CHAPTER – IV
RUSSIA’S PEACEKEEPING OPERATION IN CENTRAL ASIA:
A Case study of Tajikistan
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1. INTRODUCTION

Since 1990, the former Soviet republics of central Asia have become one of the hot spots of instability. It is the lack of internal unity among people of different nationalities that has been mainly responsible for most of the crises in Central Asia. The rise of armed conflicts in this region has posed a threat to the peace and security in the CIS. It has also created serious challenges to the national security in the post Soviet environment. Theses circumstances may be said to have directly contributed to the emergence of a new function of the Russian military – to keep and restore peace unilaterally or under international agreements within the framework of peacekeeping operations. A civil war erupted in the former Soviet Republic of Tajikistan soon after it got independence in 1991. Since this civil war spilled over in the Tajik-Afghan borders, it assumed singular significance possessing all the potential to affect the whole of Central Asia.

In such a background, Russia deployed its peacekeeping mission in Tajikistan in 1993 following the outbreak of civil war (Nikitin 1996:91). In fact, the Russian forces has taken the role of peacekeepers since 1992 with the task of preventing the explosion of conflict which further threatened to spill over into Central Asia.

The Russian approach to peacekeeping in post Cold War conflicts is aimed at conflict management in accordance with changes in its foreign policy towards the CIS. This new role of the Russian Federation has strengthened its position in the CIS. These ‘peacekeeping’ functions of the Russian armed forces were later incorporated into their national military doctrine. Indeed, Russia’s involvement in peacekeeping activities in Central Asia, particularly in Tajikistan’s civil war stems from its national interests and the perceived threats to those interests.
This chapter analyses Russia’s peace-keeping operation in the new geopolitics of post Cold War Central Asian conflicts. For a better understanding of the Russian approach to these conflicts, it also examines the changing nature of the post Cold War Central Asian environment. It attempts to answer what the Russian interests in Central Asia are and what factors compel Russia to conduct peacekeeping operation in the region. It also analyses the unique features of Russian peacekeeping operations in Central Asia and its military capacity to ensure peace and stability in the region.

2. BACKGROUND: Post Cold War situation in Central Asia

All of the five the Central Asian states are signatory members of the Commonwealth of the Independence States (Imam 2001: 90). During the Soviet era, all of these five republics of Central Asia had been dependent on large scale transfer of budget from Moscow despite possessing a good amount of natural resources. Moreover, due to its geo-strategic location as it bordered the heartland of Asia in south and West-Asia in south west, soldiers were deployed in large numbers including the Soviet Air Defence Forces, the KGB and the 201st MRD under direct control from Moscow.

However, the collapse of the Soviet Union in 1991 led to the separation of powers in military, political, and economic spheres of the sovereign states, resulting in the loss of formerly smooth regional economic ties as well as gradual decline in the level of all types of production in Commonwealth of Independence States. Apart from this, some of the constituent republics have taken the armed forces stationed on their territory under their own jurisdiction (Orr 1998: 151). Tajikistan is one of those countries which have been unable to do this. Most of armed forces stationed in Tajikistan comprise former Soviet regular soldiers or armies returned from Afghanistan after its withdrawal from that country.

In fact, the disintegration of the Soviet Union did not bring much change to the regimes in the region. Supporters of the pro-Communist party bureaucracy (nomenclature) continued to rule in these states after renouncing Communist ideology and adopting pragmatic nationalism as its new guiding
Map 1. Central Asia’s Political Map:

Source: Encyclopedia
principle, although several other political parties based on democratic ideas have also emerged. They are opposed to the growth of Islamic fundamentalism in the region while standing for status quo to maintain present state borders.

However, the development of religious fundamentalism has already begun to lead the emergence of Islamic militancy in the five Central Asia republics - particularly in Uzbekistan, Kyrgyzstan and Tajikistan and affected the internal peace and security of the region. In fact, the growing Islamic extremist groups in the surrounding regions, such as the Taliban in Afghanistan which had successfully seized Kabul (Ibid: 24), was spreading Islamic fundamentalist ideas into the Central Asian region.

This development has radically changed the course of events in Central Asia as the fundamentalist groups have started extending support to various militant groups in the region by supplying arms and man power. The most prominent Islamic extremism of Central Asia is represented by the Islamic Movement of Uzbekistan (IMU). It has been reported that IMU fighters were taking refuge in Pakistan and known for conducting frequent cross border incursions into Uzbekistan with the declared goal of toppling the Uzbek government. Another illegal Islamic organisation, the Hizbut-Tahriral-Islami ("Party of Islamic Liberation"), based in Uzbekistan, has also been very active in the region, though with the peaceful aim of re-establishing an Islamic Caliphate in the region once known as Turkistan.

2.1. Growing Outside Influence in the Region

Another significant feature of the politics of the post Cold War Central Asia is the growing influence of the Western powers. The geo-strategic vacuum created by the disintegration of Soviet Union has attracted many regional players into the
region and they have started spreading out their influence rapidly. For instance, the US has been trying to expand its presence both militarily and politically into Central Asia and the Caspian Sea (Chenoy 2005: 31-33). Moreover, the NATO’s eastward expansion which started soon after the end of Cold War in late 1991 has already reached the former Soviet republics. Efforts have been made to extend its influence over the Central Asian republics. The five Central Asian states have begun to cooperate with the NATO within the EAPC (Euro-Atlantic Partnership Council) through their post independence policies. The Partnership for Peace (PiP) framework document was signed in 1994 by Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Turkmenistan and Uzbekistan (Lucas 1995: 151), and later on by Tajikistan. This development shows the emergence of new geo-politics in the region where Russia’s traditional national interests remain unchanged.

Furthermore, the existence political vacuum created after the collapse of the Soviet Union in the Muslim majority republics of Central Asia has provided an opportunity to its neighbouring Islamic countries to intervene. The Islamic states like Iran, Turkey, Pakistan, and Saudi Arabia have already extended their influences in the region through a rediscovery of close cultural ties as well as by playing Islamic card. Moreover, China has also been encroaching into the southern side of the Central Asia. The geo-strategic location of the region as well as its geo-economic significance with the potential for development has brought many

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1 The vast area stretching from the Caucasus Mountains and the Black Sea in the west, on to Iran, Pakistan and Afghanistan in the south, and China in the east, was once known as the Soviet Union's hinterland. The other superpower, the United States, simply tried to "contain" these areas by linking its various alignment systems. Thus, Turkey, Iran and Pakistan became important outposts of this policy, while Korea and Vietnam became its battleground, and China was useful in the chain insofar as it quarreled with the Soviet Union. However, the collapse of the Soviet Union has changed this situation dramatically, putting the newly independent states of Central Asia firmly into geopolitical calculations. Because of it vast natural resources, notably oil and gas, and because some of these Central Asian states which were engulfed in ethnic conflicts attract the interest of various regional and extra-regional countries with their intentions to influence. The competition between various outside powers for influence which was duped as the return of the "Great Game", threatened widespread disagreements, hostility and possibly armed interventions. Moreover, while Russia's power and influence weakened, the newly independent states of Central Asia have taken different roads toward national consolidation, and regional economic and political alliances, thereby raising international security and policy issues that did not exist before the fall of Soviet power. see in Dr.Aydyn, URL:http://www.sam.gov.tr/perceptions/sampapers/NewGeopoliticsofCentralAsiaandtheCaucasus.pdf.
countries into the region. Under these circumstances, the emergence of conflicts in the region has naturally provided a good opportunity to these outside players to reinforce their influence over the region. Moreover, the rapid decline of the Central economy which further worsened their political instability facilitated the strengthening of these outside influences.

Another characteristic feature of the post Soviet Central Asian region is the increasing problems of refugees as a result of the conflicts. From the Russian point of view, all these developments present themselves both as threats to its national interests and as a challenge to the formation of its post Soviet foreign policy. These developments formed the larger background in which Russia was compelled to intervene in these conflicts in the form of peacekeeping.

