CHAPTER – V
RUSSIA’S PEACEKEEPING OPERATION IN GEORGIA AND MOLDOVA
Chapter 5

RUSSIA'S PEACEKEEPING OPERATION IN GEORGIA AND MOLDOVA

1. INTRODUCTION

The conflicts in Southern Caucasus (particularly in Georgia) and also in Moldova, a region which the Soviet once considered a corridor to the West and to Eastern Europe as well as its own internal buffer zone, compelled Russia to launch its peacekeeping operations in the region. In Georgia, the demands for separate independent status by the Abkhazians and South Ossetiansrocked the country soon after it got independence. The conflict in Abkhazia began in 1989 and accelerated momentum in 1992. Since 1992, Russian peacekeeping operations in the Transcaucasia as well as in the Transdniestrian region of the Republic of Moldova had drawn the attention of the international community and the western countries. It has been argued by several Western writers that Russia aimed at expanding and consolidating its powerbase throughout the region by subduing the newly independent states of the Transcaucasia and Moldova. In both Transcaucasia and Transdniestria, the Russian peacekeeping forces have been accused of supporting or patronising one or other of the conflicting sides. In fact, in the post Cold War international or regional peacekeeping operations, the three basic principles of peacekeeping have often been found to be debatable.

Russian peacekeeping operations were unique both in Moldova and Georgia, but not because of their multidimensional tasks. It was the composition of the troops which made it unusual, as the parties to the conflict were included in the peacekeeping force alongside its troops. The operations in both the conflict zones were deployed not under the UN mandate. However, Russia's desire for international legitimacy of its efforts in peacekeeping operations in Transcaucasia got fulfilled when the UN Security Council in 1994 sent a military observation mission there.
This chapter examines the evolution of the post-Soviet Russian Peacekeeping operations in Georgia and Moldova. It is divided into two sections. The first focuses on Georgia (in South Ossetia conflict and in Abkhazia conflict) while the second examines the case of Moldova. Both sections begin with an historical analysis with particular references on the origin of these conflicts. It further analyses the unique characteristics of Russian peacekeeping operations that arise due to the involvement of troops from both the warring factions in peace operations. For a fuller understanding of Russian approaches to peacekeeping operations, the chapter further discusses the Russian interests towards these countries and its responses to the conflicts.

SECTION -A

2. GEORGIA: Historical Background

Georgia has a history of an independent existence of its own statehood with a deep rooted cultural identity. But there were frequent changes in its territorial boundaries with continued attacks on them from the neighbouring powerful states. For instance, the Ottoman Empire’s campaign into the Caucasus in early 18th century caused frequent changes in Georgia’s southern and eastern territory (Naumkin 1997: 29-30). The northern and western parts of Georgia were the main areas where the emergence of the Georgian culture and development took place. In 1770s, in order to protect its territorial boundaries from the neighbouring Muslim states Georgia sought Russian Empire’s help. Hence, in 1783 the Georgian king Irakly, was compelled to ask for Russian protection in order to resist Muslim expansion from the South-west (Ibid: 30). It was under this agreement signed by Irakly and the Russian emperor that Georgia had been given protection with full autonomy but that sowed the seed for the present instability of the state.

By 1801, Georgia lost its autonomous status and was included in the Russian administration as a new Russian province. Perhaps, this inclusion of Georgia was a Russian strategic move to use Georgia as a buffer state between Russia and Turkey and pave channel for its ride to North Caucasus. For
strengthening Russian control over this newly included province, the Tsarist administration under its policies of Russification, allowed the inclusion of the Georgian ruling population into the Russian gentry. In support of this policy, a nationalist policy was introduced under which the Tsar encouraged the settlement of various ethnic groups within Georgia, which brought about shifts in the ethno-demographic structure of the state (see Fig. 4).

Map 4. Georgia Political Map

Source: Encyclopaedia
Figure 4. Ethnic Demography of Georgia in 1989

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Nationality</th>
<th>Georgian</th>
<th>Armenian</th>
<th>Azeri</th>
<th>Russian</th>
<th>Abkhaz</th>
<th>Ossetian</th>
<th>Others</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Population in Per cent</td>
<td>70.1%</td>
<td>8.1%</td>
<td>5.7%</td>
<td>6.3%</td>
<td>1.8%</td>
<td>3.0%</td>
<td>5%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: Naumkin 1997: 35

A tension between the various ethnic groups started to develop with the emergence of the Georgian National Movement, which demanded full autonomy of Georgia within Russia. Meanwhile, the ethnic composition of the non-Georgians had gone up and got already scattered in the Southern and Eastern parts of the province. It was only after the 1917 revolution that Georgia was given a de facto independent status for the time being. Georgia was re-occupied, despite the Great Britain serving as guarantor for its independence, by the Red Army in 1921 (Salinas 2005; Mackinlay and Peter Cross (eds.) 2003: 64), and joined the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics (USSR). Throughout the Soviet period, all political and ethnic tension that emerged within Georgia was suppressed under the strong control of the communist system.

However, the Moscow announcement to recognise the various ethnic communities in Georgia encouraged the non-Georgians to start demanding autonomy in the 1990’s. Because of this historical animosity as well as Georgia’s strategic location bordering the Black Sea, the Soviet Union installed its military base in the region. The Russian Federation, as the sole successor of the former Soviet Union has continued these Soviet legacy. Therefore, when conflicts broke out in 1992 in former Soviet republics approximately 20,000 ground troops of Russian armed forces were located in Georgia (Hedenskog and Robert L. Larsson 2005: 81-82). For instance, in Sakhumi (Abkhazia), Batumi, Akhalkalaki and Vaziani, 42 military bases were there with a large headquarter located on acres of prime real estate in downtown Tbilisi.
2.1. Origin of the Conflict in South Ossetia

The origin of Georgia’s South Ossetia conflict lies in the history of the Soviet Union formation. The ethnic Ossetians are the native people of the Caucasus region and they were settled down there since very early period of history. Since then, Georgians and Ossetians had been living in peace with each other until early 1920’s. Both ethnic groups have had a high level of interaction and a high rate of intermarriage (DARC 2006; and also see “Georgian-Ossetian conflict,” URL: http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Georgian-Ossetian_conflict). Ethnic tension became visible for first time during the de-facto independent period of Georgia (1918-1921). During the period between 1918 and 1920 a series of Ossetian rebellions took place. In 1920, a violence clash broke out when Georgian Mensheviks sent National Guards and regular army units to Tskhinvali to crush the uprisings. Ossetian sources claim that about 5,000 Ossetians were killed and more than 13,000 subsequently died from hunger and epidemics.

In 1921, the Soviet Red Army invaded Georgia and the South Ossetian Autonomous Oblast (SOAO) was created within Georgia. Even as previously existing tensions had not been resolved, a new source was created due to the forced migration policy of Joseph Stalin and his successors during the Soviet period. During this period many of the ethnic Ossetians were deported or forced to settle in various parts of the Soviet republics. As a result, in 1970’s ethnic Ossetians like other ethnic groups of the CIS were found scattered in North and South Caucasus.

The reforms of glasnost and perestroika had provided an opportunity for the growth of Georgian national Liberation movement as well as Ossetia Popular front (Ademon Nykhas) in late 1980’s. The reforms made possible the emergence of these movements which legitimised the ethnic groups to consolidate or strengthen their identities. Moreover, it enlarged the tension among the dominant ethnic Georgians and the minority Ossetians. In this background, the ethnic Ossetians began to demand an autonomous status of South Ossetia.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Nationality or ethnic groups</th>
<th>Abkhazia</th>
<th>Adzharia</th>
<th>South Ossetia</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Georgians including Adzharians</td>
<td>45.7</td>
<td>82.8</td>
<td>29.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Abkhazians</td>
<td>17.8</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Greeks</td>
<td>2.8</td>
<td>1.9</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Russians</td>
<td>14.3</td>
<td>7.7</td>
<td>2.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Armenians</td>
<td>14.6</td>
<td>4.0</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ossetians</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>66.2</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ukranians</td>
<td>2.2</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>


Open tension between the Georgians and the Ossetians began in August 1989 after the Supreme Council of Georgia announced Georgian language as a new state language (Lewis and Marks 1998: 69-71). During Soviet Union period, the Georgian was the official state language, with some of the minority languages having equal status in minority areas (DARC 2006). However, in an atmosphere of nationalist euphoria and chauvinism it increased the insecurity felt by the minorities and hence, they perceived the announcement as a discriminatory policy against non Georgian ethnics group. Therefore, 1989 announcement of the
Georgian language as a new state language remained one of the immediate causes of the conflict between the Georgians and the Ossetians.

