its policy towards CIS by allowing the establishment of the American army base in Central Asia and Caucasus. This new attitude of Russia in Central Asia reflected a more flexible stance on the broader issue of NATO’s influence within the CIS. For instance, during his visit to the USA in November 2001, Putin expressed no signs of objection to the Baltic States joining the NATO.

Meanwhile, the USA signed bilateral agreements for co-operation with some of the Central Asian States which are geographically closer to Afghanistan viz. Uzbekistan, Kyrgyzstan and Tajikistan and obtained air base facility for its anti-terrorists operation (http://www.bits.de/NRANEU/Central Asia/html). In 2001, Uzbekistan extended Khanbal base in the Karshi province, the biggest air
base in Central Asia, to the USA. By the end of the same year, Kyrgyzstan allowed the American army to set up its military bases at Manas International Airport. Tajikistan, a country in which Russia has had a stake, offered its three airfields: Kulyab, Khojund and Kurgan-Tyube to the Americans during the US Defence Secretary, Donald Rumsfeld’s visit to the country. In return, the American government promised financial help to these countries.

In return for the Russian support to the American war against terrorism, the USA, for a short while, showed their sympathies to the Russian government on its military operation in Chechnya but criticisms soon re-surfaced in 2002. Moreover, within the Russian military and its executive, there was a strong dissatisfaction about Putin’s cooperation with the USA in Russia’s anti-terrorist policy.

In addition, the American policy of using the Central Asian region as a base camp in its anti-terrorist operation has been seen by the international community and by Russia, in particular as Washington’s long-term policy to expand its influence in the region. The basic logic behind the United States’ signing of bilateral military agreement with Uzbekistan, Tajikistan and Kyrgyzstan was more or less a long term policy in order to gain a strategic foothold in Central Asia. This development further shows two aspects: the geo-political significance or the strategic location of the region in post Cold War international system as well as the American desire to maintain permanent military presence in the region. President Bush once stated that US military cooperation with Central Asian states no longer needed approval from Moscow (Ibid. and also see Mohapatra, 2002: 13). It clearly indicated that the US military presence in Central Asia was not a short term strategy; rather, it had a long-term ambition. The military presence was also important from the viewpoint of checking the emergence of China as a great power. This development was however likely to become a hurdle to Russia’s ambition of becoming a regional power as the increase in the USA military and political presence in Central Asia brought about a change in the region’s geo-political equations. In other words, the readiness of Central Asian states to expand their cooperation with the USA jeopardized Russian interests in the region.
The permanent presence of United States in Central Asia, known for its rich natural resources, would further pose a hindrance to the Russian policy of economic cooperation with the Central Asian countries. Hence, after 2002 Russia started to look out for alternative measures to regain its strategic role in the region. Besides, Putin tried to strengthen its political relations with the Central Asian states. Chapter 5 of the thesis will further examine the impact of 11 September 2001 on Russia's foreign policy as well as on its peacekeeping operation in the CIS.

6.2.1. Analytical Assessment

After analysing the above mentioned points, it is clear that there are limits to the expansion of USA’s relations with Central Asian states. Above all, it is doubtful that Washington will come to the financial or economic aid of these countries when it is needed most, although they are counting on continuing US support. Thus, cooperation with the US will not replace the need for the countries of the region to further develop their economic links with Russia. Furthermore, Central Asian leaders will continue to come under pressure from the US to establish democratic systems, improve human rights, accelerate economic reform and demonstrate commitment to Washington. The circumstances mentioned above are likely to result in Central Asian leaders attempting to find a balance between Russia and the US, calculating that they will receive additional protection and benefits from both sides. This model will allow Russia to retain its position in Central Asia, without having to shoulder an excessive burden.

7. RUSSIA AND TRANSCAUCASIA: GEORGIA

The Kremlin fully knows that the security of Russia is inextricably linked to political developments in its 'near abroad'. Hence, Moscow is making efforts to strengthen political and security arrangements not only with the Central Asian states but also with the governments of Southern Caucasus. The fact is that since mid 1990's, the Russian government had acknowledged its desire to play a key role in attempts to resolve the ethno-territorial dispute in the CIS, in general, and in Transcaucasia in particular. Hence, to ensure the peace and stability in the Transcaucasia has been a part of the Putin's foreign policy in the region. The
Russian government had already warned the three Transcaucasus states viz, Georgia, Azerbaijan and Armenia against the transferring of money and weapons to the Chechnya separatists. The base line of this policy was to obtain the three Transcaucasus states as a part of the Russian sphere of influence area.

