

# Chapter V

CONTESTED BORDERS IN THE CAUCASUS

## Russia's Search for an International Mandate in Transcaucasia

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### 1. Introduction

For centuries, the Caucasus has been a sphere of vital Russian interests. The Northern Caucasus is actually an inalienable part of Russian territory. After the disintegration of the USSR, Russia strove to take an active part in the conflicts both in this region and in Transcaucasia. Its role in the Northern Caucasus is very different from the one it is striving for in Transcaucasia. In the Northern Caucasus, Russia emphasized above all the legitimate exercise of power functions by the federal authorities, although, as the events in Chechnya have shown, such an exercise of power does not always correspond to international norms. Russia's actions vis-a-vis the independent and sovereign Transcaucasian republics, on the other hand, have to rely on international organizations and agreements. Russian policies in relation to international organizations, and the drawing up of rules and mechanisms for its intervention which may be acceptable to the international community, are very different, from a legal and political point of view, from its policies in the North Caucasian region. The present article focuses exclusively on Transcaucasia.

### 2. Stages in the Settlement Process in Transcaucasia

No clearcut chronological limits may be discerned in the different stages through which the settlement process in Transcaucasia has passed. The first stage was characterized by Moscow's efforts to preserve the integrity of the USSR and to shore up the central power. The interethnic and national conflicts in the Caucasus were regarded by Moscow as, first and foremost, an effective means of achieving its objectives within a broader political framework. At this stage of the process, any intervention by the international

community in the settlement in Transcaucasia would clearly have run counter to the imperial premises of Moscow's political course. Such intervention would have been regarded as interference in the internal affairs of the USSR and would therefore have met with strenuous resistance. But the lack of political will on the part of the Soviet leadership to reach a settlement in Transcaucasia, followed by the consequent loss of levers of control over the situation, provoked an escalation of the conflicts and led the opposing forces to stake their solution on military means.

As a result, the crises during the second stage of the settlement process (after the break-up of the USSR) in Nagorno-Karabakh, Abkhazia and South Ossetia took place in a situation where - despite the changed status in international law of the states in this region - the external means of achieving this settlement were extremely limited. A high pitch of nationalism in the policies of all the Transcaucasian states proclaiming their independence, their desire to rid themselves of Russia's influence at all costs, political instability and the grave miscalculations in Moscow's internal and military policy made it impossible for the latter to play an effective role in the settlement process. Russia's attempts at political manoeuvring and power politics undermined its authority and diminished its peacemaking capability even further.

At the same time, the West's unwillingness to become involved in conflicts in the East, the manifest unpreparedness of the international security organizations for local crises and interethnic conflicts (and their inability to manage them), the concentration of their efforts on other regions (in particular, Yugoslavia and the Persian Gulf zone) and on other problems - all this precluded recourse to international levers for a real settlement.

During the next stage, continuing up to the intervention in Chechnya at the end of 1994, there was a growing understanding of the need to place greater reliance on Russia's peacekeeping efforts - both on the part of the international community, which realized the clearly inadequate means of effective action at its disposal, and on the part of the conflicting sides. The latter, however, counted on using Russia as a power capable of exerting influence on their opponents, rather than relying on it as an authoritative arbiter and peacemaker.<sup>(1)</sup> Nevertheless, Russia managed to secure for itself the role of active intermediary in the settlement process.

Initially, Russia's efforts at mediation were not in fact supplemented by serious practical action by the international organizations. This is attested to, among other things, by the situation in Nagorno-Karabakh, which remained the most acute crisis zone after the break-up of the USSR. At a time when the conflicting sides were already relying on Russia's practical support for a settlement of the Karabakh conflict, the international organizations merely "did not rule out" a possible contribution by the international community. Russian officials, for their part, noted that international recognition of Russia's mediating function was clearly inadequate and that more concrete and practical assistance in its efforts was required.<sup>(2)</sup>

Russia's search for international legitimation of its peacekeeping efforts in Transcaucasia coincided with the wish expressed by the Transcaucasian governments for an international component to the settlement process, in order to control Russia's policies in the region. Both factors facilitated action by the international organizations in the Transcaucasian conflict zones. As a

result, a political vacuum in the area of settlement in Transcaucasia, which had formed at the preceding stage, gradually began to be filled, while an intensive - but conflictual - interaction gradually developed between the international community and organizations on the one hand and Russia on the other. Although this interaction did not acquire a systemic character, and was based, not on a division of labour and distribution of responsibilities, but rather on competition in mediating initiatives in the region, it nevertheless involved the recognition by both sides of the need to combine Russia's efforts with those of the international organizations.