The tension was further worsened by the South Ossetian Supreme Soviet’s decision, on 10 November 1989, to unite South Ossetia with the North Ossetian ASSR (Autonomous Soviet Socialist Republic) which is a part of Russia (Payin 1994: 73). A day later, the Georgian SSR Supreme Soviet revoked the decision and the previous autonomous status of South Ossetia was abolished (Lewis and Marks 1998: 69-71). On November 23, thousands of Georgian nationalists led by Zviad Gamsakhurdia and other opposition leaders marched to Tskhinvali, the South Ossetian capital, to hold a meeting there.

In response to Zviad Gamsakhurdia’s initiative, the Ossetians blockaded the roads. It fueled further tensions and by 1990, the clash between the Georgians and Ossetians took an ugly turn. In September 1990, the South Ossetian parliament declared full independence as South Ossetian Democratic Republic (Naumkin 1997: 37), and again sought for its inclusion in Russian Federation. At this juncture, the Georgian Supreme Soviet announced the date for general election.

The general election was held in October but South Ossetia boycotted and called it illegal. However, Gamsakhurdia and his party succeeded in forming a unitary government under the slogan of the “Georgia for the Georgians” (Ibid). The tension between the two took a sharp turn soon after Gamsakhurdia assumed the post of the Chairman of the Supreme Soviet of the Georgian SSR in November 1990. However, Gamsakhurdia was deposed in a violent coup just months after being elected as president. His strong anti-Russian policies and intense Georgian nationalism had a powerful impact on the regions of South Ossetia and Abkhazia, both historically loyal to Moscow.¹

¹ Gamsakhurdia was ousted in January 1992 by his own National Guard after supporting the December coup against Yeltsin. After three months of fighting in the streets of Tbilisi, Gamsakhurdia and his men fled to Chechnya. In 1994 he returned to Georgia and launched a civil war against President Eduard Shevardnadze before dying in mysterious circumstances later that year.
Map 5. South Ossetia Region

Legend
- • Villages under Georgian control
- ○ Villages under Osetian control
- --- Osetian bypass route
- --- Georgian bypass route
- ------ Security corridor
- ⭕ 15 km conflict zone
- - - - - - Russian/Georgian border
- . . . . . . Border of former South Ossetia
- - - - - - Roads

Source: International Crisis Group 2007: 27
On 10 December 1990, South Ossetia conducted its own elections but it was declared illegal by Georgia. On the next day, the Georgian Supreme Soviet dissolved the Southern Ossetian autonomous status (Macfarlane 1997: 512) and declared a state of emergency. On the same day, in Tskhinvali (capital of Southern Ossetia) Ossetian policemen as well as two other Georgians were killed. The Ossetians claimed that this was done by members of Gamsakhurdia’s personal guard.

The Georgian parliament declared, a day later, an extraordinary situation on the territory of the former autonomous region. On 5 January 1991, Georgian police forces and paramilitary units entered the capital of Southern Ossetia (DARC 2006). The urban fighting destroyed Tskhinvali, but the understaffed and poorly trained Georgian troops were unable to secure a victory and retreated on 26 January 1991. Relying largely on an unorganized citizen’s militia, the Georgian side reportedly committed numerous human rights violations in the breakaway region (Helsinki Watch (ed.) 1992). Afterwards the Ossetian force succeeded in pushing back the Georgian forces several kilometres.

In mid 1991, the inter-ethnic war escalated with blockades, hostage-taking, and artillery attacks (Lewis and Marks 1998: 69-71). Meanwhile, an active military confrontation between the Ossetian and Georgian formations was over. In fact, the tactical aim of each side was to maintain the territory it controlled. But the outbreak of a major bloodshed was stopped only after the intervention of Soviet army units (which later became a part of the Russian army) (DARC 2006, and also see “Georgian-Ossetian conflict,” URL: http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Georgian-Ossetian_conflict). However, several people were wounded in the subsequent clashes between Georgians and Ossetians.

2.2. Origin of Georgia - Abkhazian Conflict

As mentioned above, Georgia declared its independence in May 1918 just a year after the fall of the Russian empire in 1917 (but re-occupied by Soviet Union in 1921). Following the establishment of Soviet Rule in the Trans-Caucasus, Georgia had become a part of USSR and Abkhazia was declared an Independent Soviet
Socialist Republic in March 1921. By December 1921, Abkhazia signed a treaty of federation with Georgia, although it became an autonomous republic of the Georgian Soviet Socialist Republic only in February 1931. Dissatisfaction among the Abkhazian political elites with their position vis-à-vis Georgia was a common scenario by that time. From their perspective, all major political, administrative, and economic decisions pertaining to the region were made in Tbilisi—beyond their direct control.

By mid 1980, tension between Georgia and Abkhazia aggravated with the involvement of various ethnic groups which divided the whole population and thus weakened the state. At this juncture, Moscow's announcement to recognise the non-Georgian ethnic communities in Georgia such as the south Ossetians, Adjarians and Abkhazians as autonomous units further worsened the emerging tension between the two. The logic behind this move by Moscow was nothing more than a device to control them for the smooth functioning of the administration.

In fact, Moscow's grip became loose in late 1980's in respect of its control over the dominion states. As a result, several nationalities emerged against the authority with various demands. For instance, Georgian anti Soviet opposition started demanding separation from the USSR. Following the Georgian move, in March 1989 Abkhaz nationalist also raised their voice for the status of a separate republic based on the separate Abkhazian SSR that existed in 1921 and 1931 (Stewart 2004). Moreover, under Michael Gorbachev's Perestroika, the problems in Georgia got magnified, and since then discussion about nationality became discussions about independence.

The first armed clashes between the representatives of the Abkhazian and Georgian populations took place on July 16–July 17, 1989 in Sukhumi (Naumkin 1997: 38). The conflict was sparked off by alleged violations during the entrance examinations to the Sukhumi University. The tension had already been in a position to explode soon after the Georgian government's announcement to establish a branch of the Georgian State University in Sukhumi which was strongly condemned by the Abkhazian. They opposed this announcement since this branch
had to replace the Georgian department of the Abkhazian University. The resulting civil unrest quickly turned into militarized clashes resulting in 16 deaths and about 140 wounded, mostly Georgians ("War in Abkhazia," URL: http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/war in Abkhaz). But the introduction of the ‘state of emergency’ in Abkhazia successfully avoided a large-scale conflict.

The tension reached a dangerous edge soon after its independence in January 1992 after the Georgian President Gamsakhurdia was expelled from the office. Taking this opportunity, Abkhazian separatist attacked the government building in Sukhumi in June 1992. Numerous Georgian laws were nullified in Abkhazia; all local enterprises and organizations, including military and police units, were placed under regional jurisdiction; and a special regiment of internal troops was created and placed under the command of the Presidium of the Abkhazian Supreme Soviet. Finally, on 23 July 1992, the 1978 Constitution was repealed and replaced by the long-dormant 1925 Constitution that declared Abkhazia a sovereign republic with only alliance commitments to Georgia (Ibid), though it was not recognised by the international community.

In response to this declaration of independence, the Georgian government deployed troops in Abkhazia. Meanwhile, Russia was accused for encouraging the Abkhazia separatist for the August 1992 fighting. But this allegation against Russia was not convincing since the fighting was initiated by the Georgian military action. It was firmly believed that Tengiz Kitovani, the commander of the Georgian National Guard initiated the clash (Baev 1997: 44). He ordered his troops to occupy the major cities of Abkhazia, including the capital, Sukhumi without a proper plan from the government side. This action forced the Abkhazian leadership, headed by Ardzinba, to retreat to the regional centre of Gudauta. When Kitovani and his troops assaulted Abkhazia, Russian troops already deployed there made no attempt to stop this advance (Ibid).