2.2. Problems of Refugees

Since the Central Asian states are multi-ethnic in social composition, ethnic conflict in a particular state naturally posed a potential threat not only to the neighbouring states of the conflict zone but also to the region as a whole. The following Table 6 shows the major ethnic Compositions of the five Central Asian states.

The table clearly shows that till the early 1990's the Russian diaspora constituted the second largest ethnic group after Uzbeks in whole Central Asian region (Hyman 1999: 15). Most ethnic Russians were concentrated in the northern industrialised part of Kazakhstan bordering the Russian Federation. The second largest concentration of the ethnic Russians were found in Kyrgyzstan. In Uzbekistan and Turkmenistan, the number of the ethnic Russian is estimated to be 8 and 9 percents respectively. Only about 7 percent of the ethnic Russian was in Tajikistan.

The problem of refugee and massive displacement has remained a major disaster of the post Soviet Central Asian ethnic conflicts. Indeed, as a consequence of the ethnic conflicts on the territory of the former Soviet Union, a 'migration crisis' has ensued. By 1993, approximately 860, 000 people from the countries of
the Near Abroad have already taken refuge in Russian territory. It remains a major concern for the Russian government from its national security perspective as well as from the angle of its existing economic problems in post Soviet era. In addition, the protracted fighting between the various ethnic groups in the region has spread out to other areas and affected the well-being of most of the neighbouring states and changed the ethnic demography.

Table 6. The major Ethnic Compositions of Central Asian States in late 1980's and early 1990's (in percentage of the total population)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Nationality or ethnic group</th>
<th>Kazakhstan</th>
<th>Kyrgyzstan</th>
<th>Uzbekistan</th>
<th>Tajikistan</th>
<th>Turkmenistan</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Kazaks</td>
<td>39.7 %</td>
<td>37,318</td>
<td>4 %</td>
<td>0.2 %</td>
<td>2%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Kyrgyz</td>
<td>14,112</td>
<td>37,318</td>
<td>174,907</td>
<td>1.3 %</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Russians</td>
<td>37.4 %</td>
<td>20 %</td>
<td>8 %</td>
<td>7.6 %</td>
<td>9%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Uzbek</td>
<td>2.0 %</td>
<td>13%</td>
<td>71 %</td>
<td>23.5 %</td>
<td>9%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tajik</td>
<td>3 %</td>
<td>33,518</td>
<td>5 % (this is official number but it was believe to be more higher)</td>
<td>62.3 %</td>
<td>3,149</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Turk</td>
<td>3,846</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>121,578</td>
<td>0.4%</td>
<td>71%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ukrainian</td>
<td>5.4 %</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>0.8%</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Others</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>2.6%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Due to the ethnic tension, Uzbekistan became a homogeneous state in the mid 1990s as the outflow of Russians and other minorities continued while ethnic Uzbeks returned from other parts of the former Soviet Union. According to unofficial data, between 1985 and 1991 the number of non-indigenous people in Uzbekistan declined from 2.4 to 1.6 million.

3. RUSSIAN INTERESTS IN CENTRAL ASIA

Historically, the Central Asian region has been an area of interest to Russia since the Tsar period. Traditionally the region had been maintained as a buffer state by the Russian empire. Moreover, geographically, it served as an important traditional trade route. It has a vibrant corridor connecting East and West and South to the North. The significance of its geo-strategic location remained unchanged even after the collapse of Soviet Union. However, the interest of the Russian Federation in the region is more security oriented. This post Soviet Russia’s interests were twofold under the former President Boris Yeltsin: first, to integrate the Central Asian states in the CIS sphere and make them a part of its close allies and second, to deny external powers strategic access to Central Asia.

3.1 Strategic Borders

Since the outbreak of ethnic conflicts in Central Asia, Russia has had an eye on the strategic borders of the region. Hence, it continued to deploy its border guards not only to protect minority Russian ethnic groups but also to guard the borders. The basic reason behind deployment of its troops at various strategic border areas viz. the Tajik-Afghanistan and Kyrgyz-Chinese borders was to ensure peace and stability in Central Asia. It cannot at the same time be denied that it has also been a move by Russia to secure its position in post Soviet environment as a regional power. Further, it was important to solve the Central Asian conflicts in order to protect Russia’s own national integrity. Because the emergence of Islamic fundamentalism and its increasing influence in the southern part of the Russian federation, where the separatist movement has already begun in Chechnya, posed a threat to its national integrity.
The spill-over of the conflicts from Central Asia further posed a threat to the Muslim dominated southern part of Russia. Meanwhile, the increasing smuggling of small arms along with drug trafficking in the Central Asian borders worsened the conflicts situation. In short, Russia wanted Central Asian region as buffer states to Islamic extremism. Paradoxically Russia has continued the Tsarist containment policy in Central Asia even in the post Soviet environment.

Since the Tsar period, the Central Asian states had been used by the Russian Empire as a buffer zone against the Ottoman Empire's expansionist policies. So, the erstwhile Soviet Union declared the strategic significance of the region and Russian Federation has continued it. The presence of Russian soldiers on the Tajik-Afghan borders confirms this significance of the region as a strategic frontier for Moscow in post Cold War period.

Another reason behind Russia's interests in Central Asian strategic borders is the need to counterbalance increasing Western powers in the region. The increasing ties between Central Asian states and the Western powers such as the U.S. and other NATO members of Europe undermined Russia's pre-eminence in the region. By the late 1990's, the influential role of Russia as the regional security provider has been eroded due to a fall in its economy amidst increasing demands of aid by the Central Asian states. It forced Moscow to reduce its security presence in the region temporarily. Since 1992, Russian border troops have been defending CIS borders in Tajikistan, but they were largely phased out in Kyrgyzstan in 1999 (some 100 Russian advisors remain, deployed along the Kyrgyz-Chinese border). In late 1999, the last group of military advisors left Turkmenistan. Meanwhile, NATO has expanded its operations in the region without any hurdles.

The Russian efforts to regain its power in international politics as well as to become a regional power in the former Soviet space got a blow in 1999 by the sudden announcement of Uzbekistan's withdrawal from the Collective Security treaty. In view of this changed strategic configuration in the region, Russian leaders were compelled to rethink its existing policy and security concepts. As a result, by June 2000 Russian Federation launched a new policy which signalled a
change in its strategy in the Central Asia. By re-emphasising the growing Western influence in the region, Russia re-focused its policy and launched bilateral tactical agreements alongside the traditional multilateral approach. This has, in effect, slowed down the growing wave of Western influence that was intended to undermine Russian national interest.

3.2 Economic Interests

The Russian Federation has for long nurtured interests in the rich natural gas and oil resources of the region. These resources have also been responsible for pulling other regional powers into the region, which later gave rise to a new geo-politics in late 1990’s.

As mentioned in chapter 3, Russia’s economic interests in the region are mainly focussed on Kazakhstan and Turkmenistan. These two countries border the landlocked Caspian Sea, which was once of geo-strategic and geo-economic importance to the Soviet Union. Russia has inherited the economic interests in this area and wants to protect or restrict the entry of other outside powers. But soon after the disintegration of the Soviet Union, many Western corporations have signed a number of multi-billion dollar contracts with Kazakhstan, Turkmenistan and Azerbaijan for the exploration and exploitation of the region’s oil and natural gas resources (Bakshi 1999: 1778). At present, Russia’s pipeline –Baku-Grozny-Novorossisk pipeline- remains the main transit route to carry Caspian oil to the world market. Many Western corporations wanted to link a new pipeline from Baku-Ceyhan. Russia has shown its unwillingness to the proposal as most of the suggested pipeline routes would not pass through the Russian territory, which in turn would result in the loss of its existing bargaining power.