The United States had shown its interests in the region’s energy and natural resources. After the 11 September 2001 terrorist attacks, America has been trying to establish its military and political presence in the region which has a potential to weaken or remove the Russian influence over the three states. For instance, talks were held on 27 February 2002 between the Georgia’s chief of general Staff, Dzhoni Pirthalaishvili and the Eurasia branch chief of the US Unified Command, Elmer Guy White in Tbilisi for the deployment of commandos in Georgia (The Hindu, 3 March 2002). This development has been a key concern to Russia in the formation of its policy towards the region. As a result, Putin further strengthened Russian diplomatic efforts in the Transcaucasus. Through bilateral and multilateral agreements with the Southern Caucasus states, President Putin legitimised the presence of the Russian troops as a peacekeeping force, particularly in Georgia, both under the CIS peacekeeping mandate and with the consent of the host country. For example, a separate meeting was held with the leaders of Georgia, Armenia and Azerbaijan just before the CIS Council of Heads of State summit in Moscow in January 2000 (Dr Smith 1999). The continued presence of the Russian peacekeeping forces in Georgia and its military base in Armenia were not only Putin’s policy to maintain peace and stability in Southern Caucasus but also to ensure stability in the Northern Caucasus, since the Baku-Novorossiysk oil pipeline runs through Dagestan and Chechnya where separatism had already broken out.

In addition, both the Northern Caucasus and the independent states of the southern Caucasus were culturally and ethnically linked to one another. So, the destabilisation of the Southern Caucasus due to the Nagorno-Karabagh conflict between the Azerbaijan and Armenia as well as conflict in South Ossetia has a potential to further destabilise the Russian controlled Northern Caucasus where the Chechen conflict already posed an exacerbated security problem for Russia. As a matter of fact, the conflict between Georgia and South Ossetia had dramatic
repercussions in the Republic of North Ossetia.

To stop the drift of Georgia and Azerbaijan towards NATO was one of Putin’s policy objectives in Transcaucasus. Its repercussion was felt in Central Asia which more or less poses a threat to weaken Russia’s influence in the region after Uzbekistan moved away from Moscow. Hence, the Russian government under President Putin followed a policy of containment towards Georgia and Azerbaijan from 2000 to late 2001, after they had moved towards the NATO. Therefore, the basic nature of Putin’s foreign policy towards Transcaucasus can be understood as a combination of containment and cooperation.

It is very clear that the Russian foreign policy towards Southern Caucasus was based on three principles: to bring the three Southern Caucasus states into the CIS as new member states; to guard the external borders of these states with Russian border troops; and to establish the Russian military bases on the territory of these three states. The Russian foreign policy in Transcaucasus further displays a mix nature of economic and business realism mixed with geopolitical pressure. Above all, security concerns have been a predominant component in Russia’s foreign policy towards Caucasus and Central Asian states in the post Soviet environment.

7.1. Russia and Georgia

In the Southern Caucasus, Georgia's inability to control its own territory had enabled armed Chechen groups to use its territory for refuge and possibly for launching attacks. As a result, the Russian government had difficulties in dealing with the Chechnya separatists in the autumn of 1999. The Chechen fighters were not only taking refuge in Pankisi George in northern Georgia as a safe haven, but they were also reportedly trained and supplied with arms and money by Georgia (Trayor 2002; Dr Smith 1999b). Thus, Moscow asked the Georgian government to close down the Chechen information centre in Tbilisi. Moreover, Moscow did not like the continuous development of closer security relations between Georgia and the NATO.

In 2000, the Russian military bases in Georgia remained as the main issue
in the relations between the two countries. At the OSCE summit in Istanbul in November 1999, Russia agreed to reduce, by 31 December 2000, the levels of its Treaty Limited Equipment (TLE) located within the territory of Georgia not beyond the limits of 153 tanks, 241 ACVs and 140 artillery systems, located at the Russian military bases at Vaziani and Gudauta (Dr. Smith 2000). Georgia granted Russia the right to basic temporary deployment of its TLE at facilities of the Russian military bases at Batumi and Akhalkalaki. Russia had begun to pullout its troops from the beginning of August 2000. The withdrawal of Russia’s troops coincided with the holding of the first US-Georgian naval exercises. Hence, Russia slowed down the process of withdrawal and continued to use the airfield at Gudauta to maintain links with the bases at Batumi and Akhalkalaki.

Georgia’s geo-graphical location put her in a strategically important position for transporting the energy resources of the Caspian Sea to Europe and other destinations. The efforts Putin and Eduard Shevardnadze to strengthen their political and economic ties despite divergences in several factors disappeared after the January 2004 presidential elections. The Parliamentary election was held at a time when public dissatisfaction with corruption within the administration and economic stagnation was rising, which led to the toppling of the administration by the opposition parties and finally President Eduard Shevardnadze resigned.