On the other side, Abkhazia Supreme Soviet sought for Russian help against the Georgian aggression. The Russian president Boris Yeltsin, in response, tried to act impartially and negotiate a ceasefire. In the process of negotiation, Yeltsin acknowledged Georgian territorial integrity. This decision, further nullified
the early allegation on Russian side for supporting the Abkhazia. Paradoxically, within the Russian Duma, several nationalists came out with an idea of helping the Abkhazian against the Georgian aggression.

Indeed, the Georgian assault on Abkhazia was later bogged down with the help from the Confederation of the Mountain People of the Caucasus (CMPC). The Abkhazians, who received substantial political and military assistance from volunteers from the CMPC and at least some assistance from local Russian military units, were able to launch a counter offensive and gradually re-establish control over "their" republic up to the Russian-Georgian border. Due to the brutal persecution that accompanied this counter offensive, most Georgians (about 240,000) left Abkhazia as refugees.

3. RUSSIAN INTERESTS IN SOUTH CAUCASUS (GEORGIA)

The Caucasus region has a strategic borderland since the time of the expansion of the Russian empire and the Soviet Union. After the collapse of the USSR, North Caucasus came under the Russian Federation while South Caucasus remained under Georgia. But the strategic significance of the region still remained very much a part of the Russian policy making. Indeed, the traditional Russian desire to maintain geopolitical influence and strategic positions in Eurasia (Shashenkov 1994: 50) still continues.

Russia’s strategic concerns of this region was linked to its desire to establish its military bases in Georgia (Ibid: 49), road and rail links to the South Caucasus running through Abkhazia, Black Sea ports and Caspian Sea, the tourist industry and protection of the Russian minority in Abkhazia. However, Russia has no intention of re-establishing the former empire. According to Lynch, Russia is concentrating on regaining hegemony in the region as a regional power (Lynch 2002: 845). Another Russian interest area is the region’s economy. The economic resources of the region, particularly those relating to oil pipeline routes, have become increasingly prominent aspects of Russia’s relationship with the Caucasus and they have merged into boarder political interests. The sudden eruption of the ethnic conflicts in early 1990’s has compelled Moscow to re-think and assume the
importance of the security of the region. In this background, Russian interest in the peacekeeping role in the region has had to be recognised by the international community.

4. RUSSIAN PEACEKEEPING ROLE IN GEORGIA

The Russian Federation conducted its first peacekeeping operation (within the CIS) in Southern Ossetia, the autonomous region in Georgia. The first ceasefire in the conflict was reached in January 1991. A proto peacekeeping force was established under the supervision of Soviet interior Ministry troops (Macfarlane 1997: 512). However, the ceasefire was violated with increasing participation of volunteers from North Ossetian and sporadic fighting has continued till this day. After the collapse of the USSR in December 1991, the Soviet interior Ministry force was withdrawn (Ibid). Under such circumstances, the conflict and violence turmoil was escalated in the newly independent republic of Georgia.

Initially, the Russian Federation with its pro-West policy had shown reluctance towards the CIS conflicts. Moreover in its foreign policy priority list the 'near aboard' became less significant (Imam 2001). This development saw to it that Russia in its diplomatic campaign for recognition of the CIS as the regional organisation skipped a consideration of the emerging volatile environment in Caucasus which directly affected Russian national interests. Perhaps, Russia's refusal to take action to control the volatile situations in the region at the initial stage was because of its foreign policy perception that the region had lost its significance in the post Soviet era foreign policy rather than because of the Georgian refusal to join the CIS.

Over the course of the fighting until June 1992, over 1,000 civilians were killed (Macfarlane 1997: 512), and roughly 60,000 ethnic Ossetes were driven from their homes outside of South Ossetia, while roughly 10,000 ethnic Georgians fled the conflict zone (International Crisis Group 2005; and also see International Displacement Monitoring Centre 2003). This refugee problem later became one of Russia's major concerns while making a new policy towards the CIS. In fact, this
increasing number of refugees and migrants in Russian southern border particularly in North Ossetia triggered a threat.

Meanwhile, North Ossetia began to voluntarily involve into the conflicts while Russian leaders were worried about the increasing separatist problem in its southern part of the territory (like Chechnya). This development served as an eye opener to the Russian political leaders. Keeping the separatists in mind, in Moscow many Russian leaders believed that the ethnic conflict in Caucasus had the potential to enflame ethnic mistrust throughout the entire Caucasus region, engulfing Russia's southern border in combat. Moreover, within the Russian Duma, a strong debate took place between the communist and democratic leaders. The possibility of attracting other regional or international powers to intervene in region to fill the political vacuum left by the collapse of the Soviet Union compelled Russia to bring peace and maintain security. In fact, since South Ossetia lies at the north of Georgia, encompassing the Caucasus Mountains and the Georgian border with Chechnya, Moscow has been trying to legitimise its peacekeeping role in the CIS. Eduard Shevardnadze, elected as the president of Georgia in March 1992, further provided an opportunity for Russia's intervention as mediator since the newly elected president was a pro-Russia.

4.1. Russian Peacekeeping role in South Ossetia

The post Soviet Russia's peacekeeping role in South Ossetia began with the establishment of ceasefire agreement in June 1992 in Sochi under the strong pressure from the then Russian President Boris Yeltsin (Macfarlane 1997: 514 and also see Lewis and Marks 1998: 73). Besides Georgia, the representative of the North Ossetia and South Ossetia were also invited during the signing of the ceasefire agreement. Under this agreement, the Joint Control Commission (JCC) was set up and with the task of supervising forces withdrawal (Ibid). Later on, it established the Joint Peacekeeping Forces (JPKF) -a multi-lateral force. This arrangement has managed to implement the ceasefire quite successfully, despite sporadic violence.
4.1.1. Joint Peacekeeping Forces (JPKF) Structure

The Russian forces dominated as well as constituted the key element in the JPKF. In contrast to the accepted UN traditional peacekeeping formation, the soldiers from the conflicting sides were included in this Joint peacekeeping force. This characteristic made the Russian peacekeeping operations in the CIS unique in its kind (Mackinlay and Sharov 2003: 80). The structure of JPKF included 500 troops each from Georgia, Russia and Ossetia. However, the Russian peacekeeping force occupied most of the important places. In addition, Russian peacekeepers were a battalion of 45 Motorised Infantry Division from Leningrad military district. While operating the task like monitoring ceasefire, the JPKF set up checkpoints in the “most explosive contact areas between Georgian and Ossetian villages” (Ibid.). The JPK operation expanded in 1993 and several other tasks were also included.

4.1.2. Mandate

Under the United Nations Department of Peacekeeping Operation (UNDPKO), each mission of peacekeeping operation should have a specific set of mandated tasks. Depending on their mandate, peacekeeping missions require to:

- Deploy to prevent the outbreak of conflict or the spill-over of conflict across borders;
- Stabilize conflict situations after a cease fire, to create an environment for the parties to reach a lasting peace agreement;
- Assist in implementing comprehensive peace agreements;

Hence, in context of UNDPKO mission statement, the Russian peacekeeping operation in South Ossetia is legal and legitimate. The Russian peacekeeping operation in South Ossetia operated under the JPKF. The JPKF mandate has to separate the warring factions by creating a buffer zone between South Ossetia and Georgia (Shashenkov 1993: 52). The JPKF mandate was introduced only for two months. In this context, the Russian peacekeeping
operation in South Ossetia with the JPKF mandate has performed similar tasks as mentioned in UNDPKO mission statement i.e. creating ceasefire and separating the conflicting parties, returning refugees and resettling the massive displacement, and remove mines.

