

On Continuity in Russian Security Policy towards the Former Soviet Union



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Introduction

Chaos struck the newly independent states of the Former Soviet Union (FSU) following the demise of Moscow, the former hegemon, in the early nineties. As the grip of Moscow's power house quickly loosened, the rise of secessionist movements and oppositional parties created maximum potential for conflict in several countries. Most of the new states were in an even worse military, political and economic state than Russia, and several needed the former ruler to secure survival. They lacked all attributes of statehood as a result of the highly centralized infrastructural heritage of the Soviet Union. Fearing a new round of territorial losses if secessionist conflicts were to spill over into its own unstable territories, Moscow accepted the burden of conducting large-scale military missions in the FSU. Referencing well known United Nations (UN) operations, the Kremlin called these operations *peacekeeping missions*. In contrast to the UN peacekeeping missions, Russia held bias and relied heavily on the use of military force. Therefore, the UN refused to give a mandate for the Russian operations.

Furthermore, Moscow asked a political price for its operations. Georgia and Moldova, which at first abstained from and reluctantly participated, respectively, in the Russia-dominated Commonwealth of Independent States (CIS),¹ quickly augmented their activity in this organization after Russia's peacekeeping mission took off. Tajikistan's government owed its very existence to Moscow's peacekeeping mission, turning Tajikistan into a *de facto* Russian protectorate. Russia used its peacekeeping operations to aggressively advance its national interest by the massive use of force to fight threats to its national security and by trading military support for political compliance. Sometimes secessionist groups were used as a tool to force governments to comply with Russia's wishes. However, from 1996-1998, conflicts in the FSU froze. Conflicting wishes from opposing parties were turned into an unstable status quo as a

¹ The CIS was founded in 1991 to 'save what can be saved', according to Yeltsin. At the middle of the 1990s, the grave problems of the organization led it to be seen as an instrument for a *civilized divorce* of the former Soviet republics. Russian efforts to strengthen the organization to make it usable for continued intensive economic and military cooperation were lowered with Putin's coming to power, but the organization continues to exist and is seen as little more than a gentlemen's club for ministers and presidents.

result of Russia's unwillingness to push for a sustainable conflict resolution. According to many western analysts,² Moscow consciously froze the conflicts on a feeble compromise in order to exert lasting influence over the domestic politics of the new states of Eurasia.³

Quickly after the conflicts in the FSU were frozen, a new threat emerged in the FSU. At the end of the 1990s, a series of terrorist attacks hit Russia and other parts of the Former Soviet Union. The Moscow apartment bombings in 1999 and the hostage situations in the Dubrovka Theatre and the Beslan nursery school left more than 600 people dead and sent shockwaves through Russia. Uzbek president Islam Karimov almost lost his life in an assassination attempt by the Islamic Movement of Uzbekistan (IMU), and armed Islamic groups infiltrated Tajikistan and Kyrgyzstan. In the Caucasus, Chechen warriors, allegedly supported by the Taliban, were putting up bases in Georgia. International terrorism was on the rise, and in the 2000 race for the presidency, it was the *terrorist ticket* that won Putin the Kremlin. A year later, the 2001 Al Qaida attacks on the Twin Towers provided a perfect policy window to place Russia on the forefront of the international war on terrorism, and Putin presented the brutal war in Chechnya as proof of Russia being at the forefront of the fight. He pushed for a new partnership with the US, based on a shared responsibility to defeat international terrorism, and succeeded, with Russia ranking above America's cautiously acting allies.

In making Russia one of the leading nations in the global war on terror, Putin used anti-terrorism as a legitimate excuse to interfere beyond Russia's borders. Putin allowed the Russian military to search and destroy Chechen terrorists in Northern Georgia, legitimizing its unilateral action by claiming that Georgia was a 'weak link' in the *war on terror*, that it posed an 'acute threat to the national security of Russia'⁴ and that Georgia needed help to control the terrorist threat. The endangerment of Russian national security legitimized, to Moscow, Russia's unilateral interference. If it had not been for its newfound friendship with the US and the financial constraints resulting from the 1998 financial crisis, Russia might have sent a full intervention force to Northern Georgia. It is certain that Russia tried to use the threat of far-reaching

² D. Lynch, B. Lo, B. Buzan, I. Facon

³ Eurasia is a term referring to the area of the former Soviet territory; it is neither 'truly' European nor Asian. We can place the term against the background of a historical national debate on which course Russian foreign policy should follow: European, Asian or autonomous, focusing on its intermediate position between two cultures: the perception of Russia and the surrounding territories as 'Eurasia'.

⁴ RFERL Newline 21 December 2001, <http://www.rferl.org/content/article/1142585.html>. RFE/RL Newline February 20 2002, <http://www.rferl.org/content/article/1142619.html>

unilateral action on Georgian territory to assert Moscow's influence on the ongoing revolution in Tbilisi. In Central Asia, large-scale military anti-terrorist exercises aimed at rebuffing outside influence were executed under the 'anti-terrorism banner' as Putin tried to push the feeble authoritarian regimes of this region into constricting security partnerships. From 2005, he struck implicit deals with Central Asian leaders to close American bases and open Russian ones. Some analysts have even accused Russia of supporting terrorist groups to blackmail the Central Asian and South Caucasus governments.⁵ Just as in the case of Russia's peacekeeping missions, western analysts accused Russia of trying to derive maximum political benefit from its security policy in the Former Soviet Union (FSU).

Whereas most analysts focus on the differences that Putin's coming to power brought in Russian foreign policy, this paper will focus on continuity, applying Daniel Treisman's vision on security policy towards the FSU that says that 'Putin's Russia, although it sports a glossy new coat of paint, remains Yeltsin's Russia underneath'⁶. This paper will argue that the two main security policy issues in Russia's FSU policy - peacekeeping and anti-terrorism - are a case of wrapping new paper around the same gift. To this end, the following hypothesis will be tested in a number of case studies: 'Between 1992 and 2008, Russian security policy towards the FSU showed strong continuity in its aggressive pursuit of the national interest, adapting it to a changing international threat environment'.