In the presidential election held in January 2004, the joint candidate of the opposition parties Mikhail Saakashvili was elected by an overwhelming majority and this was welcomed by major countries. However, the Russian government has made no change in the aims and objectives of its foreign policies towards Georgia. As a counter move to, or compelled by, the new geo-political situation in Caspian Sea and in Georgia, Russia continue to station its troops in Abkhazia in particular and in Georgia in general. However, the new Georgian government never ratified the military agreement which was signed by former the President, Shevardnadze on the question of the establishment of Russian military base in Georgia. The Georgian government was able to reach the agreement for the withdrawal of Russian troops in 2006 and the Russian troops are still stationed in Abkhazia and South Ossetia.
Since May 1997, a little progress has been made in the relations between Russia and Moldova. However, they are still at loggerheads over gas repayments, and the withdrawal of Russian forces from Moldova. Furthermore, the Moldovan and Transdniestrian leaderships have been unable to reach agreement on the status of Transdniestria within Moldova. It is clear that issues like Gas Debts, the status of Transdniestria and the withdrawal of Russian forces continue to be major hurdles in the development of closer relationship between Russia and Moldova.

8. CONCLUSION

Since late 1993, the broad strategic goals of the Yeltsin’s foreign policy toward the CIS had remained the same as that of Putin’s policy. Boris Yeltsin’s foreign policy under the Foreign Minister Andrei Kozyrev was strongly pro-west with a little attention toward CIS till 1994 and which was a subject to much domestic criticism. By 1996, Russia started the two pronged policy with special priority given to former Soviet republics. This change in its attention toward the CIS was further strengthened by increasing pressure from not only the aggressive nationalistic and communist fundamental opposition, but also of influential groups within the Russian leadership. However, the NATO’s east expansion as well as threat posed by the emerging intra-states conflict based on the ethnic problems remains a key eye opener for realising geo-political importance of the CIS. The policy of re-integration are utilised by the Russian foreign policy makers but not with intention of reconstruction of the former Soviet republics into one except by some communist leaders.

Like Yeltsin, Putin too desires to see a closely integrated CIS, united around a Russian core. To protect and safeguard the Russian diaspora and Russian speaking population was also one of the Russian priorities areas in its policy since early 1990s. Soon after, Putin came to the power Russian government had given an important emphasis to economic cooperation which was more or less neglected by Yeltsin in 1990’s. The failure so far to carry out an effective economic reform in Russia means that the Russian Federation is unlikely to become a pole of attraction for other CIS members. At the CIS Council of Heads of State summit in January 2000, the participants agreed to develop a programme for CIS development up to
2005. However, this programme is depends on the fate of economic reform in Russia and the development of intra-CIS trade. Further, the Russian president V. Putin had strengthened the Russian stance into the region through bilateral and multilateral agreement.

The then Russian president Boris Yeltsin’s foreign policy towards Central Asia was to develop a ring of friendly and cooperatives neighbours in its Asian borderlands towards the south, thereby to keep away other powers and influence from the region. The other was the need for ensuring its own security and defence through bilateral military ties as well as by simply intervening with arms and logistic support in crisis situation.

Safeguarding Russia's economic and security concerns in its sphere of influence has been one of the enduring objectives of the Putin’s Foreign policy towards Central Asia. Its recent forays, in terms of bilateral and multilateral engagement or agreement, are to be seen as an attempt at regaining its declining clout and using it as leverage in shaping its regional strategy. This is also important in the interim in preventing Central Asian strategic space from being usurped by powerful extra-regional actors such as China and the United States. Within the above context, Russian developments need to be seen as an attempt at preserving its strategic space in the area that it perceives as its buffer zone. This is being achieved by an incremental enhancement of interstate relationships, using the plank of "stability" rather than "democracy."

To strengthen the Russian economic interests was one of the basic policies towards Transcaucasia. Since, Putin came to the power his foreign policy towards the Transcaucasia was a policy of cooperation in order to secure its position in the region both in economic and political sphere as well as it was a containment policy too. To safeguard its External Frontiers was another reason for Russia to maintain its military presence in the Southern Caucasus. Russia’s new borders with the former republics of the former Soviet Union are not very clear ones. Moreover, erecting new border infrastructures appear to be too costly and time consuming for the present. Russia, therefore, wants to keep the ‘external borders of the Commonwealth’, especially in the Caucasus and in Central Asia secure under joint
control. After analysis of all the past and contemporary development both in Russia and in its neighbouring states of CIS it can be conclude that in near and there future too Russia would likely to continued its military presence as long as US troops are there. Hereby, it wouldn’t be right to term the policy as a neo-imperialism plan. Indeed, Russia is still struggling to emerge from the shadow of mistake which were committed by its army during the initial period of it new existence as a sole successor of the former USSR. Moreover, the time has come for Russia to consolidate its economic and political cooperation with the other CIS members to realise their concept of new world order.