3.3 Protection of Russian Diaspora

The Tajikistan civil war forced minority ethnic Russians to migrate into Russia or to other neighbouring states at a time when Russia was facing extreme scarcity of housing and jobs due to withdrawal of its troops from Central Europe (Simon 1997: 250). Moreover, the continuation of the ‘Kazakhisation’ process by its elites not only strained its relationship with Moscow but also forced many minority
ethnic groups to leave the country. By 1993, about 300,000 of the 388,000 Slavs who lived in Tajikistan before the troubles had begun left the country and many of them already reached Russia (*The Current Digest of the Post-Soviet Press* 1993: 1).

This problem of migrations and refugees proved costly for Russia both politically and economically. Further, it was also feared that large scale migration and refugees would generate crime in the society. Hence, the protection of these ethnic Russians and Russian speaking peoples in the CIS became a main objective of the Russian foreign policy. It is significant to point out here that the Draft Military Doctrine of 1992 made a special mention for the protection of the civil rights of Russians outside Russian Federation (Raevsky 1993:17). Thus, the situation of the Russians and Russian-speaking people in the 'near abroad' became a major concern for Russian leaders and a patriotic consensus developed among anti-Westerners including former Soviet Army Officers. In fact, because of all the above reasons, Russia found itself at the epicentre of peacekeeping activity in the Central Asian region.

4. TAJIKISTAN'S CIVIL WAR

Geographically, Tajikistan lies in between five historical empires of Asia; Russia in the north, Turkey in the west, Iran and India in the south and China in the south-east (Neumann and Solodovnik 1995). It existed as a Tajik Autonomous Unit within Uzbekistan before it became a full-fledged Soviet republic in 1929 (Naumkin 1997: 64). Since then, the social composition of Tajikistan has become fragmented with a mix of various ethnic groups: Tajiks, Uzbeks, Slave and Pamiris (Jawadand and Tadjbaksh 1995). The society was largely divided into two main groups: the Northerners and Southerners.

The Northerners consisted of various communities of Hujand, Ura-Tyube, Samarkand, Bukhara, Ferghana valley while the Southerners consisted of Darvaz, Karategin, Kulyab communities etc. (Naumkin 1997: 63). The Northern part of Tajikistan was comparatively more developed than the Southern side. Since earlier times, warlords of various clans have been fighting in an effort to extend their
control over the entire region. During the Soviet period, the Leninabadis and Kulyabis (the only Southerner which has been an old ally of Leninabadis) dominated the Tajik political system (Neumann and Solodovnik 1995). Indeed, the tension between these various clans, regional factions and political tensions characterised Soviet Tajikistan. Furthermore, religious differences became a major factor behind the constant tension between regions. The Gorno-Badakhshan (Pamir highland) follows the Ismaili faith whereas the rest of the country are followers of the Sunni Islam (Naumkin 1997: 64).

4.1. The Root Cause of the Conflict

The idea of national identity remained weak due to the fragmented nature of the Soviet Tajikistan society. In fact, the Tajik people prefer to identify themselves according to the region, locality, village or city of their origin (Zviagelskaya 1997: 5). The Kulyab, Gharm (Pamir foothill), Gono-Badakhshan (Pamir highland), Kurgan-Tyube, Leninabad and Hissar are some of the main regional identities of Tajikistan.

During the Soviet period, the differences between these groups (Northerner and Southerner) were sorted out through intervention from Moscow. But this act of balancing began to crumble soon after the Perestroika reforms came to be accompanied by the politicization of the communities (Mackinlay and Cross 2003:161-163 and also see Neumann and Solodovnik 1995). Thus, the emergence of the alliance of the liberal intellectuals and Islamic extremism in southern Tajikistan challenged the dominant position of the Leninabadis and Kulyabis. Moreover, the coming of the small section of well educated intelligentsia particularly from Pamirs, Gharmi and other parts of the country provided the ideologists for the democratic and nationalist party. Since then, many warlords and political parties who relied on community and cultural ties of various groups started using the public support in seeking its political power. Neumann and Solodovnik point out that the real struggle was not about ideology. "Rather, various ideological movements like communism, democracy and Islamism served as nests or power containers for identity-region politics" (Ibid). However, the Tajik
conflict had an element of ideological affiliation as was seen in the fight between the “Communists” vs. the "Democrats" and "Islamists". Moreover, the warring parties relied on a strong regional base. In February 1990, the first stage of the
clash witnessed the death of 20 anti-government protestors. Later the rivalry for power proliferated at all levels.

The Islamic Revival Party (IRP), founded in October 1990, was led by the Pamiri and Karategin clans. It converted many tribal villagers into Islam in order to make them potential voters for the Islamic forces. It had a stronghold in the region like Gorno-Badakhshan and Dushanbe. It also promoted the idea of establishing an Islamic state of Tajikistan. They nominated Davlat Khudonazarov, an ethnic Pamiri, as their candidate for the president. And the liberal Democratic Party of Tajikistan (DPT), which was created under the Rastokhez movement with supporter from Gharmi, Pamiri etc., proclaimed the idea of democracy, humanism and personal freedom. Like the IRP, the DPT members came from different regions while the ruling communist party had a strong support from the Kulyab communities.

Under such a situation, a fresh election was conducted in November 1991 and Rahmon Nabiyev (Communist Party of Tajikistan) got elected as the president of Tajikistan. The DPT and the IRP later merged to form “the United Tajik Opposition” (UTO). The UTO represented the southern regions of the Tajikistan, while the ruling side was represented by an alliance of Leninabad and Kulyab, supported by local Uzbeks (Zviagelskaya 1997: 7-9).

In March 1992, clashes broke out with the launch of anti-government and counter anti-government protests rallies and demonstrations after the arrest of a prominent reform minded politician (Panfilov 1992: 22). Again in May 1992, in response to a meeting organised by the opposition party in Dushanbe, pro-government groups and their supporters from Kulyab organised a similar meeting in Ozodi Square. In the same month, demonstrations turned violent. The opposition took over the television station and the presidential palace on May 5 (Naumkin 1997: 68). In response to those two meeting and their consequences, president Nabiyev created the National Guard unit with his Kulyab supporters (Ibid). This further worsened the relationships between the various clans.
Since the Soviet era, Kulyab had been dependent on the food supplies from the Kurgan-Tyube, Garm and other southern areas. In fact, these areas have been dominated by Islamists. With the rise in tension the opposition supporters blocked the food and good supplies to the pro-government Kulyabis. However, the opposition Democrat-Islamists failed to block the access of Kulyabi armed groups to their protected Kurgan-Tyube area. The civil war grew worse and casualties on both sides went up. Since then the large scale military confrontation spread like a wild fire between the supporters of the Islamic-Democratic block with supporters from the Gram on one hand and Kulyabis and Khodzhandis on the other hand.

In an effort to prevent further bloodshed, the opposition leader like Davlat Khudonazarov asked the Kulyabis to leave Dushanbe. But the blockade of supplies led Kulyabis to raise their voice against them. The Tajikistan conflict is a civil war which was complicated by clan rivalry where each clan was loosely aligned by region. It resulted in the massive exodus of refugees and displacement of population in Tajikistan. A large number of ethnic minorities fled Tajikistan during the civil war. It seems that many of these minorities would never return back to the country. It has caused a massive displacement resulting into a change in the demographic structure of the Tajikistan (see Table 7). The sudden decline in ethnic Russian population from 7.6 percent in 1989 to 1.1 percent in 2000 was because of the civil war and its consequences.