In fact, Russia provided financial and humanitarian assistance for rehabilitation of displaced populations and refugees as well as shouldered it cost alone. Besides, the mandate has a provision on Russian diplomat for its efforts to mediate a political settlement. According to Kristina Jeffers, the JPKF has granted the right to use “decisive measures, including the use of force” against “uncontrolled armed groups from either side of the conflict.” (Jeffers 2006: 22). The mandate further allowed establishing the command post at the Russian 292d Helicopter Regiment base in Tskhinvali. Russia has taken in charge of these commands post.

The mandate had been extended since political leaders were unable to reach an agreement concerning Southern Ossetia's status (Mackinlay and Sharov 2003: 80). As a result JPKF— Russian, Georgian and Ossetian combined forces have continued to serve as a stabilizing force in this area. The lack of a political resolution has placed the peacekeepers in a precarious situation. The commander of the Russian battalion claimed that combat duty in Afghanistan was easier than peacekeeping duty in Southern Ossetia. “In Afghanistan everything was clear; on the one side were the Afghans and we were on the other side. Here on both side our people, both Georgians and Ossetians; as if everyone were friends. But both Georgian and Ossetian blood is shed, and we are unable to stop it. This is very difficult on morale” (Izvestiya 1994: 13). This has shown the complexity of the post Soviet intra-states conflicts based on the ethnicity in the post Cold War international environment.

In May 1996, under the Russian and OSCE presence, Georgia and South Ossetia came to a further step towards resolution of the conflicts by signing a memorandum on measure for providing security and joint confidence, in which two sides had to abandon the use of forces. Perhaps the reduction in the number of posts of JPKF, from 39 to 16 in 1997 (Mackinlay 2003: 83), was the outcome of
1996 memorandum. Further, refugees had begun to resettle in the zone of conflicts but only in small number. Therefore, it is clear that Russia led JPKF remained unsuccessful to bring the conflict fully under control. Sporadic shooting and terrorist acts continued. During the first month of peacekeeping operations itself 20 peacekeepers were killed in action. However, Russia led peacekeeping forces was successful to halt most large scale fighting.

4.2. Russian Peacekeeping in Georgia - Abkhazian Conflict

Like in other conflict zones, Russian involvement in peace resolution processes has been compelled by the same factors. Therefore, when the decades long tension between the minority Abkhazia and majority ethnic Georgian erupted in 1992 (Lewis and Marks 1998: 72), Russia intervened as a mediator with an objective of protecting the ethnic Russians in Abkhazia. It had other interests behind its involvement in the conflicts as a mediator such as to ensure peace and stability of the North Caucasian frontiers of the Russian Federation. Moreover; Russia wanted to establish its military base and save guard its army units in the zone of conflict.

Other factors which compelled Russia to involve in the conflict were the problem of refugee as well as the incident of shooting down of the Russian helicopter. The increasing flow of refugee toward southern border of Russian Federation was also one of the major concerns of the Russian leaders in 1990's. The incident of Russian Mi-8 helicopter (carrying humanitarian aid) shot down by Georgian forces on 27 October 1992 (DARC 2006, and also see “War in Abkhazia,” URL: http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/war in Abkhaz), as well as the shooting down of another helicopter reportedly carrying evacuated civilians on December 14 in the Tkvarcheli district resulting in 52 to 64 deaths (including 25 children) strengthened its involvement in conflict.

4.2.1. 1992 Cease-fire Arrangement and Humanitarian Actions

Russia started its peacekeeping operation in this conflict with the deployment of the 345th Airbone Regiment on 3 September 1992. It was deployed with the consent from both the warring factions and ceasefire agreement (Mackinlay 2003: 89). Throughout 1992, Russia launched humanitarian actions by evacuating many
people from Abkhazian resorts by means of Black Sea fleet and Russian Airforce. However, the installation of landmines along the mountain highway to town during the conflict had made evacuation a difficult task. Consequently, evacuation through helicopters remained one of safest means of transportation. Moreover, Russia also began to supply humanitarian aid to both sides; it also brokered numerous agreements concerning the exchange of prisoners-of-war (DARC 2006, and also see “War in Abkhazia,” URL: http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/war in Abkhaz). In fact, it had been accused of being biased by Georgians and by Western countries, but Russia continued its mediating role in Georgia-Abkhazians conflict. During this period Russian foreign policy fluctuated but the military policy was seen as anti-Georgian.

4.2.2. Second and Third Cease-fire Arrangement

The offensive action by the Abkhaz against the Gagra in late 1992 had turned the conflict in a new phase of violence. Thus, the September 1992 Russia mediated ceasefire had collapsed. At this juncture, Georgia repeatedly requested for the UN peacekeeping force into the conflict (Macfarlane 1997: 513). However, there was no positive or immediate response from the UN Security Council. Hence the question arose: Does the UN lack the capacity to deploy a peacekeeping force? Or, is it because of its recognition of Georgia and Abkhazia as Russia’s sphere of influence? But in the changing paradigm of the post Cold War international politics, the notion of the significance of geo-strategy has remained unchanged for super power nations. In this context, this failure or delay of the UN decision to deploy a peacekeeping force seems like a lack of progress in reaching a political settlement among these super powers (including Russia).

In fact, this negative response from the UN, when it was needed most in the region, legitimised Russia to strengthen its role of peacekeeping and mediating process in its conflict resolution task. Meanwhile, on ground, Russia evacuated thousands of Georgians from Gagra and allowed many more to cross the Russian border and return eventually to Georgia. Hence, in 1993 too, Russia continued to provide humanitarian aid to the town of Tkvarcheli besieged by Georgians.
Meanwhile, the Russian diplomatic campaign to legitimise its peacekeeping role in the region took one further positive step in 1993. Eduard Brunner was appointed as special envoy of the UN Secretary General and was given a major role in negotiation. In May 1993, the second Russia-mediated ceasefire agreement was signed in the presence of Brunner and Russia's special envoy to Abkhazia Boris Pastukhov (Ibid). However, it again failed soon after it was launched. By autumn 1993, Russian influence on Abkhazia had persuaded the Georgian president to endorse the idea of the Russian army playing the central role in a peacekeeping plan for the conflict. The Russian-brokered peacekeeping plan was worked out in July 1993, with the UN and the CSCE representatives, and later signed by the Georgian and Abkhazian authorities. Russia also approved Resolution 849 of the UN Security Council (SC) which provided for deployment of the UN Military Observers. Thus, the third Russia mediated ceasefire arrangement was implemented (Ibid). It provided mandate for a staged demilitarization of the region and for Georgian-Abkhazian-Russian supervisory groups to monitor compliance with the ceasefire regime (BBC Summary of World Broadcasts 1993). At the same time, it had also agreed that a limited number of Russian military observers had to be stationed along the Gumista River overlooking Sukhumi, the Abkhazian capital. The ceasefire remained fragile but Russia consolidated its support for UN Observer Missions in Georgia. Russia consolidated its support for UN Security Council Resolution 858 for establishing UN Observer Missions in Georgia (UNOMIG). In August, for the first time in Georgia-Abkhazia conflict, the UN Security Council authorised deployment of an advanced 50 person observer force in order to observe ceasefire (see Map 6). But it failed to end Georgian-Abkhaz military clashes and an appeal for the UN peacekeeping forces was again made by the negotiating parties in December 1993.

The Russian effort to arrange a ceasefire between the Georgia and the Abkhazia was hampered by the suspicion of each other as well as by the aggressive nature of Abkhazians. Meanwhile, the Russian forces were accused by Georgia for providing military assistance to the Abkhazian insurgents. Hence, Russian Defence Minister Pavel Grachev’s proposal in September 1993 to deploy two Russian divisions and one brigade as peacekeeping forces in Abkhazia with the third ceasefire agreement was rejected by the Georgian government.


4.2. 3. Russia and the CIS Peacekeeping Forces

In early 1994, Russia and Georgia had concluded a series of agreements which incorporated for Moscow's assistance in the development of the Georgian army (Macfarlane 1997: 513). Further, the agreements allotted right to Russia for establishing military base in Georgia as well as for the deployment of the Russian Border Guard.