The central aim is to prove continuity of aggression in Russian security policy, which, between 1992-2008, was driven by an undercurrent of three aspects of Russian national interest: domestic political unity; dominance in the FSU; and national security. These three factors pose an incentive for an aggressive pursuit of national interest. After outlining this threefold continuity of the national interest in the first chapter, I will present four case studies from 1992-2008 in the second chapter. These case studies clarify the connection between the continuity of national interest and aggressive security policy. The security policy banner under which the national interest was aggressively pursued changed with the international climate, from ethnic secessionist conflicts and

⁵ M. Pikulina, *Russia in Central Asia: Third Invasion* (Camberly, 2003) 2.

⁶ D. Treisman, 'Russia Renewed?', *Foreign Affairs* 2002, pp. 58-72, 59.

interstate wars in the 1990s to international Islamic terrorism in the new millennium.⁷ This leads many analysts to focus on a break line that would have come about with Putin's presidency. While the break line is existent, it is nowhere near as sharp as commonly believed as I will demonstrate.

The first chapter will be dedicated to Russia's national interest in security policy in the FSU between 1992 and 2008, and the second chapter to demonstrating the continuity of aggression under changing policy banners by analyzing four case studies. These case studies shed light on Russian policy towards the conflict over Abkhazia in Georgia between 1992 and 1998, Russian policy towards the civil war in Tajikistan between 1992 and 1998, Russian anti-terrorist policy towards Georgia between 1999 and 2008, and Russia's regional anti-terrorist cooperation in Central Asia between 1999 and 2008. Georgia and Tajikistan have been the focal point of Russian security policy towards the Caucasus and Central Asia respectively; hence this paper will focus on these states. Tajikistan became a focal point because of its civil war, weak state and long border with Afghanistan; Georgia because of its strategic, political and economic importance. The two peacekeeping missions in those countries (and the ones analyzed in this paper) are arguably the most divergent cases of Russian peacekeeping and thus provide a broad overview of Russian security policy: one in the South Caucasus, one in Central Asia, one an example of an intervention as a political pressure tool (Abkhazia), one a genuine effort at stabilizing a conflict through full government support (Tajikistan). The two anti-terrorist cases are again divided over the South Caucasus and Central Asia. One is a unilateral effort at fighting the spill-over from an internal Russian conflict (Georgia), while the other is an effort to establish a regional control mechanism for stability.⁸

Due to the lack of comparative works that treat the Yeltsin and Putin periods together, most of the works used for this thesis deal with either Yeltsin (and/or peacekeeping) or

⁷ As opposed to *terrorism of conflicts*. Terrorism of conflicts is a mode of operation used by non-state actors in an asymmetrical confrontation with a state to achieve more limited goals within a regional context. The infrastructural organization can be *internationalized*. International terrorism 'seeks to create a global outreach and, as such, does not have to be tied to any particular armed conflict'. The aims of international terrorist organizations are '*unlimited* and non-negotiable' and the fall of the West or the Western world order is often part of its ideology. E. Stepanova, 'Russia's approach to the fight against terrorism', J. Hedenskog, V. Konnander et al. (eds.), *Russia as a Great Power. Dimensions of Security under Putin* 301-322, 301

⁸ None of the cases represents the western tier of the FSU. This is a result of the somewhat separate status of the western tier in the Eurasian security complex as Russian influence was quickly compromised by the proximity of western political .

with Putin (and/or anti-terrorism).⁹ Therefore I have categorized the works by period. Regarding the Yeltsin years, several insightful studies have been of great help. In Dov Lynch's compelling analysis of Russian peacekeeping, he shows that Russian peacekeeping is part of a policy of armed suasion. The bundle of works on Russian peacekeeping published in 2003 and edited by John Mackinlay and Peter Cross focuses mostly on the connections or lack thereof between Russian and UN peacekeeping. Lena Jonson and Clive Archer's bundle, published in 1996, gives an interesting insight of the 'hot' issues of the time. The authors present several case studies, in which they give a detailed analysis of the military actions on the ground and try to discern how Russian peacekeeping will develop. The recent work of Isabella Facon (2007) is especially important in projecting Russian peacekeeping against the background of longer term developments in Russian security policy. Also, several broader works on Russian foreign policy were important to create a deeper understanding on the background developments of Russian society and how this influenced foreign policy, most notably the work edited by Adeed and Karen Dawisha, *The Making of Foreign Policy in Russia and the New States of Eurasia* (1995) and the work by Martha Brill Olcott, Anders Aslund and Sherman Garnett (1999), on developments within the CIS organization..

Regarding the Putin (anti-terrorism) years, I combine my own analysis of primary sources with secondary literature on Russian anti-terrorism. I started studying these primary sources during my internship at the Political Department of the Royal Dutch Embassy in Moscow. I mostly used the online databases of Radio Free Europe/Radio Liberty (rferl.org), and the online database of the New York based 'Central Eurasia Project of the Open Society Institute' (eurasianet.org), occasionally using the websites of the Russian Presidency and the Russian Foreign Ministry (kremlin.ru and mid.ru). One of the most important secondary literature sources consists of the works of Bobo Lo (2007) on Russia's foreign policy under Putin. Lo focuses on the main differences in the political concepts used in Russian foreign policy. The combined work of Jacob Hedenskog, Vilhelm Konnander, Bertil Nygren, Ingmar Oldberg and Christer Puriainen (2007) on Putin's security policy has been extremely useful as well, providing a deep insight on several Russian security dimensions. Of particular importance was the analysis of Pavel Baev on the way in which Putin used anti-terrorism policy as a political tool. The work of Bertil Nygren on bilateral security

⁹ Many of the works on Putin pay attention to the Yeltsin years, but mainly to show the differences.

relations within the FSU under Putin, and the work of Roy Allison on Putin's efforts to establish a regional security network in Central Asia were also very valuable, the former in showing how bilateral relations developed and what role security policy played in these relations. Allison's work gives a clear overview of how geopolitical goals influenced regional security cooperation. Finally, I need to make mention of the bundle of works edited by Roger Kanet on the concepts motivating Putin's foreign policy, and the work by Bobo Lo, Vladimir Putin and the Evolution of Russian Foreign Policy (2003).