This interaction may be described as a mirror image of the usual practice of international crisis management. As a rule, that practice provides for active participation by states in settlement efforts which are being made by the international organizations (e.g., in Yugoslavia). The settlement process in Nagorno-Karabakh, and later in other zones of the Caucasus, was based on an inverse logic: Russia's peacekeeping activity required reinforcement on the part of the international community. This difference explains Russia's request to be granted special responsibility in crisis management in Transcaucasia.

The Policies of International Organizations in Transcaucasia Russia's policies in Transcaucasia may be seen as a consequence of the ineffectiveness of the international organizations in responding to security challenges in the region. Their inadequacy is manifested on two main planes:

- **horizontally:** the absence of a unified system of practical mechanisms for the warning, localization and settlement of conflicts which would enable the international community to cope effectively with instability crises in the CSCE (now OSCE) zone;
- **vertically:** the fragility of the "Eastern pole" of European security, associated in large measure with the relatively slow formation of a partnership between West and East, the lack of a clear perspective in their relationships and the unwillingness, or inability, of Western states and European organizations to shoulder in the East a burden of responsibility similar to that borne by them at the "Western pole".<sup>(3)</sup>

The inadequacy of the international security system to meet modern security challenges is attested to by the international organizations' slowness to act in the conflicts in Georgia and Nagorno-Karabakh. After the signing of the tripartite Sochi agreement on 27 July 1993, Russia and Georgia asked the UN and the CSCE to send observers to assist the process of peaceful settlement. But these failed to decide and act promptly. Initially, time and effort were put into persuading the Security Council of the need to increase the number of observers from the 8-12 people originally suggested, to 80.<sup>(3)</sup> As a result, the dynamism of the settlement was lost. By the time the Sochi agreements were broken (16 September),<sup>(4)</sup> in all about 20 observers had arrived at the conflict zone.<sup>(6)</sup>

After the second round of the Georgian-Abkhazian talks, held in Geneva in November 1993-January 1994 under the auspices of the UN and with the participation of Russia and the CSCE, the international organizations increased their activity in the conflict zone, striving not to repeat past mistakes.<sup>(7)</sup> In the opinion of many observers and politicians, however, this activity was still inadequate, given the scope of the conflict - nor did it meet

the demands for a settlement, especially in the period prior to the completion of the third round of talks (22 February-31 March 1994). The extension of the mandate of the UN observers' mission - in particular, its taking control over the non-resumption of hostilities - was taking too long to materialize, despite repeated appeals from the conflicting parties and Russia. The Russian Foreign Ministry declared that it was "not fully satisfied" with the contents of Security Council Resolution No. 896 of 31 January 1994, since "the simple extension of the UN mission's mandate envisaged by it can hardly be viewed as an adequate response to the progress reached during the Geneva talks of December 1993 and January 1994 by the Georgian and Abkhazian delegations".<sup>(8)</sup> An urgent demand to extend of the mandate of the UN monitoring mission in Georgia was contained in a statement on the conclusion of the third round of negotiations, signed in April 1994 by the Georgian and Abkhazian delegations, together with representatives of the UN, the CSCE and Russia, and also, subsequently, in the parties' appeal to the Security Council within the framework of the May 1994 talks in Moscow.

In late 1993, Georgia appealed directly to Russia for help in settling the conflicts on its territory. A peacekeeping operation was unveiled in Abkhazia under the auspices of the UN, with participation by the CSCE and based on Russia's peacekeeping forces. These forces did not officially receive the status of "blue berets", but in early July 1994 their deployment was approved by the Security Council and, in practice, their activity proceeded in close, permanent contact with the UN military observers.

A commission on refugees, with the participation of Georgia, Abkhazia, Russia and the UN (in the person of the High Commissioner for Refugees), and with the CSCE as an observer, was formed only in August 1994, although the question of refugees was and remains one of the key issues in the resolution of the conflict. The unduly long wait for a definite response from the UN to pressing appeals from Georgia and Abkhazia for the speediest possible arrival of international peacekeeping forces, with participation by the Russian contingent,<sup>(9)</sup> added to both sides' dissatisfaction with the UN's contribution to the settlement process.<sup>(10)</sup>

Unfortunately, the activities of the representatives of the Minsk Group - which, on the whole, has great peacemaking potential in the Nagorno-Karabakh area - also demonstrated instances of inefficiency. It took the capture of Azerbaijan's Kelbajar Raion and, later, the town of Agdam by Karabakh Armenians, and the adoption in this connection of UN Security Council Resolution No. 853 on 29 July 1993 - confirming and supplementing Resolution No. 822 (30 April 1993) - to stimulate proper activity by the Minsk "Nine".<sup>(11)</sup> The Minsk Group held meetings with all the conflicting parties individually and organized a joint meeting session on 12 August.