By September 1992, Tajikistan’s internal instability spilled its violence in Tajik-Afghan border. Many of the Islamic opposition supporters fled into Afghanistan, where they were trained and supplied arms and weapons and sent back to Tajikistan (Orr 1998:154 and see Izvestia 1993: 4), to fight against the government. This development in the border areas was accompanied by another problem of proliferation of arms and drug trafficking from Afghanistan (Naumkin 1997: 71-72) and the Pamirs. This had its impacts not only in Central Asia but also in other CIS member states.
Table 7. Demographic Population of Tajikistan (1989 - 2000) in percentage

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Nationality or ethnic groups</th>
<th>1989 (in percentage)</th>
<th>2000 (in percentage)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Tajik</td>
<td>62.3%</td>
<td>79.9%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Uzbek</td>
<td>23.5%</td>
<td>15.3%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Russians</td>
<td>7.6%</td>
<td>1.1%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Kazakh</td>
<td>0.2%</td>
<td>0.0%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Kyrgyz</td>
<td>1.3%</td>
<td>0.8%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Turkmen</td>
<td>0.4%</td>
<td>0.3%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ukrainian</td>
<td>0.8%</td>
<td>0.0%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Others</td>
<td>3.9%</td>
<td>2.6%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: Erlich 2006 URL: http://www.migrationinformation.org/Profiles/display.cfm?ID=411

At that time, Tajikistan possessed no regular army except 10,000 president guards to defend or prevent a conflict (Orr 1998: 152), and instability within the country. It was under such circumstances that the Russian government was compelled to consider peacekeeping.

5. RUSSIAN PEACEKEEPING OPERATION IN TAJIKISTAN

To ensure peace and security in Tajikistan as well as to safeguard Tajik-Afghanistan border was one of the objectives of Russian peacekeeping operation. This desire was reflected in their Military Doctrine and National Security concepts of 1993. On number of occasions, the then Russian president Boris Yeltsin, Minister of the Defence Pavel Grachev as well as the Minister of the Foreign Affairs Andrei Kozyrev had declared Tajikistan as a zone of special interest to the Russian Federation.
5.1. 1992 ad hoc Peacekeeping Operation

Russian peacekeeping operation in Tajikistan began in summer 1992 without the UN mandates but on the request from the Tajikistan government. Operation priority was given to political and negotiated approaches to solution of the crisis with comprehensive participation of the UN. The Russian Interior Ministry repeatedly appealed to both the warring sides in order to start negotiations. Moreover, the Minister of Foreign Affairs, Andrei Kozyrev, also made a similar appeal during his special visit to the Central Asia in October, 1992. On 19 September, Tajikistan’s acting president Akbarsho Iskanderov again requested for troop support from the CIS (Neumann and Solodovnik 1995: 6). However, due to the complex regional dynamics of Central Asian politics as well as its own domestic political considerations, Russian peacekeepers did not take up any peacekeeping tasks except for protecting refugees and guarding key government buildings and sites and installations for communication at the request of the Tajikistan government (Orr 1998:152).

During this period both the Islamic-democratic supporters and the pro-communist National Front tried to persuade the Russian military onto their side. In Kurgan-Tyube, Colonel Merkulov of the 201st MRD regiment was once told by a mob, who were trying to broke his barracks:

"You are no more than fifty and there are thousands of us. 'We' are professionals, he replied. 'Start something and you'll only find my men under mountains of your own dead. Any one of my subordinates is worth a hundred of your fighters" (Ibid).

Meanwhile, many other regional powers accused Russia for supplying arms and ammunition to particular warring factions. However, it was reported that these groups took away Russian weapons and equipments by using every possible means (Sokolov: 1997). The commander of the 201st MRD had reported that the Tajik Popular Front broke the barracks and stolen the arms and weapons including Tank and armoured vehicles at gun point (Nezavisimaya gazeta, 15 October 1997). These stolen vehicles were later destroyed by Russia helicopters on the divisional commander’s orders (Orr 1998:153). However, it also cannot be denied that in
some cases few Tajik nationals within the Russian army did possibly help fellow clans in fighting by supplying arms and ammunitions (Ibid). In fact, the unit of the 201st MRD was the source of arms for both the warring sides till late 1992. Such incidents reflected the weakness of the Russian peacekeeping forces due to shortage of manpower. In some of the 201st MRD base camps, circular walls were made to defend from arm grabbing (Ibid). Under such circumstance it would be wrong to presume that Russian peacekeeping operation at that time was partial.

Simultaneously, the Acting president Akbarsho Iskandrov appealed to the United Nations for peacekeeping and humanitarian assistance, but neither the Security Council nor the humanitarian agencies responded immediately ('UN Ready to Provide Aid,' January 22, 1993 in FBIS-SOV-90-015). Meanwhile, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, and Uzbekistan came out with a statement in November 1992 supporting the use of the 201st MRD "to protect civilians and vitally important facilities and assist in restoring law and order in Tajikistan," (Nezavisimaya Gazeta 1992). The request from Tajikistan and the support from these countries may be seen as the source of legitimacy for Russian peacekeeping operation in Tajikistan where peacekeeping was urgently needed to ensure peace and stability in the region.

5.2. Source of Mandate

After summer 1992, Russian peacekeeping operation in Tajikistan evolved through various multilateral treaties (Collective Security) as well as bilateral agreements with other CIS member states of Central Asia including Tajikistan. These treaties are the main sources of mandates for Russian peacekeeping operation in Tajikistan. Russia's early efforts to preserve the 'joint armed forces' and common military strategic space in the CIS initiated the idea of collective peacekeeping forces in former Soviet republics. On March 1992, 11 of the CIS member states signed an agreement on 'Groups of Military Observers and Collective Peacekeeping Forces in the CIS' (Rotar 1992). This agreement was known as Kiev Agreement. According to Lewis and Edward Marks, the agreement has many restrictive conditions, similar to UN "terms," which called for a request from all parties and a ceasefire in place (Lewis and Marks 1998: 65). However, the Russian effort of
making a joint armed force remained unsuccessful after Ukraine established its own national armies. It was soon followed by Moldova, Azerbaijan and Belarus establishing their national armies. It gave a blow to the idea of collective peacekeeping for a while. However, Russia and some of the former Soviet republics from the Caucasus and the Central Asian region continued looking for a possible solution to this urgent need of the post Soviet environment since it has remained a major concern for many of the CIS member states to establish a collective security.

On 15 May 1992, a multi-lateral treaty was signed at Tashkent on collective security.\(^2\) It was an outcome of Russia’s security policy towards the successor states of the Central Asia: Kazakhstan, Uzbekistan, Turkmenistan, Kyrgyzstan, and Tajikistan in the post Soviet environment. It is also in agreement with Russia’s struggle for maintaining its new identity in international politics as a regional power. However, in practice, the May 1992 treaty could not be implemented in the Central Asia due to the refusal of signatory member states to engage with Tajikistan. One of the important reasons behind this refusal was the complex regional dynamics of the Central Asian politics and domestic political considerations of the signatory states. However, Russia and Georgia has concluded a treaty on collective peacekeeping operation and sent their troops to South Ossetia in Georgia.

Under the protocol signed by the representatives of the governments of Tajikistan and Russia on July 21, 1992, Russian forces have been given the responsibility to protect the Tajik-Afghan and Tajik-China borders during a transitional period at the request of Tajikistan (The Current Digest of The Post Soviet Press 1992: 12). The presence of Russian forces and its peacekeeper role was further legitimized by the delayed response from the UN Security Council and humanitarian agencies (‘UN Ready to Provide Aid,’ January 1993 in FBIS-SOV-90-015). In fact, on October-November 1992, Tajikistan’s acting president Akhbarsho Iskandarov approached Russia and requested for the use of 201st MRD

\(^2\) Perhaps, this Treaty on Collective Security of May 1992, was concluded as a response to the break-up of the Soviet Union but also with an eye on the situation in Tajikistan. (Shashenkov 1994).
as a peacekeeper. The addition of specially trained units has replenished the 201st Motor Rifle Division. However, Russian peacekeeping continued to suffer from a shortage of manpower even after this addition. Check posts and barricade were installed on the roads around the Tajik capital. The measure, Russian maintained, was targeted only to preventing the infiltration of small gangs of thieves notorious for their handiwork in the capital city.