Regional security theory as put forward by the work of Buzan and Waever (2003), and Bertil Nygren's application of their concepts on the Eurasian subcomplex (2008) was extremely useful in getting a clear view on the interconnectedness of security issues and security policy throughout the FSU. According to Buzan and Waever, Russia is the centre of a regional security complex (RSC), which is 'a group of states whose primary security concerns link together sufficiently closely that their national securities cannot realistically be considered apart from one another and emphasise the interdependence of rivalry as well as that of shared interest'.¹⁰ Russia is the dominant power in the security complex of the Former Soviet Union 'that helps stabilize the region by containing and resolving conflicts among the successor states, providing border defense and bolstering domestic regimes, yet it simultaneously forms, in many cases, the most salient threat to the security of member states'.¹¹

¹⁰ B. Buzan & O. Waever, *Regions and Powers: the Structures of International Security* (Cambridge, 2003) 15.

¹¹ B. Nygren, *The Rebuilding of Greater Russia. Putin's Foreign Policy Towards the CIS Countries* (New York, 2008) 190.

Continuity in Russian National Interest 1992-2008

In this chapter, I will focus on the connection between Russia's security policy and national interest in the FSU between 1992 and 2008. I will analyze the political and strategic benefits that Moscow could derive from its security policy towards the FSU. Three broad categories will be analyzed in the three sections of this chapter: security policy in the FSU used to create domestic political unity, to increase Russian dominance in the FSU and to fight threats to Russian national security. At the end of this chapter, we will have a better understanding of what type of national interest had to be served by Russian security policy.¹²

I.I

Serving the National Interest through Security Policy: Domestic Political Unity

In the chaotic transition process from a communist past to a capitalist future, Russian policy towards the FSU was largely passive as a result of a radical change in Russia's perception of its national interests. Since it was expected that Russia's future was with the West, Moscow opted for devoting its attention to its former European and American enemies in order to swiftly complete its transition to a capitalist democracy. Complying with almost all of the West's wishes, Russia's foreign policy in 1991 was called the 'policy of yes'.¹³ The great Russian writer Aleksandr Solzhenitsyn dramatically expressed the isolationist vision on Russia's national interest: 'We don't have the

¹² Chronologically, we can discern four phases in Russian security policy towards the FSU: firstly, the phase of extreme political chaos in 1991-1993, when the Russian military in the pre-peacekeeping years improved Russia's strategic position, secondly, the phase between 1994 and 1998, when the Russian peacekeeping missions were executed and the conflicts frozen. Thirdly, the phase of Putin's coming to power in 1999 and his move to position Russia as a major anti-terrorist fighter in the FSU until 2003, when the fourth phase starts, with what seems to become a return to geopolitical sphere of influence thinking. As the color revolutions hit the FSU and Russia started to oppose the 'attack from the West' ever more openly by distinguishing between friends and foes in the FSU, using energy and military assets to divide and rule. Throughout this whole period, Russian views on the FSU serving national interest showed only minor changes.

¹³ Buzan, Waeaver, *Regions and Powers. The Structure of International Security* X.

strength for the peripheries either economically or politically for sustaining an empire. Let this burden fall from our shoulders – it is crushing us, sapping our energy and hastening our demise'.¹⁴ In 1992, the remnants of Moscow's ties with the former republics cost some ten percent of Russian GDP, spent in the form of aid to the new states. A logical consequence was that many policy makers in Moscow thought that a western orientation best served Russian national interest. This western orientation led foreign policy towards the newly independent states to lack vision, resembling 'an empty vessel'.¹⁵

In the new international order after the fall of the Soviet Union, Russia was no longer treated as an equal force by its *defining other*, the United States. The West proved unable to accommodate its enormous and backward former archenemy. Russian bitter disappointment over the loss of the Soviet Union, already rising as a consequence of plummeting living standards and the loss of republics seen as truly Russian,¹⁶ was reinforced by the obedient attitude towards the former Western adversaries in the first Yeltsin years. Yeltsin's inebriated public appearances completed the 'national humiliation complex',¹⁷ leaving the Russian electorate craving for the restoration of Russian national pride, increasing support for the 'revanchists'. Many high ranking Kremlin officials left the 'isolationist' camp and started to push for a more autonomous, Russia-centered foreign policy orientation.¹⁸ Under this political pressure, Yeltsin realized he had to change his policy course, and put the FSU higher on the agenda of national interest.

The proponents of a reactivation of Russian policy used the threat of secessionist conflicts throughout the FSU as a need for this reactivation, since 'Russia can be a civilizing and stabilizing influence to help peacefully contain both extreme Islamic fundamentalism and conflicts resulting from ethnic and religious rivalries',¹⁹ and there were dangers of enemy forces filling the 'power vacuum' Russia would leave in Russia's 'historic sphere of interest'.²⁰ Domino theories of instability spreading through

¹⁴ Solzhenitsyn cited by T. Parland, *The Extreme Nationalist Threat in Russia. The Growing Influence of Western Rightist Ideas* (London 2005) 108.

¹⁵ Lynch, *Russian Peacekeeping Strategies in the CIS* 37.

¹⁶ Most notably Ukraine, Belarus, the Baltic states and Kazakhstan.

¹⁷ B. Lo, *Vladimir Putin and the Evolution of Russian Foreign Policy* (Oxford, 2003) 74.

¹⁸ A. Pikayev, 'The Russian Domestic Debate', L. Jonson, C. Archer (eds.), *Peacekeeping and the Role of Russia in Eurasia* (Oxford 1996) 51-66, 51-57.

¹⁹ Then Ambassador to the United States V. Lukin as cited by Lynch, *Russian Peacekeeping Strategies in the CIS* 155.