A renewed schedule for the peace settlement, submitted to the conflicting sides in November 1993, completely ignored Azerbaijan's demand for the withdrawal of Armenian forces from the Azerbaijani population centres of Lachin and Shusha.<sup>(12)</sup> Consequently, the new proposal was doomed to failure from the start. Azerbaijan linked the attainment of its political aims in the resolution of the conflict largely with the activity of the "Minsk group", as opposed to Russia's unilateral efforts. The large-scale December offensive by Azerbaijan may be seen as a consequence of its disappointment in the policies of the Minsk Group.<sup>(13)</sup> The Azeri government was apparently trying

to compensate by military means for the lack of international peacemaking, thereby putting pressure on the international community.

On the whole, the states of Transcaucasia were distinctly dissatisfied with the actions of Western states and international organizations in the conflict zones, and they stated this openly. They were thus driven to accepting Russia's leading mediation role, as Russia alone possessed real military means for enforcing peacekeeping activities.

### **3. Russia's Role: from Inconsistency to "Special Responsibility"**

In understanding the limitations of Russia's peacemaking potential, no less important than the lack of international recognition are the inconsistency of its policies and its departure in some cases from international norms - especially in giving military aid to the conflicting sides.<sup>(14)</sup> Its policies have often brought accusations from all of the conflicting sides that Russia wishes to patronize one or other of them. The inconsistencies of its policies in Transcaucasia reflect a confrontation between different political currents in Russia itself regarding the general aims of its foreign policy. One current wants to restore Russia's influence in the ex-USSR zone by all possible means, often including the use of armed force (a policy of neo-imperialism). The other extreme is to keep as far away as possible from settling the mounting problems and crises in the "near abroad" areas, while concentrating on dealing with tasks related to internal development (a policy of isolationism). Russia's policies in Transcaucasia fell between these two stools. At the beginning of 1994, Russia's foreign minister, Andrei Kozyrev, still had good reason to assert that "the 'neo-imperialist' and 'isolationist' approaches to the problems of the former USSR are both equally unacceptable to Russia".<sup>(15)</sup>

In the course of 1993, Russia spelled out its priorities and interests in relation to the conflicts in the former USSR, and particularly in Transcaucasia:

- the performance by Russia of peacemaking functions and the defence of the rights of national minorities, especially those of the Russian-speaking population in the "near abroad";<sup>(16)</sup>
- ensuring stability throughout the area of the former USSR and the formation of a belt of "good neighbours" along the whole perimeter of Russian borders, to be secured (among other means) by retaining Russia's military presence in the CIS countries, following the appropriate legal norms and consolidating their common security framework;<sup>(17)</sup>
- the acceptance of Russia's special role in the CIS, account being taken not only of its own interests and those of its neighbours, but also of the fact that "no state of the 'near abroad' or 'far abroad' areas and not a single international organization has evinced the wish, or is able, to replace Russia as a peacekeeping force in that region";<sup>(18)</sup>
- the need for co-operation between Russia and the international community and organizations in order to increase stability and manage crises within the area of the former USSR. "Russia consistently intervenes in favour of the broadest participation by the UN and the CSCE in settling conflicts in the CIS countries."<sup>(19)</sup>

The declaration of these tenets was undoubtedly a step towards the

formulation by Russia of an integral conception of the post-Soviet region and a clear-cut, comprehensive policy on it. So far, however, these were merely reference points which first of all required concretization and, secondly, presupposed that Russian policy should be brought into line with them in practice. This gave a number of Russian experts grounds for doubting if Russia had "any strategic line in the 'near abroad', given the discrepancies between its declared principles and their practical fulfilment".(20)

According to Russia's foreign minister, A. Kozyrev, "the conducting of one single national policy with regard to local conflicts" had to be one of Russia's main tasks. "It must not look like a puff-pastry in which each layer satisfies the tastes of individuals, government bodies or regions... Manifestations of such an approach... are contrary to Russia's official position, seriously damage the cause of settlement... and undermine trust in Russia on the part of the international community".(21)

Russia's aspiration to special responsibility in the Transcaucasus did not evoke understanding and support from the international community. On the contrary, there were growing accusations of a renaissance of "imperialist" tendencies in Russian foreign policy - these came from the West, from the central European countries (above all Poland) and from a number of states of the former USSR (the Baltic states and the Ukraine).

The typical question which arose in earlier stages of the settlement process - namely: to what extent were Russia's policies and actions capable of influencing the situation in the region? - was being transformed in 1994 into another: in which particular forms would Russia's active role in the Transcaucasus materialize? The states participating in the settlement of the conflicts in Transcaucasia had to choose between two alternatives.