In 30 November 1992, another agreement was signed by the Presidents of the Russian Federation, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan and Uzbekistan in the Uzbek town of Termez. They shared the common view that the conflict in Tajikistan posed a danger to the entire Commonwealth of Independence States and also expressed their intention of intervening if the hostilities did not cease. In addition, they also agreed to contribute one battalion each to the collective peacekeeping effort. In the same month, a joint statement was released by the governments of Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan and Uzbekistan which further legitimised the Russian force to assume the peacekeeper role. The statement supported the use of Russian 201st MRD unit to protect civilians and vitally important facilities and assist in restoring law and order in Tajikistan (Rotar 1992). Therefore, Russia peacekeeping operation in Tajikistan started with a loosely defined CIS mandate.

5.3. First Operation

The first Russian peacekeeping operation in Tajikistan, after the ad hoc mission of summer of 1992, was launched in January 1993 and it was authorised by the CIS (Lewis and Edward Marks 1997: 67-68). However, the nature of conflict in the region had changed from civil war to guerrilla war which made it hard for the peacekeeper to maintain the traditional buffer zone. Like in other post Cold War conflicts, the conflict in Tajikistan involved the annihilation of civil communities leading to the problem of massive displacement in the region. Under this situation the main tasks of the operation also changed from those under the previous 1992 ad -hoc operation. Russian troops were deployed along Tajik-Afghan border as a measure to stop infiltration of Afghanistan Mujahadeen as well as to secure the border from spilling of the conflict into neighbouring states. The element of enforcement was absent from the functions of this particular peacekeeping mission.
by Russia and it differed from the traditional concept of peacekeeping in so far as it was limited to deployments at the border without maintaining a particular buffer zone, besides the difference in the nature of consent.

5.4. Incident of July 1993

Displaced populations crossed border, and opposition leaders used the neighbouring states as safe havens as conduits for combat supplies and as sources of manpower. Many of UTO groups trained in Afghanistan launched hit and run attacks across the border areas particularly in the Pyanj and Moskovskily, with the help from various Afghan warlords (Orr 1998: 154). In this attack many Russian border guards and guards under the Russian jurisdiction often became the target. For instance, on 13 July 1993, a border troop post manned by 47 Russian soldiers was assaulted by guerrillas, with mortar fire from across the Afghanistan border where 24 guards got killed and another 18 wounded (Serrano 2003:156-182). About 200 villagers, mostly Kulyabis, and some 60 attackers were also killed. Russian border guards (the Russian peacekeepers) retaliated by attacking Afghan villages with rockets and fixed wing aircrafts. According to James Sherr, the July 1993 incident has strengthened or further legitimised the military involvement of Russia in Tajikistan (Sherr 1993: 514-516).

In fact, the shocks of July 13 attack obliged Moscow to rethink over the structure and composition of its border guards. Thus, the Russian Defence Minister General Pavel Grachev made an order to improve the border guards with inclusion of mortars and heavy artillery. The 201st MRD was reinforced and two of its regiments were stationed close to the Afghan border in Kulyab and in Kurgan-Tyube. Furthermore, Air support including SU-25 ground attack aircraft was also deployed. At this point, in the global sphere, the rules of international peacekeeping were under debate over the three principles of traditional peacekeeping operations. Moreover, this incident alerted the neighbouring Central Asian states and strengthened their efforts in ensuring peace and stability in Tajikistan. The incident further paved the way for implementation of the CIS collective peacekeeping forces in Tajikistan.
Till the July 13 incident, the Russian peacekeeping operation in Tajikistan had been more or less inclined to Tajik government rather than being neutral as a third party. It was conducted with consent from one side of the warring groups while the traditional peacekeeping operation needs the consent from both of the warring factions (United Nations 2001). The Russian peacekeeping operation of 1992 was conducted on the request of the Tajikistan government (Neumann and Solodovnik 1995: 6), while January 1993 peacekeeping operation was authorised by CIS ³ (Sokolov 1997; and also see Lewis and Edward Marks 1997: 67-68). By deploying the Russian peacekeeping forces along with it Border Guards on Tajik-Afghan border not only stopped the spill of the conflict into neighbouring states but also pointed their guns to warring rivals’ (opposition supporters) hit and run activities across the border from Afghanistan.

5.5. Russian Peacekeeping Operation under the CIS Collective Peacekeeping Mission

The Russian peacekeeping operation in Tajikistan got reinforced by the CIS collective peacekeeping forces in late 1993 (Shashenkov 1994: 55). This was Russia’s second effort at peacekeeping in Tajikistan under chapter VIII of the UN charter. On 24 September 1993, a meeting was held in Moscow where the heads of Governments of Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, the Russian Federation, Tajikistan and Uzbekistan agreed to establish the CIS Collective Peacekeeping Forces in Tajikistan (multinational peacekeeping forces) (Nikitin 1996: 91). Russia’s 201st MRD formed the base of the CIS collective peacekeeping forces. Most of the Russian forces were deployed along the Tajik-Afghan border and Dushanbe while Kazakhstan’s troops were deployed in the mountainous region of Badakhshan.

Colonel-General Boris Pyankov of Russia was appointed as commander of the CIS Joint Peacekeeping Forces. Actual deployment of the 25, 000 collective forces began only in October 1993.⁴ This Joint Peacekeeping Forces contained the following mandate:

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³ Tajikistan was also one of the signatory members on 1992 collective security treaty.
⁴ In mid 1997, the CIS peacekeeping operation reached its peak time with 29,000 troops.
(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; and

(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 (United Nations 2001).

The mandate was to be renewed every six months as per the agreement. Turkmenistan did not join the agreement despite strong pressure from Russia. However, the absence of an official and comprehensive peacekeeping doctrine in the CIS has made successful peacekeeping a little complicated. Hence, realizing the need for a greater mandate, in September 1993, Russia and Kazakhstan together appealed to the UN for sanctioning a UN Security Council mandate to this 25,000-strong CIS force in Tajikistan as a United Nation peacekeeping force though no positive result came out of this initiative. In theory, however, the Russian peacekeeping operation in Tajikistan was legitimised under the Charter of the UN (Chapter VIII). It operated with the consent of the Tajik government (one of the warring forces in the conflict).

5.6. Negotiation Process

Till January 1994, the Russia led CIS collective peacekeeping operation consisted of 10,000 troops only but it successfully improved the situation within Tajikistan. It encouraged the government to consolidate its control over large areas of the country. The United Nations also extended it support for negotiation procedure. Russia along with the support of the UN initiated the first round of the inter-Tajik negotiation talk, which was held in Moscow in April 1994. Kyrgyzstan, Kazakhstan, Uzbekistan, Iran, Pakistan and even Afghanistan were also invited as observers for the negotiation process (Zviagelskaya 1997: 163). Agreements were
made on disarmament, cessation of armed conflict, and to organise for the resettlement of refugees as well as to work out the structure of the future government.

The Second round of talks was held in Tehran in summer 1994 where both government and opposition parties agreed to a ceasefire. However, the peace talks failed to suppress the hostilities between them. The ceasefire was repeatedly violated despite the presence of the UN, OSCE and Russian peacekeepers. The third peace talk was organised in Islamabad in November 1994 while the fourth peace talk was held in Almaty in May 1995. The peace talk between the UTO and government was stretched into 1997. In June, an agreement was signed on power sharing between the government and the opposition and it was implemented in 2000. By 1997, the hostilities between the two came to an end and the Russia led CIS collective peacekeeping operation started withdrawing their troops.