²⁰ Jonson, Archer, 'Russia and Peacekeeping in Eurasia', Jonson, Archer (eds.), *Peacekeeping and the Role of Russia in Eurasia* 3-32, 10.

the newly independent states were developed; the Russian Diaspora would be 'at the mercy of the Mullahs'.²¹ In 2001 Putin's presidential aide Yastrzhembskii commented on possible NATO-membership of the Baltic by saying that he expected their attitude toward their Russian-speaking populations to change after membership, making Russia 'keep an extra eye' on the situation since 'the Russian public is very sensitive to the policies pursued regarding our compatriots in the Baltic states'. This kind of politicization of Russian foreign policy was and continues to be a dangerous factor in Russian foreign policy, since it has the potential to generate mass support for extreme foreign policy measures.

One of the building blocks of the high ratings Putin received during his presidency was the way in which he domestically used the war on terror. The pressing security issue of Chechen warriors using terrorism in their struggle for independence became a useful tool in fighting political fragmentation and in creating support for an active anti-terror campaign in the Caucasus and the FSU. Putin turned the fight against terror and the war in Chechnya into his 'personal crusade',²² stating that he would 'destroy these devils', and that he would 'flush them down the toilet'. He used the terrorist threat to fight the Yeltsin legacy which had left Russia with 'regional barons...pursuing their parochial agendas, paying scant attention to the federal legislation; oligarchs...busy plundering Russia's riches, not bothering to share the proceeds with the tax authorities; and each government ministry...conducting its own foreign and domestic policy, having long forgotten about any central coordination or guidelines'.²³ Where security policy was concerned, Putin used the terrorist threat to generate support for an active fight in the FSU. According to Putin's reasoning, terrorists wanted to establish a giant arc of instability from Northern Africa to the Philippines, and Russia's geographic position inevitably meant it was drawn into the struggle. In Putin's view, 'We are dealing not just with individual, isolated acts of terrorism. We are dealing with a direct intervention of 'international terror' against Russia, with a total, cruel, and all-powerful war, which again and again takes the lives of our fellow countrymen'.²⁴

²¹ A. Serrano, 'CIS peacekeeping in Tajikistan', J. Mackinlay, P. Cross (eds.) *Regional Peacekeepers. The Paradox of Russian Peacekeeping* (Tokyo 2003) 156-182, 167.

²² P. Baev, 'Counter-terrorism as a building block for Putin's regime' Hedenskog, Konnander et al. (eds.), *Russia as a Great Power. Dimensions of Security under Putin* 323-344, 332.

²³ *Ibidem* 330.

²⁴ Russia: On Beslan, Putin Looks Beyond Chechnya, Sees International Terror, *RFE/RL* 7 September 2004. <http://www.rferl.org/content/article/1054720.html>.

After 9/11, Putin started to call the CIS countries Russia's 'brothers' with whom Russia shared a common heritage as 'multicultural and multireligious' states that are committed to fighting terrorism, not Islam.²⁵ An important reason for turning the Chechen war from a domestic counterinsurgency into a struggle in the international war on terror was to generate support for a bigger cause, which was simultaneously used to fight political opposition: anyone who opposed the patriotic struggle for survival (i.e. fighting the war on terror) was an enemy of the Russian nation. Russian media were forced to self-censor; oligarchs and regional barons had to conform to the Kremlin's wishes if they wanted to prevent themselves from becoming a target of Putin's campaign for national unity. The risk of the terror propaganda campaign was that 'the more successful it is, the more rigid the goals in the war against terrorism become, thus reducing further any space for compromise solutions',²⁶ something that reverberated in Russian security policy towards the FSU as well as we will see later.

The Russian Diaspora, dispersed over the FSU, presented another Russian national interest in the FSU that further blurred the distinction between Russian and FSU territory. Fear of these tens of millions of Russians falling victim to either Islamic fundamentalists or hostile anti-Russian governments obliged Moscow to act. But as Russian was the *lingua franca* in the CIS, Russia offered (dual) citizenship to CIS citizens and Russia stated it had the right to intervene in order to evacuate citizens under threat, the Russian Diaspora could easily be used as a motivation for Russian intervention, making it a threat to the territorial integrity of the newly independent states.²⁷ Although the Russian Diaspora diminished in numbers during the 1990s, Moscow continued to see their protection as a justification for intervention. An important rationale behind the Georgian-Russian war of August 2008 was that Abkhazia was a 'danger zone for its (Russian) citizens'.²⁸ After the war, Russian Foreign Minister Lavrov said that the conflict had proven that Russia had 'returned to the world stage as a responsible state that has the ability to defend international law and its citizens'.²⁹ While defending Russian citizens abroad continues to be a popular theme with the Russian electorate, at the beginning of the 1990s it served a practical purpose as well; housing

²⁵ *RFE/RL Newswire* 17 September 2001. <http://www.rferl.org/content/article/1142486.html>.

²⁶ Baev, 'Counter-terrorism as a Building Block for Putin's Regime' 333

²⁷ *Ibidem* 25

²⁸ N. Wild, 'Does A State Have The Right To Protect its Citizens Abroad?' *RFE/RL* 22 August 2008 http://www.rferl.org/content/Does_A_State_Have_The_Right_To_Protect_Its_Citizens_Abroad/1193050.html.

²⁹ Statement Russian Foreign Minister Sergei Lavrov. http://www.mid.ru/brp_4.nsf/itogi/BC2150E49DAD6A04C325752E0036E93F.

and services were extremely scarce, and it was feared that an endangered Diaspora would return in large numbers, making the situation even worse.

Both under Putin as under Yeltsin, threats in the FSU and the Russian Diaspora were used to generate domestic support for an active security policy. The close connection between Russian national identity and the FSU legitimized an aggressive fight in the former Soviet territory to counter these threats. Both were projected into the FSU through Russia's enduring imperial identity:

*'Russia's central problem, which poses a constant threat to the sovereignty of numerous neighbors, is its inability or unwillingness to forge a distinct nationality and clearly delimit its territorial reach. In order to become a nation-state, the ruling elite would need to divest itself of any pretensions to pan-Slavism, Eurasianism, or other messianic, state expanding, and 'great power' ambitions couched as 'national interests'.*³⁰ – B.Lo

It was thought to be in the national interest to retain dominance in the FSU as a necessary strategic, cultural and economic advantage. On top of that, it was perceived Russia's 'historic duty'³¹ to defend the outer borders: 'Russia as a Great Power is obliged to look after its interests in Central Asia as it had for centuries'.³² This is a common phenomenon in post-imperial societies, as a Dutch phrase popular at the beginning of the independence movements of the 20th century shows: 'With Indonesia lost, disaster will come'.³³ But one may ask whether the post-imperialism card should be played in any way to soften criticism or even create understanding (what if Germany, after the fall of the Third Reich, would have continued to approach Europe as a 'sphere of special interest?').