The first was regarded by the Russian leadership as optimal for its own interests as well as for those of the conflicting sides and the international community: it included a recognition of the complementarity between Russia's specific efforts and those of the international organizations. According to this option, Russia's forces (or contingents within these forces) would be given clear-cut international legal status. After lengthy discussions in 1993 and the first half of 1994, a consensus developed regarding the necessity of establishing peacekeeping forces for the settlement in the region, with an international mandate from the UN and/or CSCE. The deployment of UN peacekeeping forces in Transcaucasia, while feasible in principle, was scarcely likely, mainly because of financial constraints and fears that the entry of UN forces into one of the conflict zones could set an unwelcome precedent for wider armed participation by the UN in regulating crises on CIS territory. The CSCE had no mechanism whatever for conducting peacekeeping operations in areas of conflict. Thus a variant whereby Russian (or CIS) peacekeeping forces would be used, acting on the basis of resolutions and decisions by the UN and/or CSCE as its regional organization, looked optimal, even though this would mean a departure from the UN's "classic scheme".(22) With a parallel activation of the UN and CSCE in conflict zones in the Transcaucasus, this would make it possible to ensure effective concerted action by the international organizations and Russia. The UN and the CSCE would in this case be responsible for the formulation of general policy for a settlement, for preventive diplomacy and for international legal control in the conflict zones, in order to weave Russia's activities into the

policies of the international security system. The CSCE would at last acquire practical support at its "Eastern pole", supplementing its most effective Western supports (NATO, WEU and the EU), which could not (and still less wished to) take the leading role in strengthening security and stability in the area of the CIS, and in Transcaucasia in particular.

Those who favoured the first option pointed out that the other alternative presented far fewer possibilities for a gradual settlement in the Caucasus. A denial by the CSCE or the UN of Russia's "special responsibility" for security and stability in the CIS zone would mean that Western and Russian policies in the Transcaucasus could not be pursued within the framework of a jointly accepted model for practical co-operation, but would be dictated by the particular political situation. International organizations would react to crisis situations in the region both late and ineffectively. This would sharply reduce Russia's ability to ensure a settlement, as it would lead to constant disputes (both overt and veiled) with Western, regional and even CIS states. The absence of an international mandate for the Russian peacekeeping forces or for Russia's mediation efforts would lead to increased efforts by other regional powers - fearful of excessive Russian influence not counterbalanced by the international bodies<sup>(23)</sup> - to intervene in the region. Obviously, such competition would provoke a new aggravation of tensions.<sup>(24)</sup> Russia, relying solely on its own economic, political and peacekeeping potential, would most likely be unable to develop a long-term settlement policy and its policies would attract strong criticism from all sides (including within Russia). The charge of "Russian neo-imperialism" would have a more persuasive ring. According to those keen to point out the risks of such an alternative, failure to insert Russia's activity into the context of international efforts would effectively create favourable conditions for the formation of the very "imperialist course" most feared by Russia's partners.

#### **4. The Status of Peacekeeping Forces**

The future status of peacekeeping forces is a key problem in the negotiations on all Transcaucasian conflicts. In principle, Russia did not rule out any of three possible variant options for the deployment of peacekeeping forces in crisis zones within the framework of the international settlement effort:

1. The conduct of UN peacekeeping operations, in which - in accordance with the norms accepted in the UN - the proportion of Russian army servicemen would not exceed 25 %.
2. The formation of international peacekeeping forces acting on a mandate from the UN Security Council, but outside the framework of its peacekeeping operations. The Russian contingent would form the basis of these mixed forces (in February 1994, Eduard Shevardnadze suggested an 80 % participation by the Russian military).<sup>(25)</sup>
3. The deployment of Russian armed forces in the conflict zones under the aegis of the UN or CSCE, with the simultaneous posting of observers from the international organizations.

Of all these variants, the Russian leadership considered the second to be the most acceptable and realistic. The first variant seemed hardly probable. It was considered that the third variant would be difficult to bring about in the

political situation of 1993/early 1994. The Russian leadership in that period proceeded on the basis that "it [was] impossible to obtain a carte blanche from the UN or CSCE" [for the activity of Russian troops as "blue berets" - D. D.].(26)

Gradually, in the early months of 1994, Russia's stance on peacekeeping operations in Transcaucasia was becoming increasingly rigid. On the one hand, this was undoubtedly a reaction to the absence of any solution in principle from the international bodies to the problem of the use and status of peacekeeping forces in Transcaucasia. Alongside this, the relative toughness of Russian policy was also predetermined by the Caucasian leaders' desire to resolve the issue of Russia's participation in peacekeeping operations in the region as quickly as possible - a wish the Russian leadership naturally could not ignore. On the other hand, Russia had now acquired new possibilities for pursuing a tougher line on the deployment of peacekeeping forces in Transcaucasia.