On 4 April 1994, the conflicting parties signed another cease-fire agreement in the presence of the UN and Russia (Mackinlay and Evgenii Sharov 2003; Lepingwell 1994: 76). It was soon followed by the Moscow Agreement on 14 May 1994 which established the CIS Peacekeeping Forces (CISPKF). The CIS force had a multi-lateral force with the troops from the Georgia, Abkhazia and Russia. The CISPKF had been deployed to replace the Russian forces that were engaged in conflict with the task of separating the parties since November 1993. Under the Moscow Agreement, the conflicting line was divided into two zones, a Security Zone of twelve kilometers on each side of the Inguri River dividing Georgian and Abkhaz territory, and extended further twelve kilometers to form a Restricted Weapons Zone in which artillery, mortars, tanks and armored personnel carriers were prohibited (see Map 7).

In fact, the CISPKF in Abkhazia was approved by the UN Security Council under the Resolution 937 of 21 July 1994 (Macfarlane 1997: 511). However, the CISPKF was dominated by the Russian troops. But the UN's approval of the CISPKF despite Russian dominance makes it clear that the conflict management in the Former Soviet Union (FSU) needs special cooperation with regional organizations.

In June 1994, the Russia dominated CISPKF was deployed along the administrative border between Abkhazia and Georgia (Ibid). Most of its peacekeeping forces comprised the Akhalkal and Batumi divisions of the Russian army. The troops were deployed both on the territory of Abkhazia and inside Georgia. Sukhumi was made the headquarters of the peace-keeping forces. The Russian peacekeeping operation under the CISPKF mandates had a task to promote
the safe return of refugees and displaced persons, especially to the Gali District. Under the CISPKF mandate, Russian peacekeeping force controlled the newly developed security zone through the establishment of a checkpoint.

Map 7. Map of the Cease-fire Lines (Security Zone and Restricted Weapons Zone)
The Russian forces, furthermore, has a task to demilitarize the Kodor pass in the mountains, part of Abkhazia, still populated by Georgians and controlled by Georgian forces. The Russian peacekeeping forces further conducted an extensive operation on removal of mines and made it clear for future agricultural activity. The removal of mines was extremely complicated because of the lack of maps showing their location. However, the peacekeeping force has managed to clear the 10-kilometre-wide strip under their control of mines (Sokolov 1997). The peacekeeping forces also assumed the protection of the Inguri hydroelectric station which supplies energy to the region (Ibid).

The proclaimed intention behind this deployment is to concentrate the combat material of the conflicting sides in specially allotted regions and to implement a process of demilitarisation throughout the territory of Abkhazia, stage by stage. A Russian police contingent was also part of the CISPKF and deployed in Gali region. The CISPKF mandate has further expanded after the CIS Heads of state summit on 2 April 1999.

4.3. Assessing the Accusations on Russia

Did the Russian peacekeeping forces help separatist Abkhazia? Initially, Russian peacekeeping forces were accused for supporting the Abkhazia through supply of arms and ammunition. In fact, the arms and ammunition used by both the warring factions were of Russian origin. Many of these arms were transferred to other CIS member states after the collapse of former Soviet Union. Georgia also got some of its share including main battle tanks, armored personnel carriers, heavy artillery and heavy mortars under the bilateral agreements with Russia (Ibid.). In fact, the whole Akhaltsikhe motorised rifle division was turned over to Georgian jurisdiction on September 22, 1992. Though, some weapons were gained through local raids on Russian Army bases in Batumi, Akhalkalaki, Vaziani (near Tbilisi) and Poti by irregular Georgian paramilitary forces (Ibid.). However, such incidents made Russian foreign policy to Georgia prone to allegation for imperialist ambition and their peacekeeping operations as their hidden agenda.
The possession of the arms and ammunition by the unrecognized Abkhaz has raised questions within the international community over the Russian peacekeeping operation. As a matter of fact, Abkhazia began the war with few weapons available to them, and having only one tank available for combat operations. After the eruption of armed conflict, the Abkhaz separatist paramilitary units, along with their political supporters fled to Gudauta from where they obtained significant amount of military and financial aid (Ibid.). In Gudauta, Russian Army base housed and trained Abkhaz paramilitary units and provided protection for the leader of Abkhaz separatists, Vladislav Ardzinba. Perhaps, it was because of the lack of discipline of Russian army which were demoralised by the sudden collapse of former Soviet Union. Many of these forces were far away from the Moscow’s control for quite long. It was only after the launch of the 1993 Military Doctrine that Moscow could successfully control the former Soviet army which was under its own jurisdiction.

SECTION –B

5. MOLDOVA

This section of the chapter outlines the post Cold War Moldova’s conflict. It begins with a historical background for better understanding of the nature of post Soviet Moldova conflict. This section further outlines Russian interests as the basis of the following assessment of Russian peacekeeping role in its conflict resolution process.

5.1. Historical Background

Geographically, Moldova lies in between Ukraine and Romania. It strategic location in proximity to Black Sea makes it a major concern to Russia since 18th century. Historically, Moldova was known as Bessarabia (Waters 2003: 132). However, the present Moldova is divided by Dniestr River into two separate territorial entities (See, Map no. 8). Bessarabia, also known as the right bank Moldova, has been expanded between Prut River, Danube and Dniestr River. The
Map 8. Map of Republic of Moldova

left bank Moldova of the river Dniestr has been popularly known as Transdniestrian (Ibid; and also see King 2000:94). These territorial areas were under the rule of several princely states for many years.

Bessarabia, particularly the area lying on east of the Prut River, became a part of Russian empire in 1812 (International Crisis Group 2003: 2), while the west of Prut was under Ottoman Empire administration (Water 2003:132). The southern part of left-bank Dniestr River- Tyaspol and Dubossary districts was included into the Russia empire under the Yassy Peace Treaty (1791) which was signed after the 1787-91 Russian-Turkish war (Aklaev 1994). Whereas, the northern part of left-bank Dniestr became part of the Russia Empire two years later. It was previously under Polish control.

However, it was only after the Bucharest Treaty that the territory between the Prut and the Dniestr (Bessarabia) were acceded to the Russian Empire. The southern Bessarabia was acceded to Russia two decades later at the Berlin Congress in 1878 (Ibid). Perhaps, it was for the first time that Moldova got unified as a single territory under the Russian empire. However, the outbreak of the World War I further shook the unified Moldova.

5.1.1. During Soviet’s era

Following the fall of Russian empire after the October revolution of 1917, the Nationalist-democratic forces who came to power in right-bank of Dniestr proclaimed independence of the Bessarabia People's Democratic in 1918. After the proclamation of independence the Bessarabian Parliament (Sfatul Tserij) launched a campaign to win the Western powers for recognition of it’s newly claimed independence as well as for their assistance. In this process, the Sfatul Tserij voted for union with Romania (Naumkin 1997: 49). Ethnically, Romania had a close relation with the right bank Dniestr. However, the Bessarabia union with Romania was rejected by the Russian empire and later on by the Soviet Union.

Afterwards, the Romanian authority had already begun to play the ethnic card with the adoption of the policy of the forcible “Romanization” of Moldovan
On the other hand, Left-bank Dniestr had come under Ukrainian possession. In this context, Moldova was again divided politically between the Right bank and Left bank. However, Transdniestrian soon again came under the Soviet after February 1920, civil war in Ukraine (Aklaev 1994). Later in post Second World War period, various other ethnic groups came and settled in left bank of Moldova under Joseph Stalin and his successor’s domestic policy. This further poured fuel to the fire which was already in full flame.

In 1924, the Soviet Union created Transdniestrian an autonomous entity. Thus it became a Moldovan Autonomous Soviet Socialist Republic (MASSR) within Ukraine Soviet Socialist republic. It was unified with Bessarabia in 1940 and thus formed Moldovan Soviet Socialist Republic (MSSR) (International crisis Group 2003: 2). However, during the Second World War, Moldova Transdniestrian was occupied by the axis forces (Romanian fighting as Germany's allies) and became a part of Romania but just for while (Christensen 2007: 26). This occupation nullified the Vienna conference agreement of 1924 which was concluded between the Soviet Union and Romanian. The occupation was particularly brutal in Transdniestrian as it was the most Russified region of the Moldova SSR. But the Soviet Army re-conquered it in the autumn of 1944 and the MASSR was restored.