We see that under Yeltsin and under Putin the potential harm of threats originating from the FSU to Russian national interests was highlighted. This blended with Russia's post-imperial identity and as such involvement in conflicts in the *near abroad* ('blizhniy zarubezh') was beneficial to Russian national interest.

³⁰ Lo, *Vladimir Putin and the Evolution of Russian Foreign Policy* 84

³¹ P. Roeder, 'From Hierarchy to Hegemony: the Post-Soviet Security Complex', D. Lake, P. Morgan (eds.), *Regional Orders: Building Security in a New World* (Pennsylvania 1997) 219-245, 222.

³² Uzbek President Karimov as quoted in Lynch, *Russian Peacekeeping Strategies in the CIS* 158.

³³ 'Indië verloren, rampspoed geboren'. The phrase never proved to hold any truth, as the wealth of the Netherlands and its citizens rose quickly in the 1960s, despite the loss of its huge colony.

I.II

Serving the National Interest through Security Policy: Domination in the FSU

Investing in Russian security and defense cooperation in the FSU could be used to streamline FSU interests with Russian ones, projecting Russian policy to the world through a coalition of states, making Russia less of a *lone wolf*. This would provide the Kremlin with significantly more leverage to pursue its national interest on an ever-expanding scale. A problem posed by bringing such cooperation about was that in the geopolitical tradition of Soviet foreign policy thinking, the Kremlin continued to perceive a loss of Russian influence in the *near abroad* as inherently negative to the Russian national interest. This resulted in a static security policy towards the FSU under Yeltsin that was mostly aimed at ‘saving what could be saved’ but succeeded only in looking at once ‘imperialistic *and* feeble’.³⁴ Putin took up the task of bringing more dynamic in Russia’s FSU policy, bringing coherence in political society in order to be able to better defend Russian national interest. Under Putin, the FSU continued to be seen as Russia’s exclusive territory. As Prime Minister, he described the collapse of the Soviet Union as the greatest geopolitical catastrophe of the 20th century, and his successor, President Dmitri A. Medvedev, has insisted that Russia reserves ‘a zone of privileged interests’ covering the post-Soviet space.³⁵ With 9/11 giving Putin an opportunity to increase the standing of the CIS as ‘the anti-terrorism theme was to become a standard argument from now on within the CIS and CST [Collective Security Treaty³⁶].’³⁷ As Bobo Lo points out:

³⁴ At the beginning of the 1990s, the Russian Federation counted some 150 million inhabitants, while in the other CIS members only the Ukrainian, Kazakh and Uzbek population exceeded 10 million people. The sheer size and strength of Russia in comparison to its neighbors poses an inherent problem to post-Soviet integration efforts, since Russian policy moves are always at risk of looking like efforts at neo-imperialistic domination. Lo, *Vladimir Putin and the evolution of Russian Foreign Policy* 81.

³⁵ Statement Russian President Dmitri Medvedev

<http://www.nytimes.com/2009/04/10/world/europe/10nato.html>.

³⁶ The Collective Security Treaty was signed in 1992 by several CIS member states but was largely ineffective during the 1990s, until in 2002, the Collective Security Treaty Organization was founded, based on the 1992 Treaty.

³⁷ Nygren, *The Rebuilding of Greater Russia* 32.

*'What Putin has done is not so much revolutionize Russian thinking as to introduce a measure of concordance between existing ideas as well as consistency in their application. He has adopted a capacious approach that incorporates traditional notions of 'hard security' (nuclear and conventional deterrence, geopolitical calculus) while ridding them of their more unsustainable aspects'.*³⁸

At the end of the 1990s, 'Russia's ability to accomplish its foreign policy objectives, to have an impact on events beyond its borders, had declined to a point that it could be, and was, largely ignored by the major states of the West',³⁹ while in the FSU Russia was no longer the natural nucleus of post-Soviet integration. Turning this situation around by restoring Great Power status became the overarching goal of Russian foreign policy'.⁴⁰ When Putin came to power in 1999, the EU and especially NATO influence was encroaching ever deeper into the FSU. After 9/11, Putin, in a much celebrated political move to counter both Russia's loss of influence and NATO expansion, was the first foreign leader to call President Bush to offer his condolences and support, and to present Russia as an indispensable and equal partner in America's war on terror:

*'We would like the results of the joint Russian-American fight against terrorism to be positive so that terrorism is eradicated, destroyed and liquidated not only in Afghanistan, but in the whole world, so that the conditions that breed extremism of various types be eradicated, so that the channels of financing extremism in all its forms be destroyed and so that the citizens of our countries feel secure'.*⁴¹ – Vladimir Putin

With his swift reaction Putin positioned Russia as a special and indispensable partner to the most powerful country in the world, elevating Russia above the 'ordinary' European great powers. If Russia was manoeuvred as the terrorist fighter in Eurasia, this would grossly enhance Russia's international standing, returning it to Great Power status. A problem in this was that the war on terror was to bring NATO troops into the

³⁸ Lo, *Vladimir Putin and the Evolution of Russian Foreign Policy* 84.

³⁹ R. Kanet, 'Introduction: The Consolidation of Russia's Role in the World', R. Kanet (ed.), *Russia. Re-Emerging Great Power* (New York 2007) 1-12, 3.

⁴⁰ I. Goldberg 'Great Power Ambitions Under Putin', Kanet, *Russia. Re-Emerging Great Power* (New York 2007) 13-31, 15.