Firstly, as noted earlier, the use of Russian army contingents in whatever form in crisis management was considered acceptable by the conflicting sides. Russia could use the presence of peacekeeping forces in Abkhazia as an argument for extending such an experience to the Karabakh conflict. On 16 April 1994, Azerbaijan, together with the CIS partners, accepted a protocol decision whereby the mandate for settling the conflict was transferred, on behalf of the Commonwealth, to the Russian peacekeeping initiative. This decision stressed that the main task was the guaranteed cessation of hostilities. It contained an appeal to the UN and the CSCE, requesting their support for the Russian initiative, and it welcomed the idea of posting CIS peacekeeping forces to the Karabakh conflict zone.(27) However, as explained by Geidar Aliyev, the Azerbaijani side would not agree to the posting of these forces until the Armenian forces had withdrawn without preconditions from all territories outside Karabakh, and only after that could a real start be made on solving the problem of Karabakh proper. After several months, however, the Azerbaijani position began to look less categorical. As stated in August 1994 by Rasul Guliev, the Chair of the republic's Supreme Council, Azerbaijan accepted the need to disengage the conflicting parties with the help of the peacekeeping forces,(28) without explicitly excluding all forms of deployment of these before all the occupied territories were returned.

Secondly, the accession of Georgia to the CIS completed the unification of all the former republics of the USSR (except the Baltics) within its framework and enhanced the legitimation of Russia's peacekeeping aspirations. Significantly, at the CIS summit in April 1994, the adoption of the decision on Nagorno-Karabakh and the joint statement on the Georgian-Abkhazian conflict was unanimous, causing no disputes of any kind. This statement contained an appeal to the UN and CSCE by the Council of the CIS Heads of State for the urgent stationing of peacekeeping forces in the conflict zone under the auspices of the Security Council. If the adoption of such a decision were to be postponed, the CIS countries which were party to the Collective Security Treaty expressed their willingness to post their own military contingents on a joint basis and with the consent of the warring sides.(29) Commenting on the content of the document adopted, Georgia's Chief of General Staff G. Nikolaishvili declared that Georgia was prepared to agree to Russia's assuming the role of peacekeeper alone, due to the inadequacy of co-operation between Russia and the UN, which was acting too slowly.(30)

Thirdly, Russia's military and political options in Transcaucasia were widening considerably. The process of stationing Russian military contingents in the CIS states in accordance with internationally accepted norms was being set on a practical footing. Russian troops were deployed in Georgia on the basis of a bilateral interstate treaty signed in 1994. Agreements had also been reached with Georgia and Armenia on Russia's role in guarding their external borders.

Parallel to this, the military and political mechanisms of the CIS as a whole were visibly progressing. Within the framework of the CIS meeting in Moscow in April 1994, a Declaration on Collective Security was signed by the Council of Defence Ministers of the Commonwealth (in which all defence ministers of the CIS took part except the Moldovan one). At the same summit, a new Statute on the Council of Defence Ministers of the CIS member states was adopted, as well as documents regulating the activities of the secretariat of the Collective Security Council. All this was regarded as an important step towards the formation of a defence union; as Russia's defence minister, Pavel Grachev, remarked in assessing the outcome of the April CIS summit, the prospects for the creation of unified armed forces within the framework of the Collective Security Treaty were becoming real.<sup>(31)</sup>

Fourthly, Russia had made marked progress on shaping its peacekeeping forces, on both the military and legal levels. In addition to the CIS "collective peacekeeping forces", comprising the 201st Russian motorized rifle division stationed in Tajikistan, the "Russian peacekeeping forces" were being formed. For this purpose, the 27th and 45th motorized rifle divisions and an independent parachute battalion had already been assigned from the Russian armed forces.<sup>(32)</sup> More than 16,000 Russian army servicemen were performing peacekeeping tasks in the "near abroad" in the beginning of 1994.<sup>(33)</sup> Russian defence ministry expenditure on peacekeeping operations in the former Soviet Union increased considerably, rising from 2.5 billion roubles in 1992 to 26 billion in 1993. This testified to the advancement of the issue of peacekeeping along the scale of priorities for state policy and military construction.

Apart from the bilateral agreements with the relevant states, the legal framework for the activities of the Russian armed forces abroad was based on the Russian military doctrine adopted on 2 November 1993 and the Russian Federation Law "On Defence" (24 September 1992). In 1994 in the State Duma, work also began on a bill on the participation of the Russian Federation in international peacekeeping operations.<sup>(34)</sup>