6. NATURE OF THE RUSSIAN PEACEKEEPING OPERATIONS

Russian peacekeeping operation in Tajikistan was purely military in nature. The Russian Military Doctrine of 1993 provides an insight into Russian peacekeeping operation in Tajikistan. However, the Russian peacekeeping in the Tajik conflict failed to implement traditional norms of peacekeeping. But functionally, the Russian peacekeeping operation was not very different from the international concepts of peacekeeping where a wide range of activities such as election monitoring, provision of humanitarian relief, assistance in the settlement of a conflicts, monitoring of cease-fire are considered as the means for conflicts resolution. The tasks of the Russian armed forces were the following:

1. Separating armed groups,
2. protecting refugees (particularly ethnic Russian),
3. political initiation for negotiation
4. providing humanitarian aids
5. Monitoring ceasefire and
6. Guarding border to prevent infiltration of Afghan Mujahadeen and to stop spill over of the conflict into neighbours.
Separating the opposition groups remained a difficult task for Russian peacekeepers in Tajikistan since the conflict was clan-based with no properly defined conflict zone. Moreover, the rebel UTO forces used guerrilla, semi-
guerrilla, sabotage or terrorist tactics in the civil war. Hit and run tactics was frequently carried out by the opposition UTO supporters from the Afghanistan side in the bordering areas. Indeed, violence was scattered throughout the town and conflicts assumed an exceptionally complex character from the very beginning. Monitoring a ceasefire or establishment of buffer zones remained unsuccessful. Therefore, the Russian peacekeeping forces as part of its post Cold War mobile forces used helicopters in order to observe the crowd movement and to disperse the warring groups from direct hostilities. Local administration buildings were placed under reinforced protection. A mobile manoeuvring group made up of one company mounted on armoured vehicles was also posted in the city centre ready to be transferred to any threatened sector.

The Russian Forces and Peacekeeping Operation

According to Reavsky, the Soviet armies were too big, too heavy on armour, too centralized, and often with poor tactical training and low morale (Raevsky 1993: 9). These armies were included in the post Cold War Russian Mobile Forces and have been deployed in the CIS as its peacekeeper units. In Tajikistan too, the 201st MRD has played the main role of Russian peacekeeping. It belonged to the Soviet army and has been in region since the Soviet era (see above Map 3). During 1992, according to Andres Smith Serrano, the Russian peacekeeping force in Tajikistan has included 200 Airborne units, 8,000 army and 2,000 Russian Border Guards (Serrano 2003: 168). Most of these Border Guards were deployed in five location near the Tajik-Afghan borders like Pyanj, Moskovskiy, Kalay-Khumb, Khorog and Murgab. Forts were built with support of the Mortors and heavy artillery in the borders to stop infiltration of the armed groups from Afghanistan.

The number of peacekeepers increased in 1994 and 1996 (Ibid). In January 1994, according to Pyankov, CIS peacekeeping forces included up to 2,000 tanks, 350 infantry fighting vehicles, 350 artillery pieces, aviation and helicopters (Rossiya, 1994: 20). However, the Russian peacekeepers remained unsuccessful to bring about peace in the country though the presence of the Russian and CIS peacekeeping forces minimised the tension between the government and opposition groups.
The 201st MRD has been accused for its involvement in conflicts in favour of the post Soviet Tajikistan communist government. In fact, some of the Russian troops got involved in the Tajik conflict with little understanding of the emerging situation. Two main factors were mainly responsible for this. First, Russia’s 201st MRD consisted of a large number of soldiers from ethnic Tajiks from the Kulyab area. Hence, these soldiers (Russian soldiers but ethnically Tajik) extended their support to one against another ethnic group. Secondly, it was because of the lack of discipline among soldiers.

Moreover, during the early 1990’s, particularly just after the collapse of the USSR, the Russian armies were known for lack of discipline as well as for lack of communication between Moscow and its military bases in the former Soviet republics. Such a situation allowed the possibility for the peacekeeping troops to become partisan while performing their peacekeeping functions. Further, it has also been in the Russian perception that UTO has a link with Islamic fundamentalism. Under such circumstances, the initial stage of Russian peacekeeping effort in Tajikistan remained partial in practice since the conflict was fought between the ruling government and UTO.

7. INTERNATIONAL PEACEKEEPERS: In Central Asia

A number of international and regional diplomatic efforts were made to find a peaceful solution to the conflict in Tajikistan including by its neighbouring countries as well as by the Conference on Security and Cooperation in Europe (CSCE) [now the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE)]. These efforts were accompanied by strenuous Russian diplomatic lobbying arising out of the awareness in Moscow that unilateral peacekeeping by Russia could freeze the developing partnership with the Western states and seriously damage the international image of the new Russian state. At the same time, even the more Western-oriented Russian politicians were under domestic nationalist and military pressure to stabilise the CIS frontiers lest they threatened Russian borderlands further, to identify Russian strategic interests in the CIS and to protect Russian-speaking communities from the civil strife.
7.1. The Russian Diplomatic Campaign

Since 1993, Russia has been searching to lead a diplomatic campaign for international approval for Russian 'peacekeeping' activities in the former USSR. In this campaign the Russian Foreign Ministry has tended to project a softer, more conciliatory line than that adopted by Russian military officers on the correct use of peacekeeping forces. Moscow further argues that deployment of the Russian peacekeeping has to comply with international law.

This emphasis was the expectation of Russian diplomats and it also reflected Kozyrev’s personal interest in international organisations. To some extent Russian diplomats had viewed peacekeeping as an instrument for raising the prestige of Russia, both in the 'near abroad' and internationally. But a more self interested interpretation of peacekeeping has been promoted since autumn 1993 as a new, more nationalist consensus on Russian foreign policy interests has established itself in Moscow.

From the outset, the international debate has revolved around the nature and legitimacy of Russian intervention in former Soviet republics conflict and its conflicts resolution process as a third party, in particular the limits of unilateral action. Yeltsin's initial call, in March 1993, for 'international organisations, including the United Nations, to grant Russia special powers as guarantor of peace and stability in the region of the former USSR' suggests that Yeltsin was claiming exclusive rights and obligations for Moscow. Certainly the Baltic States and Ukraine had interpreted his appeal as a crude attempt to apply a Monroe Doctrine to cover the successor states in breach of international legal norms.

International scepticism about regional Russian-led peacekeeping operations has reflected in the first place, on Russia's failure to maintain credible impartiality in the conflicts in question. Secondly, the use of other non-neutral contingents (such as Georgians in Georgia or Moldovans in Moldova) in Russia led CIS peacekeeping operation in Tajikistan. Not only was the issue of the impartiality and neutrality of the forces engaged at stake: the western countries further argued that Russian-led model of peacekeeping force were not fully
multinational in nature. And also, argued that Russia led operation was not placed under sole UN command but through local commanders.

In September 1993, speaking before the United Nations, Russian Foreign Minister Kozyrev dismissed the western accusation and the problem posed by such 'unconventional methods' and recommended that such methods be employed and also introduced in other conflicts. In question of multinational forces, the western argument would be wrong since the Russia led CIS collective peacekeeping in former Soviet republics was conducted under the bilateral agreement and combined forces. But the only fact is that Russian troops dominated the collective peacekeeping operation. However, in post cold war conflicts all the contributor nations were not necessarily capable or even prepared to become involved in operations where a more forceful approach was needed. The prolonged, unsuccessful UN peacekeeping operation in the ethnic crisis in Somalia, and the NATO peacekeeping operation in Afghanistan, where the peacekeepers were also targeted and became victims of the ethnic rivalries besides the warring parties, point to such situations.