⁴¹ Statement Putin,

http://www.kremlin.ru/eng/speeches/2001/11/10/0001_type82915type82917type84779_143202.shtml.

FSU. But Russia was not in a position to counter this, and it was expected to be a short-term stay. That is why Putin, when America and in its wake NATO outlined plans to use former Soviet bases in Central Asia as part of the northern offensive against the Taliban, stated that the American presence was ‘no tragedy’,⁴² while the Russian nation and many of Putin’s high ranking officials, even Defense minister Ivanov, publicly opposed this historically painful event, even if it was temporarily, as expected.⁴³

One of the *hard security issues*⁴⁴ Putin incorporated was NATO’s eastward expansion. According to Moscow’s *zero sum* line of thinking, a loss of Russian influence could only mean an increase of foreign influence. This would block the Kremlin from increasing its influence, thus bringing other powers in a better position to threaten Russian national interests in the region and rivaling Russia’s role as the leader of CIS security. In this perspective it is not surprising that Russia on a continuous basis expressed strong opposition to the eastward expansion of western institutions as the EU and especially NATO, as Russian fears of a foreign take over filling the ‘power vacuum’ seemed to slowly turn into reality. Russian efforts at regional security and defense integration through the CIS and, after 2002, the CSTO were for this reason often referred to as efforts to establish *counterweights to NATO*. Despite Moscow’s denial of any such effort, the connection with NATO’s inroads are quite clear, more so as Putin in 2008 mentioned that ‘the appearance of a powerful military bloc at our borders will be taken by Russia as a direct threat to the security of our country’,⁴⁵ and his successor Medvedev in 2009 stated that the CSTO Rapid Deployment Forces ‘will not be less powerful than NATO’s’.⁴⁶ Another point to mention is the continuity of certain threats in the Concepts of National Security and the Military Doctrines, which consistently mentioned state-based military attacks on Russia as top threats to national security.⁴⁷

On numerous occasions Russian leaders have emphasized the strategic importance of the *near abroad*, expressing their view of it as a sphere of vital Russian

⁴² Nygren, ‘Russia’s relations with Georgia under Putin: the impact of 11 September’, Hedenskog, Konnander et al. (eds.), *Russia as a Great Power* 156-182, 167.

⁴³ A. Cohen, ‘The US Is Developing A Russian and Eurasian Strategy Against Islamic Terror’ *Eurasia Insight* 22 September 2001. <http://www.eurasianet.org/departments/insight/articles/eav092201.shtml>.

⁴⁴ As opposed to *soft security issues*.

⁴⁵ B. Whitmore, ‘NATO Diary: Bukarest, You Are No Munich!’, *By Country/Georgia RFE/RL* 4 April 2008. <http://www.rferl.org/content/article/1079724.html>.

⁴⁶ ‘CSTO – A NATO For The East?’ *Global Research* 9 February 2009. <http://www.globalresearch.ca/index.php?context=va&aid=12198>.

⁴⁷ Lo, *Vladimir Putin and the Evolution of Russian Foreign Policy* 83.

national interest and influence: 'the strategic and economic importance Russia attaches to the Northern Caucasus and to its southern areas as a whole' meant, according to president Yeltsin, that Russia needed bases in the region, 'for example in Georgia'.⁴⁸ The first official Russian statement on the Tajik civil war underlined its strategic importance for Russia: 'If we delay [interference] any more, we may lose Tajikistan as a state close to Russia'.⁴⁹ Appeals by Central Asian leaders, all former *apparatchiks*, called for Russia to intervene because 'Russia can be a civilizing and stabilizing influence to help peacefully contain both extreme Islamic fundamentalism and conflicts resulting from ethnic and religious rivalries'.⁵⁰ Moreover, Russian officials frequently emphasized the need for integration in the post-Soviet sphere, military bases and a monopoly on peacekeeping to be accepted by the international community.⁵¹ Perhaps the most telling example of how Russian and FSU security connected in reality is Yeltsin's 'Monroviski doctrine' which defends Russia's operation in Tajikistan by saying that the Tajik border was essentially the Russian border. So, according to Yeltsin, defending Tajikistan was basically defending Russia's strategic borders, equaling the defense of Tajikistan with the defense of Russia itself. This was explained as a necessary view because 'there was no other 'dam' to stop the tide of instability and terrorism fuelled by Islamic fundamentalism'.⁵²

These ideas were persistent over the years, as Russia carried responsibility for Tajik border defense until 2005, and today much is done to increase border safety through the CSTO. Putin maintains that Moscow is 'the natural nucleus' of post-Soviet integration,⁵³ but it has to be said that Putin's security policy in the FSU showed more realism in its pursuit of Russian national interest. He accepted that there was 'no point in fighting unwinnable battles', and that Russia could not be nor become the all-encompassing leader of Eurasia, as indicated during his election campaign in 2000: 'He who does not regret the passing of the USSR has no heart, he who wants to restore it has no head'. In the 1990s, Moscow had started to refer to the former Soviet republics as the *near abroad*, implying the existence of two abroads, for which two foreign policies were needed. Many CIS countries were opposing Russia out of fear of a 'new Russian embrace', and Putin took his loss and accepted that the CIS was not the right format to

⁴⁸ Yeltsin as quoted by Dale, 'The Case of Abkhazia' 127.

⁴⁹ Russian Deputy Foreign Minister Shelov-Kovedyaev as cited by D. Lynch 156.

⁵⁰ Russian Foreign Minister Kozyrev as cited by Neumann, Solodovnik, 'The Case of Tajikistan' 125.

⁵¹ Dale, 'The Case of Abkhazia' 128.

⁵² Serrano, 'CIS peacekeeping in Tajikistan' 170.

⁵³ *RFE/RL Newslines* 29 January 2001. <http://www.rferl.org/content/article/1142329.html>.