Figure 5. Moldovan Ethnic Composition According to 1989 Census:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Name of nationality</th>
<th>Numbers in percentage</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Moldavian</td>
<td>64.46</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Russian</td>
<td>12.96</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ukrainian</td>
<td>13.85</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Gagauzians</td>
<td>3.54</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Others</td>
<td>5.19</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: Vitaly V. Naumkin, ‘Ethnic Conflict in the former Soviet Union,’ Moscow: Russian Centre for Strategic Research and International Studies, 1997, p.48

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1 The Soviet government refuse to recognize the legitimacy of the inclusion of Bessarabia into Romania; in 1924, at the Soviet-Romanian conference in Vienna. (Alaev 1994, URL: http://www.unu.edu/unupress/unupbooks/uu12ee/ uu12ee0a.htm)
Therefore, Transdniestrian had never been a part of Romania in its history of existence. The Soviet position in the region was strengthened after the Paris Treaty of February 1947 with Romania which recognized the 1940 Soviet Romanian frontier. Industrialisation had begun in Moldova, particularly in Transdniestrian, along with the policy of Russification. Hence, approximately 3000,000 Russian speakers were settled there between 1944 and 1959, mainly in Transdniestrian and in the few bigger cities on the right bank (International Crisis Group 2003: 2). In 1960’s, Transdniestrian emerged as an important part of the Soviet heavy industry and defense sector in contrast to the right bank area whose economy was based on agriculture and light industry (Ibid.). Hence, throughout the Soviet period Transdniestrian region had supplied weapons and technical equipment to the Soviet Military. The 14th Army, which resided in the area, provided protection to the economic and social life of Soviet Transdniestrian.

5.2. Emergence of Armed Conflict

A Moldovan nationalist movement had appeared in late 1980’s. In fact, at this juncture, various movements had begun in most part of the Soviet republics. The demand for independence from Soviet Union formed the basis of these movements. However, there were differences between the various ethnic groups over the future of the Moldova, and the nationalist movement remained one sided. For instance, MSSR decision to unify with Romania was strongly rejected by the Gagauz minority and by the Transdniestrian.

5.2.1. Growth of Ethnic Political Activism

Like in other former Soviet’s republics, President Michael Gorbachev’s perestroika (restructure) and glasnost transformed Moldova with the growth of various political activisms in late 1980s. According to Alexander J. Motyl “perestroika was necessary to revive the system but it was likely to aggravate the national problem which the in long run posed a threat to Soviet stability” (Motyl 1989: 49). Democratization and glasnost proclaimed by the Gorbachev leadership entailed to raise a political pluralism in the former Soviet Union republics.
There came a surge of mass social movements, each pursuing its specific interests and advocating political objectives which differed from those officially endorsed by the Communist authorities. The formation of the Moldovan and Gagauz voluntary association of nationalist intelligentsia and activist in the period between the years 1988-1989 further strengthened the socio-political change in Moldova. They had demanded the republican sovereignty (first they demanded the political sovereignty within the USSR but they changed into full scale sovereignty later on in 1990's) and ethnic revival with anti-federalist and anti-Communist demands. The ideological platforms of the Moldovan Popular Front movements (MPF) (Popular Fronts), besides political sovereignty, aimed at bringing the cultural goals, included ethno-political, socio-cultural, and socio-economic development of Moldova. Meanwhile, Transdniestrian leaders wanted to remain within Soviet Union.

5.2.2. Linguistic disputes in Moldova

The issue of language and national identity fuelled the series of conflicts which led to the break-up of the USSR. The domination of the Russian language, as the only means of inter-ethnic communication between the nationalist of the Union, in all educational institutions, administration and in all state owned public services was strongly condemned in non-Russian republics. Thus, taking an opportunity as provided by the Gorbachev's reforms (*perestroika* and *Glasnost*) the MPF started claiming the Moldovan language in Latin script as a sole official language in Moldova (Naumkin 1997: 49-51), as an important symbol of the republic's aspirations to true sovereignty within the USSR. It was due to the steps which the Popular Front had taken in its struggle for the separation of Moldova from the Soviet Union. Therefore, on 31 August 1989, MSSR declared Moldovan the state language. Under this new language law, many Romanian speakers had access to posts in the state and the party structure. In addition, Russian and Russophone minorities had begun protests and turned to Moscow for help even after Moldova got independence.
5.3. From 1989-1991

Direct clashes took place between the police and the MPF demonstrators in November 1989. On 7 November in Kishinev, several thousand protesting demonstrators stopped the Communist Party celebrations of the anniversary of the 1917 Revolution by climbing on to tanks and forcing the Communist Party leaders of the republic to leave the review stand. In addition, an MPF rally held on 10 November 1989 ended in rioting. After the rally, an approximate of 10,000-15,000 demonstrators demanded immediate dismissal of the Moldovan Communist Party leadership and attacked several official buildings in the centre of Kishinev.3 During this violent clash both the government and anti-communist protestors got suffered. By early 1990, second wave of socio-political change in Moldova took place and there was a major shift in the power structures of the republic. Since then, the Moldavia’s nationalist-democratic forces had become very stronger and it won the democratic elections in February 1990 and declared full independence in August 1991 from the USSR through the Moldovan Supreme Soviet.

On 2 September 1991, the Transdniestrian Moldovan Socialist Soviet Republic also declared its own constitution and formed its armed forces. Since then, the dispute between the Moldovan government and Transdniestrian had turned into violence. During the winter of 1991 and 1992, Transdniestrian forces began to attack several Moldovan police stations and tried to overthrow local authorities who were loyal to Moldovan government (International Crisis Group 2003:3). This period onward, fighting had escalated into outright war. The situation was worsened after the regular Moldovan army entered into Benderi in 19 June 1992. Many civilians were killed during this military confrontation (Sokolov 1997). Benderi is the place located on the right bank of Dniestr, but came under the authority of Transdniestrian Moldova Republic. Meanwhile, the 14th Army supported the Transdniestria separatists and supplied arms and indirectly helped them to halt the advance of the government forces.

3 An attempt has made to set fire to the republic’s Ministry of Internal Affairs building
6. RUSSIAN INTEREST IN MOLDOVA

It would be very important to understand the strategic significance of Moldova to Moscow, and how Russian troops spread to former territory before coming to the later role of peacekeeping. More than two hundred years down history, Russian troops had been present on Moldova’s territory and were used by Russian tsars as a tool, and later by the Soviet authorities to promote the expansionist policy. In the post Cold War era, Moldova was considered by Kremlin as one of the strategic location to watch out against any kind of the aggressive movement in and around the territories like Balkans, Greece, and Turkey.4

Today the ideological war is over but the strategic significance between Moldova and Moscow is still important. For instance, General Lebed, former Commander of the 14th Army, called Transdniestrian “the key to the Balkans” and considered that Russia would lose this advantage and its influence in the area if it were to pull out its troops from Moldova (Waters 1996: 401). In fact, the Balkan crisis and the presence of the Western countries are of major concern to Moscow. Moldova’s entry into the NATO’s Partnership for Peace Programme (PfP) on 16 March 1994, was another concern to Russia. NATO initiation of Partnership for Peace was created partly as a framework for developing training programs in multinational peace operations of the armed forces of the former Warsaw Pact and Western nations. In fact, it was a potential tool of NATO’s eastward expansion for bringing the former Soviet satellite states including former Soviet republics under its influence. Perhaps it was the reason behind the Russian rejection of PfP at North Atlantic Cooperation Council (NACC) Foreign Ministers Meeting in Brussels in late 1994. These developments created a fear in the Russian side with regard to their national interests where they might lose out on a traditionally

4 During the "Cold War" in the case of conflict, it was the mission of Soviet troops of the Odessa Military District (including the 14th Army) to carry out strategic offensive action against the Balkans on the south western military operations front, while the Suez Canal and the northern coast of Africa constituted the second objective. In this context, Moldova and the Soviet military forces on its territory were of global strategic significance. (See in Dr. Gribincea, Mihai 2006), “Russian troops in Transnistria – a threat to the security of the Republic of Moldova,” Institute of Political and Military Studies, Chișinău, Moldova, 05 December 2006,
advantageous strategic position vis-à-vis Moldova. Moreover, this fear is one of the driving factors behind Russian deployment of its troops in the region when the conflict broke out on a large scale.