It was thus obvious, at the end of 1994, that Russia had far greater incentives and possibilities for active peacekeeping (including by military means) than at earlier stages in its efforts to achieve a settlement in Transcaucasia. Besides the suggested variants on international recognition for Russia's peacekeeping activities, other alternatives have been clearly indicated. In a joint statement from Russia's foreign and defence ministries on 5 April 1994, it was explicitly stated that, as a matter of principle, no "permission" was required from the UN or CSCE for its peacekeeping operations, insofar as, in case of necessity, these would be conducted at the request and with the consent of the conflicting sides and states and in accordance with the UN Charter and other norms of international law.<sup>(35)</sup> At the same time, Russian officials also made tougher statements reflecting Russia's willingness to resort to autonomous

peacekeeping measures in the "hot spots". Thus, in March 1994, V. Yelagin, Head of the Information and Press Department of the Russian Foreign Ministry, expressed the opinion that it was "not in Russia's interests to allow the presence of military contingents from third countries on the territory of the States of the former USSR".[\(36\)](#)

However, the Russian leaders were aware that, if the situation regarding the settlement in the Transcaucasus evolved in the direction of relatively autonomous peacemaking actions by Russia, possibly with CIS support, then both Russia itself and the international community and institutions were going to be faced with serious new problems and security challenges. That is why the Russian leadership continued to steer a course aimed at enhancing the international context of the settlement in Transcaucasia, rather than unilaterally bringing Russian peacekeeping forces into the area of the Georgian-Abkhazian conflict. Although Russian contingents were not formally stationed in Abkhazia as part of UN forces, in fact their activity is proceeding under the auspices of that organization, within the framework of its peacekeeping operation, and, in particular, it is linked to the tasks of the international observers and the international commission for the return of refugees. Thus the official Russian position, particularly as stated in the consultations in the CSCE (August-September 1994) by Vitali Shustov, the Russian representative, was that one of the mediating countries might become a "third force" in the peacekeeping operations under the aegis of the CSCE.[\(37\)](#) In the course of her visit to Georgia in September 1994, Madeleine Albright, US Permanent Representative at the UN, demonstrated an understanding of this position, stating in this connection: "Watching the experiment with the participation of Russian peacekeepers acting with the UN mandate, we are studying this process, which steps outside the bounds of international standards, with great attention, for if, as we hope, it proves to have been warranted, then such a scheme may and also must be used in the practice of the world community in the future."[\(38\)](#)

Azerbaijan preferred the use of multilateral forces, and the Western countries in the Minsk Group apparently shared this view. Even though this constituted one of the main points of discord between Moscow and the Minsk group, the Russian leadership did not in principle rule out the sending of multilateral peacekeeping forces to the Nagorno-Karabakh zone. Thus, at the talks with Rasul Guliev, the Chair of the Supreme Council of Azerbaijan, during the latter's visit to Moscow in May 1994, the Chair of the Federation Council, Vladimir Shumeiko, Foreign Minister Andrei Kozyrev and Defence Minister Pavel Grachev did not question the validity of the corresponding proposals from the Azerbaijani side.[\(39\)](#)

It is possible, however, that Russia's position would be acceptable to Azerbaijan and the international organizations, if Russia met certain conditions. In the discussions on the stationing of Russian or CIS peacekeeping forces, Russia's opponents expected it above all to be able to persuade the Karabakh side to withdraw its troops from the occupied territories and, of course, they also expected Russia to lift its strong objections to the oil extraction contract concluded between the Western consortium and Azerbaijan on 20 September 1994.

Azerbaijan's willingness to accept such mutual compromises was reflected, in particular, in an August 1994 statement by Gasan Gasanov, the republic's

foreign minister: "The essence of the problem [of the settlement] lies not in the approach, methods or list of mediators... The problem is concentrated in the fact that Armenia refuses to withdraw its occupying troops from the Lachin and Shusha Raions".<sup>(40)</sup> The US, which largely determined the approach of the Minsk Group, also demonstrated a softening of its position on the composition of the peacekeeping forces. While on a visit to Yerevan in early September 1994, Madeleine Albright did not lay down the international make-up of such forces as one of the conditions for the entry of peacekeeping forces into the Karabakh conflict zone. On the contrary, she declared that insofar as such forces cannot really be dispensed with, the involvement of Russian troops seemed acceptable if certain conditions were observed. Among the main conditions listed by Albright - who referred to the positive experience in Abkhazia - was the monitoring of the actions of the Commonwealth's peacekeeping forces. However, the statement by the Russian foreign ministry on the non-recognition of the oil contract of 20 September changed the situation again, leading the US on the one hand to oppose Russia's having too strong a voice in Transcaucasia and, on the other, to strengthen its own role. At a meeting with Boris Yeltsin on 27-28 September in Washington, Bill Clinton called on him to disavow the Russian statement, while Yeltsin failed to make progress on the question of securing the recognition of Russia's role as the main peacekeeper in the Karabakh conflict. Significantly, the US simultaneously demonstrated its intention of playing a more active role: a meeting of the presidents of Armenia and Azerbaijan with US mediation (where the US was represented by Madeleine Albright) was organized in New York on 27 September.