‘save what could be saved’. Uzbek president Karimov certainly agreed with him, as he said at a CIS meeting in 2004: ‘CIS summits are held regularly, as if they are actually doing something’.⁵⁴

Putin distinguished between allies and enemies as he started working with a *coalition of the willing*. The main advantages of being a member of this coalition were weapons at domestic Russian prices, a steady energy stream and generous loans. He started working with a *coalition of the willing*. This coalition had a strong Central Asian focus, with Kyrgyzstan, Kazakhstan and Tajikistan and, although hesitantly, Uzbekistan, completed with Armenia as the Caucasian representative and Belarus as the European one. Russian policy was to be focused on these countries. The idea remained the same though, as Russia’s ambassador to Tajikistan, Maksim Peshkov, said in 2002: ‘Russia had, has and will have strategic interests in Central Asia. Moreover, these interests are advantageous to both sides’.⁵⁵ The geopolitical rationale behind cooperation remained the same though. Russia’s ambassador to Tajikistan, Maksim Peshkov, said in 2002: ‘Russia had, has and will have strategic interests in Central Asia. Moreover, these interests are advantageous to both sides’.⁵⁶ This may be true, but the interests at play were very different. For Dushanbe, it was mainly about economical assistance, while for Moscow, Tajikistan had little economic advantages to offer, but all the more strategic advantages. For Russia, cooperation with Tajikistan was mainly about keeping it within its sphere of influence, as I will show later in more detail.

Part of Putin’s opposition to foreign influence was the so called *war of norms*.⁵⁷ The US and NATO in its wake made strong inroads in the CASC after 9/11 as part of their northern offensive to the Taliban, security cooperation was stepped up with the 2002 founding of the CSTO. In 2005 the ‘*war of norms*’ became a Russian policy tool to strengthen the organization. The war revolved around ‘the Western effort to change the rules for elections in Eurasia’ and Russia seeing ‘itself to be the example of governance set for the region’.⁵⁸ The CSTO came to represent a bulwark against democratization, and Russia was the shepherd that had to protect the herd from an attack of democracy. The idea that America had no right for a longer-term stay was

⁵⁴ D. Kimmage, ‘Analysis: Terrorism, Common Ground, And The CIS Summit’, *By Country/Kazakhstan* 20 September 2004. <http://www.rferl.org/content/article/1054939.html>.

⁵⁵ Russian Ambassador to Tajikistan Maksim Peshkov as quoted in *Tajikistan Daily Digest* 10 April 2002. <http://www.eurasianet.org/resource/tajikistan/hypermail/200204/0013.shtml>.

⁵⁶ Russian Ambassador to Tajikistan Maksim Peshkov as quoted in *Tajikistan Daily Digest* 10 April 2002. <http://www.eurasianet.org/resource/tajikistan/hypermail/200204/0013.shtml>.

⁵⁷ Nygren *The Rebuilding of Greater Russia* 30.

⁵⁸ Nygren, *The Rebuilding Greater Russia* 30.

reinforced by arguments of geographical nature: ‘While America is here today, Russia will be here forever, hence ‘the logic [of America’s presence] will be exhausted’⁵⁹ after the Taliban is defeated.

After America was ousted from Uzbekistan because it had criticized harsh Uzbek reprisals against protesters at an Andijan riot, a Russian official claimed that ‘The Uzbek authorities took an absolutely pragmatic and logical step by requesting that the Americans should leave. For Moscow, now that the antiterrorist operation in neighboring Afghanistan was over, it was ‘time for the Americans to leave Uzbekistan’.⁶⁰ The heavily Russia- (and China-) dominated Security Cooperation Organization, the *Beast of the East*,⁶¹ stated in a final declaration of its 2005 summit that ‘Considering the completion of the active military stage of antiterrorist operation in Afghanistan...members of the antiterrorist coalition set a final timeline for their temporary use of the above-mentioned objects of infrastructure and stay of their military contingent on the territories of the SCO member states’.⁶² Yeltsin and his successor used peacekeeping and anti-terrorism as a means of achieving rapprochement with the West,⁶³ while simultaneously opposing political influence on Russian policy in the FSU.

The Russian emphasis on its natural dominant role as the peacekeeper and anti-terrorist fighter of Eurasia were part of gaining profit for the national interest through security policy. Once Moscow got involved in the conflicts in the FSU in the early 1990s, it quickly learnt that the West was too preoccupied with its own problems to plan any serious interference in the Eurasian conflicts, while the other CIS states refused participation in Russia’s military missions out of fear for domination or because they had insufficient funds. This gave Russia a sense of moral superiority and a *de facto* monopoly on peacekeeping in the former Soviet Union. Yeltsin tried to legally confirm Russia’s monopoly on peacekeeping in the CIS through a plea for international recognition as he urged the UN to recognize that ‘stopping all armed conflict on the

⁵⁹ Russian Ambassador to Tajikistan Maksim Peshkov as quoted in *Tajikistan Daily Digest* 10 April 2002. <http://www.eurasianet.org/resource/tajikistan/hypermail/200204/0013.shtml>

⁶⁰ Russia’s Federation Council Speaker Sergei Mirov as quoted in *RFE/RL Newslines* 2 August 2002. <http://www.rferl.org/content/article/1143451.html>

⁶¹ ‘SCO Summit: ‘Beast of the East Appears To Have Lost Its Teeth’, *RFE/RL Features* 10 September 2009.

http://www.rferl.org/content/SCO_Summit_Beast_Of_The_East_Appears_To_Have_Lost_Its_Teeth/1755390.html.

⁶² Combined Statement After CIS Summit, *RFE/RL Central Asia Report* 14 July 2005.

<http://www.rferl.org/content/article/1342122.html>.