The efforts of Russia and Kazakhstan to be recognised by the UN on its CIS forces in Tajikistan and also over its mandate met a humiliating failure. The western countries' accusation over the lack of the UN command in Russian led peacekeeping operation was another reason behind Russia's failure to get the UN mandate. However, the accusation from the Western countries may be said to be biased for they themselves do not have a clean record on this count. Russia might well ask: was the USA led NATO intervention in Somalia and Bosnia solely under the UN command? It was conducted under the NATO procedures, not under the UN procedures. Politically speaking, the overwhelming US influence in the launching of these more military operations meant that the UN Security Council's focus of attention corresponded more closely to US foreign policy interests. Moreover, in April 1994 Russian Defence Minister, Grachev stated bluntly that Russian peacekeeping forces in CIS crisis zones could not be replaced by UN subunits, and only the UN observers could be present in these zones. He claimed this partly in order to reflect the UN's own unwillingness to become fully engaged in the CIS, but also to reflect the preference of the majority of CIS members for the
Russian army as peacekeeper on their territories. This was followed by a joint statement to the UN by the Russian foreign and defence ministries that they had no need of 'permission' from the UN and the CSCE to carry out peacemaking operations in CIS countries.

Moreover, with the realisation of the strategic importance of Central Asia, Russia started assuming their special responsibility in maintaining political stability in such regions which were vitally bound up with its own national interests on two levels: first, where peacekeeping tends to uphold a Russian strategic presence and influence and secondly, where it is tied to the specific issue of the Russian ethnic and cultural diaspora.

7.2. The Role of UN

The United Nations became indirectly involved in conflict resolution in Tajikistan in September 1992, when Secretary-General, Boutros Boutros-Ghali, made a response to a letter from the President of Uzbekistan. The UN dispatched its fact-finding mission to Uzbekistan and Tajikistan from 13 to 23 September in order to make a first-hand assessment of the ground situation (United Nations 1992). Further, a United Nations good offices mission was sent to the region which visited Tajikistan, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, the Russian Federation and Uzbekistan in November 1992 and held a series of discussions with Government officials of these countries. These missions were followed by dispatch of another group of small units of political, military and humanitarian officers on 21 January 1993, which was known as UNMOT, to monitor the situation on the ground and to help coordinate the international community's response to the humanitarian situation in the country.

In April 1993, reports from the United Nations mission led the Secretary-General to conclude that there could be an escalation of the conflict. This was especially true in the border areas between Tajikistan and Afghanistan where urgent action was required to establish a ceasefire and also to start a political dialogue among all concerned for the earliest possible solution to the problem. In
this context, the Secretary-General appointed, on 26 April, a Special Envoy, Ramiro Piriz Ballon, for Tajikistan with the following mandates:

* To obtain agreement on a ceasefire and make recommendations on appropriate international monitoring mechanisms as may be appropriate

* To ascertain the positions of all the concerned parties and make good offices available to assist in the establishment of a process of negotiations for a political solution;

* To enlist the help of neighbouring countries and others concerned in achieving those objectives (United Nations 1994).

In the following months, numerous discussions were held between the Special envoy and the president of Tajikistan along with their Government officials. Ramiro Piriz Ballon also visited Uzbekistan, the Russian Federation, Kyrgyzstan, Kazakhstan, Afghanistan, the Islamic Republic of Iran, Pakistan and Saudi Arabia, for talks with their leaders. In Tajikistan, Afghanistan and Iran, he met with leaders of various groups opposing the Tajik Government and other prominent opposition personalities. After all, UN knew that without the Moscow’s influence the civil war in Tajikistan could not be brought to an end. Therefore it highlighted that the UN had to recognise the Moscow led CIS peacekeeping operation in order to maintain peace and security in Central Asia.

Under the UN pressure, both the conflicting parties in Tajikistan opened their first official talks in Moscow in April 1994. Russia had also taken an important role in bringing this talk by pressuring both warring factions. The talk was held in the presence of observers from the OCSE and other UN member countries. However, the talk failed to bring peace in Tajikistan in particular and Central Asia in general. The United Tajik Opposition (UTO) claimed that the ruling government was responsible for the failure of the talk. UTO’s supporters and fundamentalists continued to conduct raids against government troops in an attempt to destabilise the domestic situation and to force the government to make
concessions. The United Nations, OSCE and Russia led CIS peacekeeper were unable to stop these raids. Moreover, since the UTO and its militia were strongly linked with the Islamic fundamentalist such as Taliban, these subsequent attacks and frequent infiltrations further legitimized the presence of the Russian peacekeepers. The government’s announcement for presidential elections and adoption of a new constitution further worsened the crisis situation in the country. After the unsuccessful attempt by the UN, it was under the Russian pressure that the Tajikistan government decided to postpone the presidential election till November 1994 (Naumkin 1997: 75). In September 1994 again, under pressure from Russia, OCSE and the UN, a high level second round talk was held in Teheran (Iran). It was held under the supervision of the UN but it also failed to bring peace in the region.

Despite their disagreement over peaceful resolution of the crisis, this talk brought an agreement over the creation of cease-fire which had to be monitored by the UN observers. It was under this agreement that several prisoners were released and other confidence building measures were also established. In October 1994, the third round of official talks took place in Pakistan and the previous cease-fire agreement was further extended for another six months. From 1994 to 1997 all warring parties repeatedly breached the cease-fire, but no common solution to the problems was arrived at. In the meantime, the Russia led CIS peacekeeping mandate was extended too for another six months in Tajikistan.

Despite these UN efforts to resolve the Tajikistan political instability, the presence of other observers and creation of several blocs became very common after 1996 as was seen in the creation of the Leninabad bloc and its claim as the third force in the ongoing Tajikistan civil war. By 1997 they started demanding separate seat at the UN sponsored inter-Tajik talks. And also throughout 1995, sporadic fighting on the Tajik-Afghan border and terrorist activities in urban areas continued. Frequent attacks had been launched by the Opposition militia from Afghanistan against Russian led CIS peacekeepers. This increasing infiltration and frequent attacks on CIS peacekeeper and Tajikistan army highlighted one of the major obstacles to the successful peacekeeping operation in the region. It thus
became clear that as long as the Afghanistan war continued, there would be a problem in the peacekeeping operation in Tajikistan.

7.3. The Role of NATO

The option of direct NATO involvement in peacekeeping tasks in former Soviet territory was highly sensitive for Russian diplomats and had been uncompromisingly rejected by Russian military chiefs and nationalist deputies. And also from the Russian strategic point of view, such involvement was considered a threat to Russian national interests. Perhaps this increasing NATO influence was one of the factors behind president Boris Yeltsin's original proposal for Russia led CIS peacekeeping role to act as a regional organisation under the charter VIII (Article 52) of UN Charter in order to guarantee stability to former Soviet territory. Colonel-General Mikhail Kolesnikov, first deputy chief of the Russian General Staff argued in summer 1992 that the intensification of military conflicts between former Soviet republics could lead to direct intervention by NATO forces (Nezavisimaya gazeta 1992). This scenario was evoked again by Marshal Shaposhnikov, the CIS Joint Forces Commander-in-Chief at the end of 1992. He flatly opposed NATO obtaining, within the CSCE framework, the right to use its armed forces to settle conflicts on the external borders of the CIS (Krasnaya zvezda 1992). These reactions had reflected the continuous suspicion of NATO's growing influencing power in post-Cold War Central Asia, which had begun in the former east Europe. And it is true that NATO has an interest in the security implications of a disintegrated Ukrainian state, of military actions on its borders and of direct Ukrainian-Russian military clashes.

However, there was no definite role of NATO in the Central Asia ethnic conflicts but they frequently pressured the UN through diplomats and they were successful in blocking the grant of UN mandate to Russian led CIS peacekeeping in the region. No practical contribution was made by NATO towards peacekeeping efforts in former Soviet territory; its contribution came through the medium of a draft programme of military cooperation which developed between NATO and the Russian Defence Ministry. A Joint discussion on the settlement of crises at CIS flashpoints was held in January 1994 between the NATO and Russian leaders.
NATO agreed to offer assistance Russian and the CIS peacekeeping forces, especially in training specialists as observers.