Linking settlement with the attainment of other ends (for instance, the resolution of the oil contract issue) reduces the possibility of working out a single programme of action agreed upon by all the mediators (in particular, the Minsk Group's "consolidated plan") and paves the way for a return to unilateral diplomacy. As admitted by one highly-placed Armenian diplomat, it was actually easier to bring the positions of Baku and Yerevan closer to each other than to reach an agreement between the mediators - Russia and the Minsk Group of the CSCE.<sup>(41)</sup>

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## Notes

1. As Andrei Kozyrev put it, "the conflicting groupings do not accept even the idea of peacemaking and are trying to enlist the Russian troops on their side. A classic case in point is the Georgian-Abkhazian conflict". See: *Nezavisimaya Gazeta*, 24 November 1993.
2. Vitali Churkin, then Head of the Information Department of the Russian Foreign Ministry, stated at a briefing on 12 March 1992: "The international community must not only keep alive its interest in settling this situation, but it must also step up its efforts". See: *Diplomaticheskii Vestnik*, 1992, No. 7, p. 60.
3. For a more detailed treatment of the matter, see: D. Danilov, *Rossiya v meniyuscheysia sisteme evropeyskoi bezopasnostia*, in: *Evropeyskaya integratsiya i voenno-politicheskie aspekty bezopasnosti novykh nezavisimyykh gosudarstv*. Materialy mezhdunarodnoy konferentsii, Minsk, 10-12 iyunia 1993 g., Minsk, 1994, pp. 34-36; D. Danilov, *Rossiya i Zapad: imperativy partnerstva v sfere bezopasnostia*, *Globus*. *Mezhdunarodnyi Vestnik*. 4 November 1993, No. 44 (7542), RIA-Novosti.
4. The international observers in the conflict zone were to assume tasks in accordance with the Sochi agreement: close co-operation with the Georgian-Abkhazian-Russian provisional control groups having access to any spot in the conflict; monitoring the withdrawal within 10-15 days from the territory of Abkhazia of the Georgian and other military formations (in particular, those of the Confederation of the Peoples of the Caucasus, Ukrainian National Self-Defence, etc.), groups and persons; presence and direct monitoring at the demarcation line (along the