7. RUSSIAN PEACEKEEPING OPERATION IN MOLDOVA

The Russian peacekeeping operation in the Republic of Moldova was established after the 21st July 1992 ceasefire agreement signed between the President of Moldova, Mircea Snegur, and the then Russian President, Boris Yeltsin. This agreement remains a guiding principle to Russian peacekeeping effort in the Transdniestrian region. The Russian peacekeeping forces regulated the implementation of the provisions of the ceasefire agreement in the security zone. In fact, Russian troops had taken the mediator role from June 1992 and established ceasefire as an ad hoc peacekeeping force. The Russian peacekeepers successfully held the conflict temporary but their role was partial. (International Crisis Group 2004: 4).

7.1. 21st July 1992 Agreements

Moldova once tried to secure the international community sympathy and the UN involvement but it failed. Efforts were made to win the support of the neighbouring countries without success. Throughout May and June 1992, the Moldovan government sought to form peacekeeping forces excluding the 14th Army from Byelorussian, Ukrainian, Russian and Moldovan units (FBIS-SOV-92-133). The Transdniestrian leaders were also invited at the negotiations and the signing of the ceasefire but were not a signatory to the agreement (International Crisis Group 2003: 4 and also see Hill 2002: 132). After Belarus, Ukraine and Romania decided not to participate; the Moldova President, Mircea Snegur, was finally convinced about accepting a bilateral agreement with the Russian President Boris Yeltsin to send a trilateral peacekeeping force made up of Dniestrian, Russian and Moldovan elements.

On 21st July, 1992, a tentative ceasefire agreement was signed and a trilateral peacekeeping force was established. The trilateral peacekeeping force included (among six battalion of 3,800 men), Moldovan (two battalion of 1,200)
and three battalions from Dniestr Moldovan Republic (DMR) to enforce the cease-
fire (Waters 2003:147-48). On other hand, the Moldovan government was keenly
seeking the involvement of international organisations in order to dilute Russian
dominance in the tri-partite agreement. However, the agreement contained no prior
crns on the political status of the Transdnistria area. The presence of these
peacekeepers reduced the direct armed confrontation. Meanwhile, Russia was
unhappy with the precedent of inviting foreign troops onto the territory of the
former USSR. But the main objective of the Russian initiative was to stop the
violence so that political leaders might find a peaceful solution.

7.1.1. Provisions of the Agreement

The 21st July 1992 agreement further contained provisions for the creation of a
demarcation corridor between the warring forces by setting up of a security zone
on both sides of the Dniestr River. The security zone around the Dniestr River was
220 km long and 10-20 km wide (Sokolov 1997). The leadership of the peace-
keeping forces was given to the Joint Controlling Commission (JCC) for the
Settlement of the Armed Conflict in Transdniestria Region. It made decisions on
the deployment of military contingents and military observers in case of violation
of the provisions of the Ceasefire Agreement by uncontrolled formations by
consensus. Again, on 30 July 1992, the JCC further established a Joint Military
Command (JMC) to ensure direct control over the peacekeeping forces.

The Joint Military Commander (JMC) consisting of representatives of the
Ministries of Defence of the parties in question as well as the military leadership of
the Transdniestrian Moldovan Republic observed the military contingents and was
subordinate to it. The agreement also contained provisions on introducing 'neutral'
peacekeeping forces; granting 'political status' to the left bank of the Dniestr; and
implementing bilateral negotiations on the removal of the Russian 14th Army from
Moldova.

5 The Security zone of 225 kilometres long and 4-15 kilometres covering 2,000 square kilometers
the zone was further divided into three sectors Northern (Ribnita), Central (Dubasari), and Souther
This arrangement successfully stopped the fighting in the area for the time being. But Chisinau accusations soon followed that insurgents of the 'Dniestr Republic' were permitted to maintain armed units and munitions stockpiles in the disengagement zone. In fact, such partiality was inescapable given the overshadowing presence in the region of the highly politicised Russian 14th Army, which had previously provided military assistance to Russian nationalists in Transdniestrian. The commander of the 14th Army, General Lebed, continued to act almost as a proconsul in the region and had openly advocated the incorporation of Transdniestria into a greater Russia. For better understanding of the Russian peacekeeping operation in Moldova, it is very necessary to analyze the state of armed forces and the Soviet’s 14th army since they are the forces operating as peacekeepers.

7.2. The State of Soviet Armed Forces

The long generated nationality crisis and decline of the economy in late 1980’s along with the unpopularity of the armed forces after its withdrawal from Afghanistan cost the Soviet armies of both its manpower and equipments. As of January 1992, “approximately one-half of all combat aircraft, tanks and armoured vehicles, over two-thirds of artillery, one-fourth of warships and 44 percent of the former USSR’s armed forces were outside Russia’s borders” (Rogov 2001). Even as Russia had began to withdraw its troops from the German Democratic Republic and from the Baltic States, it ran into complications when it had no place to house the returning troops and no money to build new barracks (as of December 1992, over 120,000 returned officers were without proper housing (Izvestia 1993).

In the spring of 1992, in the call-ups for compulsory military service, Russian defence experts estimated that almost 18,000 eligible young men evaded the draft, and that the needs of the Russian military for that year were met by only 21% (Izvestia 1992: 26). A high-ranking military official during this period commented that the Russian armed forces were “the USSR Armed Forces, but without hands, without legs, and without other important organs that have been chopped off during the course of the sovereignisation of the former Union republics” (Lt-Col Dukuchayev, quoted in Waters 2003). With few officers, less
than half of its equipment, and sub-par foot soldiers, it is no wonder that the Russian peacekeeping efforts seemed chaotic at the beginning. It is also less than surprising that the Russians chose to use the forces already in the field (the 14th Army in Moldova, the 201st MRB in Tajikistan) rather than shipping new troops from Moscow to the conflict zone.

Table 9. Number of the 14th Army/OGRF (both men and equipment), 1993-1999

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>Personnel</th>
<th>MBT</th>
<th>ACV</th>
<th>CSH</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1993</td>
<td>9,225</td>
<td>124</td>
<td>181</td>
<td>12</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1994</td>
<td>7,708</td>
<td>121</td>
<td>175</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1995</td>
<td>6,356</td>
<td>120</td>
<td>166</td>
<td>9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1996</td>
<td>6,529</td>
<td>120</td>
<td>130</td>
<td>9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1997</td>
<td>4,923</td>
<td>119</td>
<td>129</td>
<td>9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1998</td>
<td>2,824</td>
<td>119</td>
<td>133</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1999</td>
<td>2,620</td>
<td>117</td>
<td>131</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>


Note: MBT- Main Battle Tank; ACV- Armoured Combat Vehicles; CSH- Combat support Helicopter

7.2.1. The Soviet’s 14th Army

The Soviet’s 14th Army had been based in Moldova since a long time. The largest part of these troops was stationed on the left side of the Dniestr River with headquarters in Tiraspol (Waters 2003: 142). From that period onwards, as well as under the Soviet’s policy of Russification, many of these officers had married there and many reservists worked as specialized technicians in the defence industries and formed a privileged group with common interests and habits, supporting first the
old Soviet Union and later the idea of a "Great Russia". Furthermore, the 14th Army had many personnel who were in fact native to the region and directly concerned with the future of their homeland despite being a Russian soldier (International Crisis Group 2003: 4). Therefore, they had strong local ties and considered the region "their home."6

The 14th Army was comprised mostly of soldiers inherited from Soviet army. It was placed under the Russian jurisdiction only after the then Russian president Boris Yeltsin's decree of April 1992. Before this, the status and ownership of the 14th Army was not clear despite Russia's emergence as sole successor of the former Soviet Union. Thus, in the post Cold War period, many of the former Soviet's army were left out of the Moscow control. Therefore, the lack of discipline among the Russian troops was common in early 1990's. As a result, many of this army used their gun power to gain their interest which had a direct impact on the Russian Federation. In Transdniestria, many among the 14th Army were reported for supporting the separatist rebel group. During this period, the commander of the 14th Army, General-Major Aleksandra Lebed, spoke and acted as if he was not subordinate to Russian presidential leadership (Ibid). He had reflected, however, the policies and goals of the more conservative elements in the Russian leadership, and certainly those of the Transdniestria. This action or activities of the 14th Army as well as General Lebed had validated the accusation on Russia's policy in near abroad as an imperialist agenda.