7.4. The Role of Western European Union

In the Petersburg Declaration of 19 June 1992, the Western European Union (WEU) declared its readiness to support the implementation of conflict prevention and crisis management measures under the UN or CSCE auspices, which would involve peacekeeping activities. According to Peter van Ham, WEU has a potential for far-reaching implications of peacekeeping, and also for involvement in peace enforcement and conflict prevention in the former Soviet Union (Ham 1994: 76). The assumption of such a role by WEU was viewed with less trepidation by Russian military officers than equivalent to NATO involvement, although there has been little response to the subject so far in Moscow. WEU countries, including the Central and East European states which in May 1994 acquired WEU 'Associate Partner' status, expressed their willingness to play the role of critical observers of Russian practice in peacekeeping and enforcement measures in CIS states. Russia had a hope to increase European support for selected, limited operations in crisis zones if WEU observers reported back on the activities of Russian forces and if the WEU were to be offered certain other practical tasks alongside the CIS.

7.5. The Role of the CSCE

The Council of Security and Cooperation in Europe (CSCE) had sent its first mission in March 1992 just before the major clash took place in the Central Asia (Brenninkmeijer 1998: 182.). Its main purpose was to assess the existing political situation of Tajikistan and to find out a possible solution. Efforts were made to establish a democratic government and to check human rights violation. Along with the UN, the CSCE's main priority was to help prevent a renewed outbreak of large-scale violence. The CSCE mission once expressed its concern about drug trafficking and economic difficulties which were believed to trigger regional discontent and political instability. This was yet another factor that legitimized the Russian presence in the Tajik-Afghan borders. But the CSCE refused to recognise the Russia peacekeeping operation in the region.
In 1993-94, Russia's campaign to obtain CSCE approval for their peacekeeping operations in CIS was a lobby to secure UN mandate. The CSCE, on other hand, had already become a regional organisation under the UN charter VIII and under its own mandate the CSCE observers were already assigned to South Ossetia, Transdneister and Abkhazia. At the same time, Moscow pressed the CSCE to accept the idea of Russian forces operating in areas of inter-ethnic conflict in the FSU as CSCE peacekeeping forces. Kozyrev lobbied strongly, but unsuccessfully, for this objective at the meeting of the CSCE Council in Rome in December 1993. At that meeting, CSCE had agreed on the long term Mission to Tajikistan, a model of CSCE monitoring of Russian and other CIS peacekeeping.

However, the CSCE had earlier refused to send its forces or even CSCE command and control except for some CSCE physical presence (both in Russian regional headquarters and with Russia's troops on the ground) to monitor how the Russians had been carrying out peacekeeping activities. And the long term Mission of CSCE began its work only in 1994, and soon accused the Russian armed forces in Tajikistan under General Pyankov for its unwillingness to encourage inter-Tajik talks. Paradoxically though, around this time, a peace process had just begun at the initiative of the Russian Minister of Foreign affairs, Andrei Kozyrev.

A diplomatic war had begun between the Russian government and the CSCE over several disagreements, which was quite common during 1995-1999. This diplomatic clash created a pessimistic atmosphere for the actual CSCE engagement in the CIS region as a peacekeeper. Yet the indirect efforts of the CSCE still had an impact on Russian/CIS peacekeeping activities in regions. Russia had already deployed its own peacekeeping forces, under the aegis of the CIS, to monitor a cease-fire agreement. And it was decided that all the heads of observation posts had to be Russian officers, the agreement would thwart the earlier CSCE proposal that international (not Russian/CIS) observers monitor the activities of the peacekeepers as well as those of the combatants. This CSCE idea

5 The idea was opposed by Ukraine, Estonia, other former Soviet republics, the East European countries, Turkey and some Western states such as Canada and Norway. For a Russian assessment of the CSCE debate on this issue see (Izvestiya 1993)
stemmed from growing suspicions about the motives of Russian military policy in the region as a whole.

The war came to an end in 1997 with the signing of an agreement called the power-sharing agreement between the government and the opposition in 2000. But the tension is still prevailing between the parties as well as clashes also take place in the border area. However, Russia has decreased its military presence within Tajikistan. Moreover, Russia agreed to complete the withdrawal of its peacekeepers and border guards from Tajikistan in June 2005, while it continues to base the 201st RMD in Dushanbe and till this day, the Russian army has a presence in Tajikistan.

8. CONCLUSION

An increasing assertion of ethnic identities in the post-cold war politics in the CIS as well as the rise of Islamic fundamentalism in Central Asia with growing influence from Afghanistan disturbed the stability of the region. The multi-ethnic character of these societies and the tensions arising thereof further worsened the existing political situation of the region. The civil war in Tajikistan highlighted the complex nature of conflicts in the multi-ethnic societies of Central Asia. The Tajik conflict was not separatist in nature; it was a civil war in the true sense of term. It was by all accounts a war between various clans with each clan nurturing an ambition of becoming the dominant power.

At its simplest, the Tajik civil war has fought by two sides: one made of primarily anti-communist, pro-democracy and pro-Islamist supporters and the other, made up of pro-communist forces that opposed fundamentalism and democratization. Of course, no conflict is quite that simple, and the Tajik conflict is the most complex in Central Asia.

The post Soviet Russian peacekeeping operation in Tajikistan had the same purpose as those of general international peacekeeping missions as it attempted to bring a diplomatic solution by bringing the warring factions to the negotiable table. Though, in practice, Russian peacekeeping in Tajikistan differed considerably from classical UN peacekeeping. It was not mandated by an international organization,
nor was it impartial in the strict meaning of the term. It included, moreover, as a rule, an enforcement element, which is alien to classical peacekeeping. It reflected Russian claims of a "special responsibility" to maintain "stability" on the territory of the FSU. Yet Russian intention was impartial with the sole objective to make possible a negotiation between the warring factions in order to ensure peace in region.

Moreover, the Russian peacekeeping operation in Tajikistan was organised and conducted within the bounds of the UN Charter even though Russia and the CIS peacekeeping forces were granted the UN observer status in CIS conflicts only in March 1994. The mandates relating to the Russian peacekeeping operations have often been unclear, or were disregarded soon after being signed. The Russia-led CIS peacekeeping operation in Tajikistan crisis was conducted under the auspices of the agreements of 1992 on collective security treaty and collective peacekeeping. The involvement of heavy arms and the proximity of the conflicting zones as well as the inclusion of ethnic Tajiks in its troops made the Russian peacekeeping operation unique in nature as well as prone to allegation.

One thing is clear that, when a great power involves its military in a neighbouring country, which has until recently been a part of the same state formation, the chances are very high of taking sides. Russian peacekeeping in Tajikistan was no exception but rather a clear example of this. The opposition forces apparently accused Russia and the CIS peacekeepers of supplying the pro-communist fighters with weapons during the conflict. It was reported that some commanders of the 201st division sold their weapons to pro-communist forces, but others were simply surrounded and forced to give up their equipment. Given the state of the Russian military at the time, it is difficult to know whether the Russian forces gave up their weapons out of sympathy, greed or fear. Either way, the case of the 201st MRD in Tajikistan is clearly the only case where the Russian forces maintained a semblance of neutrality in a conflict zone.

Having analyzed their actions in the "near abroad", it can be concluded that theoretically, Russian peacemaking operations in Tajikistan were more or less the same with those actions taken by a third party (or a coalition of forces) to resolve a
conflict between two or more opposing sides. Practically, Russian peacekeeping operations had a mixed role: it had both the third party and primary party elements. Since it had no elements of reoccupation or reestablishment of Russian empire, there was no question of a neo-imperialist plan in the Russian peacekeeping operation in Tajikistan. However, there is no doubt that Russian peacekeeping operation in Tajikistan was successful only up to a certain extent in stopping bloodshed but it turned out to be very expensive both in terms of financial considerations and casualties.