- Gumista, Psou and Inguri rivers); participation in the United Commission for the Settlement in Abkhazia, which was empowered to monitor all actions provided for in the agreement. (See *Soglashenie o prekraschenii ognia v Abkhazii i mekhanizme kontrolya za ego sobliudeniem*. Sochi, 27 July 1993, *Diplomaticheskii Vestnik*, 1993, No. 15-16, pp. 21-22.)
5. The statements by the RF government on 16 September and by the RF foreign ministry on 17 September 1993 described these events as a crass violation of the Sochi agreement by the Abkhazian side and contained a demand, addressed to the latter, to cease hostilities and withdraw its troops to their initial positions - together with a warning that, otherwise, Russia would impose economic sanctions on Abkhazia, including switching off its electric power supply.
  6. *Novoe Vremya*, 1994, No. 4, pp. 19-20.
  7. In Resolution No. 892 of 23 December, the UN Security Council decided to send 50 observers to Georgia. It was anticipated that a mission of UN observers in Georgia would subsequently be founded, to be headed by the chief military observer with the rank of brigadier-general, appointed by the Secretary-General after consultation with the SC, bringing the total number of military observers to 88, in: *ITAR-TASS*, 24 December 1993, *Mir i my*, p. 13.
  8. *Diplomaticheskii Vestnik*, 1994, No. 5-6, p. 62.
  9. See, for instance, the documents of the Geneva talks: the Memorandum of Understanding of 1 December 1993; the Communique of 13 January 1994 and the Statement of 4 April 1994.
  10. *Rossiia i Gruziiya dogovarivayutsia o voennom sotrudnichestve*, *Izvestia*, 4 February 1994; *V Gruzii zhduet chuda ot Borisa Yeltsina*, *Izvestia*, 2 February 1994.
  11. The Minsk group - composed of Russia, Belarus, the United States, France, Germany, Italy, Turkey, Switzerland and Czechoslovakia - received a mandate from the CSCE Council of Ministers on 24 March 1992.
  12. For more on this plan, the attitudes of the conflicting sides to it and the activities of the Minsk CSCE Group generally, see: Chairman-in-Office Personal Representative Mission to the Area Dealt with by the Conference on Nagorno-Karabakh. Final Report. Vienna, 15 October 1993.
  13. Gasan Gasanov, Azerbaijan's foreign minister, stated that the Minsk Group should renew the style and methods of its work under the leadership of the new chairman, Ian Eliasson, a representative of Sweden who replaced the Italian diplomat, Mario Raffaelli, at that post. See: *Nezavisimaya Gazeta*, 15 December 1993.
  14. Accusations of "financial and material aid to the separatists" (the Abkhaz side) were levelled at the government of Yegor Gaidar by, amongst others, Eduard Shevardnadze and Jaba Ioseliani (*Moskovskie novosti*, No. 6, 6-13 February 1994, p. 6A; *Nezavisimaya gazeta*, 2 October 1993). Russia failed to honour the decision of the Committee of Senior Officials of the CSCE (of 28 February 1992) recommending it to refrain from supplying arms to the Karabakh conflict region, or the conditions of the Tashkent agreement between the ex-Soviet republics (15 May 1992) on maximum arms levels in keeping with the CFE (Conventional Forces in Europe) Treaty. In letter no. 175 (6.11.1993), Azerbaijan's foreign ministry admitted having received from Russia 286 battle tanks, 842 APC's and infantry combat vehicles, 386 artillery systems, 53 battle aircraft and 8 strike helicopters in July-August 1992, and an added 105 APC's and 42 artillery systems in May 1993. See: *Nezavisimaya Gazeta*, 2 December 1993.
  15. *Rossiiskie Vesti*, 9 February 1994.
  16. See Kozyrev's speech at the 48th session of the UN General Assembly on 28 September 1993 in: *Diplomaticheskii Vestnik*, 1993, No. 19-20, p. 47.
  17. Kozyrev A. V., 'Rossiya: god minuvshii i god nastupivshii', *Diplomaticheskii Vestnik*, 1993, No. 1-2, p. 3-4.
  18. Kozyrev A. V., 'Rossiiskoe mirotvorchestvo: legkikh reshenii ne byvaet', *Novoe Vremya*, 1994, No. 4, p. 19.
  19. A joint statement by RF foreign and defence ministries. 29 March 1994, *Diplomaticheskii Vestnik*, 1994, No. 7-8, p. 23.
  20. A. Arbatov, 'Bol'shaya politika ili melkaya igra?', *Moskovskie Novosti*, 1994, No. 6, p. 5A.
  21. Kozyrev, op. cit., *Novoe Vremya*, 1994, No. 4, p. 19.
  22. The "classic scheme" rules out participation in the peacekeeping forces by a contingent from a country neighbouring on the state or states where the conflict is taking place.
  23. The competition between regional powers for influence in Transcaucasia had negative consequences for international efforts to reach a settlement in the region. In the words of Viktor Kazimirov, the RF President's personal representative and leader of the Russian mediatory mission for Nagorno-Karabakh, "Russia's attempts... to uphold its own mediatory role between the conflicting parties is leading to a certain amount of jealousy on the part of the Minsk Group countries". This adversely affected the activity of the group whose chairman, according to some predictions, was going to be "more of a mediator between the US and Russia than between the conflicting parties". David Shakhnazarian, ambassador-at-large of the President of Armenia, drew attention to co-ordinated attempts by Azerbaijan and Turkey (in his opinion, with the agreement of the US) to bring pressure to bear on Russia so as to prevent a consolidation of its

- leading role in the settlement process and a new strengthening of Russia's position in Transcaucasia. (Nezavisimaya gazeta, 14 and 16 September; 11 November 1993).
24. The struggle for leadership in the Transcaucasian region could result in attempts at military intervention in conflicts by regional powers, unsanctioned by the international community. This was evidenced, in particular, by Geidar Aliyev's statements on a possible request for military aid to be addressed to one of the states in the region in the event of an escalation of the crisis. Turkey, for its part, urged "thinking of coercive measures against the aggressor" (Armenia). Iran likewise did not renounce the idea of rendering such aid, expressing only the reservation that it did not wish "the situation to require intervention": Izvestia, 4 and 10 April; 28 October 1993; Nezavisimaya Gazeta, 4, 6, 30 November 1993.
  25. Moskovskie Novosti, No. 6, 6-13 February 1994, p. 6A.
  26. Nezavisimaya Gazeta, 24 November 1993.
  27. Nezavisimaya Gazeta, 16 April 1994.
  28. Nezavisimaya Gazeta, 31 August 1994.
  29. Rossiiskaya Gazeta, 16 April 1994.
  30. Nezavisimaya Gazeta, 16 April 1994.
  31. Rossiiskie vesti, 16 April 1994.
  32. Izvestia, 23 March 1994.
  33. Krasnaya Zvezda, 22 February 1994.
  34. Krasnaya Zvezda, 21 March 1994.
  35. Rossiiskie Vesti, 5 April 1994.
  36. Segodnia, 2 March 1994.
  37. Nezavisimaya Gazeta, 25 August 1994.
  38. Quotation translated back from Russian: Nezavisimaya Gazeta, 6 September 1994.
  39. Nezavisimaya Gazeta, 31 August 1994.
  40. Nezavisimaya Gazeta, 6 August 1994.
  41. Nezavisimaya Gazeta, 3 September 1994.

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