On other hand, increasing Moldovan nationalism had begun to clash with the Russian population in 1991. During such a condition as well as soon after declaration of Moldovan independence, the 14th Army was associated with an anti-Moldovan and pro-Soviet Union stance (Neukirch 2002: 235). The growing fear of becoming a unitary Moldovan state and following a path leading to its unification with Romania among ethnic Russians living in the Transdniestria, forced the Russian population to leave or to change their citizenship.

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6 When Moldova declared independence in 23rd June, 1990, approximately 23,000 Soviet troops were on Moldovan territory, with the majority belonging to the 14th Army. (Socor, V 1992:.38; Gribincea M 1992: 144.)
In such a situation, by letting the 14th Army support separatist Transdniestria, Russia had committed the biggest mistake which made them suspicious of the neo-imperialist plan by the western countries. They were also accused by the western countries for training and transferring the weapons to the newly established Dniestr Soviet Socialist Republican Guard. In the spring and early summer of 1992, Dniestr’s forces after possessing heavy arms and ammunition, advanced towards the west side of the Dniestr River. In May-June 1992, heavy fighting ensured with casualties on both sides of the Dniestr River mounting into the hundreds (Ibid: 137 and also see Christensen 2007: 29). Today, Russian military presence on the territory of the Republic of Moldova manifests itself in the form of the Operational Group of Russian Forces (OGRF) and “peacekeeping forces”. The Operational Group was established as a result of a directive (No. 314/2/0296) from the Ministry of Defence of the Russian Federation, and is considered to be the successor to the 14th Army.

7.3. Russian Peacekeepers and their Activity

The Russian numerical contribution to the peacekeeping effort totalled 3,800 men, far outnumbering the 1,200 troops allotted to each of the other two bodies of contributing troops (Clark 1994: 119-150). Most of Russian peacekeepers were drawn from military formations in the Volga region inside Russia. The observation posts, checkpoints and two headquarters were also established within the security zone and were often jointly manned by peacekeepers from the three contingents. Separating the warring factions from the direct confrontation was one of the basic measures used by the Russian peacekeepers.

By 4th August, 1992, the withdrawal of belligerent forces from the security zone was completed and arrangements for the return of the refugees were made. A year later, over 11,000 bombs and mines from dams, gardens and fields was deactivated and the peacekeepers had confiscated hundreds of weapons from the civilian population (Waters 2003:148). Any incident of firing was investigated on the spot and the decision on it was made by the JCC.

The Russian forces sometimes conducted their peacekeeping activities jointly with other contributors as well as separately. Joint checkpoints were
established on the roads involving representatives of one of the warring sides and Russia. The protection of the dam on the Dniestr from explosions was conducted exclusively by Russian forces (Sokolov: 1997).

Another activity of the Russian peacekeeping operation was to set up a roadside check point where combing searches and arrests on the territory were conducted and controlled by the separatists. In Teraspol, the Russian forces assumed the role of law enforcement. Meanwhile, the 14th Russian Army was conducting separate tasks of disarmament and liquidation of bandit groups. Moreover, it was reported that Russian peacekeeping joined hands with the 14th Army and liquidated a bandit group in the city of Dubbossary. This development made it clear that the Russian peacekeeping forces were in contact with the former unit while implementing the provision of the 21st July agreement.

In 1993 and 1994, Russia had begun to unilaterally scale down the number of peacekeepers deployed in Transdniestria. Although the mission began with 3,800 men in July 1992, the numbers were reduced to 1,800 by March 1993 and to 630 men by the end of the year (Izvestia 1994). The official Russian statements on the withdrawal emphasized the successful completion of the mission undertaken in 1992 as well as the extensive commitments which Russia was facing in other parts of the CIS. This had shown the Russian efforts to regain its regional power status in post cold war period.

However, this announcement by the Russian leaders to reduce its troops drew complaints from the Transdniestrian and Moldovan administrations, both of whom had expressed it as the violation of the 1992 agreements. Although there was no resurgence of violence in the absence of the extra five battalions of Russian peacekeepers, the situation in Moldova (between Transdniestria and the Moldova central government) continued to stagnate. At this point, the 14th Army was being downgraded as well.

In April 1995, the 14th Army was re-named the Operational Group of Russian Forces in Moldova and in October of 1994 had committed to withdrawal
within 3 years time. Beginning in December 1995, Moscow began to agitate for the transfer of peacekeeping activities to the auspices of the group formerly known as the 14th Army, citing the cost of bringing “trainloads of peacekeepers from Orenburg or the Volga region when they can be replaced by servicemen who are already in the operational area” (Nezavisimaya gazeta 1995). Despite serious Moldovan objections, the JCC agreed on 11 June 1996 to place former units of the 14th Army in the security zone as peacekeepers (RFE/RL Newsline 1996; RFE/RL Newsline 1995). Since then, both, the ground situation and the composition of peacekeepers have remained stable, despite the legal status of Transdniestria remaining undetermined.

8. CONCLUSION

After the collapse of the Soviet Union, the proliferation of the institutions and absence of any coordination among the various bodies involved in foreign policy was a common scenario till late 1993. The army was acting at least partially of its own volition (MAJ. Finch, Raymond C 1996). When the ethnic conflicts broke out with a threat to Russia’s multi-ethnic society, the unprepared Moscow was forced to carry out peacekeeping activity with little help from the international community. So Russia carried out peacekeeping operations in Georgia and Moldova using the troops which had been stationed there since 1921 and the strategies which were available at the time. However, it is also clear that some of the Russian forces were helping the separatists indirectly by supplying arms and ammunition but it was checked and improved (the discipline of the Russian forces) after the new military doctrine of the 1993. Therefore, it is also clear that there was lack of control on its troops who were scattered over the former Soviet republics till 1993.

In theory, undoubtedly, Russia had taken their tasks as a third party to resolve a conflict between two opposing sides. However, in practice, Russia had taken a mixed party role (both third party role and primary party role). In both countries, Russia’s peacekeeping forces operated under the mandate of both the conflicting parties and successfully stopped the crisis.
In case of the ethnic conflicts between Georgia and Abkhazia, Russian peacekeeping forces got the UN green signal to operate under the UN observer mission (UNOMIG). In Moldova, initially Russian peacekeeping forces were deployed as ad hoc peacekeepers. However, after July 1992 agreement, the Russian peacekeeping forces were operated upon with mandate from the bilateral agreements as well as multilateral agreements. The Russian peacekeeping was also supervised by a Joint Control Commission (Russia, Moldova, and Transdniestria) and was monitored by OSCE.

The Russian peacekeeping operations in both Georgia and Moldova came under the UN charter Article 52 (regional arrangement of the peaceful settlement). In Georgia, the precarious situation of the troops improved when the UN finance peacekeeping operation started in 1994, after the sending of an observation mission. After all, Georgia and Moldova are part of Russia’s strategic interest areas. Despite its efforts for peaceful settlement, Russia is in the process of strengthening its position in the region through the presence of its forces. Such a stance is prone to allegations as some of its troops were found supporting the separatists (both in Georgia and Moldova) by supplying arms and ammunitions as imperialist policy. On the other hand, the image of a former imperial power often misled the Russian peacekeeping operations in the armed conflicts in and around Russian territory as other CIS member-states continue to see it as the neo-imperialists in the post Soviet era.