⁶³ Facon, ‘Integration or Retrenchment? Russian Approaches to Peacekeeping’, *Major Powers and Peacekeeping: Perspectives, Priorities and Challenges* (Aldershot 2006), 31-48, 40.

territory of the former USSR is in Russia's vital interest' and that 'distinguished international organizations, including the United Nations, grant Russia special powers as guarantor of peace and stability in the region of the former USSR'.⁶⁴ When a UN mandate for Russia's peacekeeping activities was not granted despite Yeltsin's appeals, Moscow maintained that Russian peacekeeping was '150% legitimate' and that it did not need UN-recognition.⁶⁵ Despite the obvious difficulties Russia had in restoring peace in the FSU, it tried to curb outside support to a minimum, because it could block Russia from pursuing its national interest in the FSU. Only observer missions of UN and OSCE participated in Russian operations and mainly as a result of UN concerns over Russian malpractice.⁶⁶

The similarities with the Putin era are striking. Putin on numerous occasions claimed that the origins of the terrorist attacks in Georgia, Russia, Uzbekistan, Tajikistan and Kyrgyzstan were the same: 'international extremists believe that the former post-Soviet space is the most convenient target for attack' and emphasized the need for a common approach of Russia and its 'brothers'. He started to push for a CIS Anti-terrorism Center, and as part of this, a Russian military reform doctrine stated the possibility for Russia to execute pre-emptive strikes in the CIS.⁶⁷ Furthermore, after 9/11, Putin was the first foreign leader to call President Bush to offer his condolences and support in fighting international terrorists to Washington. With his reaction Putin skillfully used the terrorist threat as part of his efforts to strengthen Russia's leading security role in the CIS. He presented Russia as the natural nucleus of Eurasian counterterrorism thus trying to undermine the rationale for a long-term American stay in the region.

Security dominance in the FSU was seen as advantageous for Russia's national interest, as it could improve Russia's ability to influence events in the FSU and it could be used to counter outside influence. Traditional geopolitical thinking hampered a dynamic

⁶⁴ M. Brill Olcott, A. Aslund, S. Garnett, *Getting It Wrong. Regional Cooperation and the Commonwealth of Independent States* (Washington, 1999) 92.

⁶⁵ L. Jonson, C. Archer, 'Russia and Peacekeeping in Eurasia', *Peacekeeping and the Role of Russia in Eurasia*. 3-32, 5.

⁶⁶ P. Taylor, K. Smith, 'The United Nations' in L. Jonson, C. Archer, 200.

⁶⁷ Recently, a law with similar possibilities was approved by the Duma. The law allows Russia's armed forces to take military action outside Russian territory in cases of aggression directed toward Russia, and in cases that pose a threat to Russia's territorial integrity. The law states that Russia is allowed to take action in order 'to return or prevent aggression against another state, to protect citizens of the Russian Federation abroad, to fight piracy and to ensure the safety of the shipping industry', this time using yet another threat (Georgia) to give Russia more leverage for military pressure.

Russian policy and scared the FSU countries. Under Putin, some change has occurred, most importantly he has shown a more realistic view on the possibilities to project Russian power throughout the FSU, but a dominant security role in the region continues to be seen as beneficial to national interest, and thus foreign influence is opposed.

I.III

Serving the National Interest through Security Policy: Fighting Security Threats

Between 1992 and 2008, Moscow showed a strong tendency to present threats to its national security as part of an internationally connected movement with the potential to destroy Russia. While this might have been possible theoretically, a more important reason for Moscow to use dramatic rhetoric was to increase the possibilities to use force on a bigger scale and against a larger number of threats. It could generate international support or at least diminish international focus on the humanitarian aspects of the way in which security threats were countered. For the Kremlin, secessionism and terrorism were intractably linked, and the distinction between the two was mainly made to benefit from the above mentioned aspects. The coming to life of the CSTO Rapid Reaction Force in March 2009, a strong indicator of Russian security priorities, had to counter ‘challenges to sovereignty,’ ‘military aggression’ and ‘international terrorism’.⁶⁸ As the distinction between these threats was blurry, similar policies were used to counter them.

In all the case studies, it is doubtful whether the threats were as acute as Moscow presented or interpreted them. A characteristic of Russian security policy is that threats in the FSU were eagerly presented as a direct threat to Russian national security. This is *not* to say that the threats were imaginary. But in all the case studies, it is doubtful whether the threats were as Moscow presented or interpreted them. Dov Lynch states that ‘many academic experts played down the dangers of Islamic fundamentalism, distinguishing it from a moderate revival of that faith’, such as Yury Gankovsky of the Institute for Oriental Studies: ‘The biggest myth would have us

⁶⁸R. Mcdermott, ‘CSTO Rapid reaction Exercises Get Off To Discouraging Start’, *RFE/RL Commentray* 10 September 2009.
http://www.rferl.org/content/CSTO_Rapid_Reaction_Exercises_Get_Off_To_Discouraging_Start/1808735.html.

believe that Muslim fundamentalism is dangerous for Russia or Russia's state interest'.⁶⁹ This was the case in the Tajik civil war, which was perceived as something almost resembling as a clash of civilizations between Muslim fundamentalists and Russian allies, and it was the case in the secessionist movements of which Abkhazia was part, which were presented as a chain around Russia's neck, and if not stopped would inevitably lead to the end of Russia. And this was the case with Chechen warriors, who used terrorist tactics but cannot automatically be categorized as part of *international terrorism* aimed at destroying the western world, as Putin did. In the case of the Central Asian anti-terrorist cooperation *international terrorism* was at play, but here it was used to fight a broad range of political resistance groups to the dictatorial regimes of the region. On top of that, Russia showed a lack of willpower and ability to fight groups that can be termed as *international terrorists*, as we will see later.⁷⁰ Moscow presented the danger of threats to maximize the support for action.

One may ask whether the one sided Russian approach aimed at eradication of terrorist groups could ever be effective, even if it was a genuine effort, as in the case of the Chechen rebels. Modern day theories on combating terrorist groups maintain that such efforts might be similar to 'banging our heads to a brick wall',⁷¹ since 'Computer simulations indicate that such networks will even survive removal of eighty percent of their members'.⁷² Attempts at combining the fight against terrorist groups with prevention of radicalization were not made. Although it remains hard to tell what causes radicalization, it is safe to say that the Russian and Central Asian approach to the terrorist threat had a counterproductive result in that it did not prevent but stimulated radicalization.

⁶⁹ Oriental Studies Analyst Yury Gankovsky as quoted by Lynch, *Russian Peacekeeping Strategies in the CIS* 156.

⁷⁰ Regarding terrorism, it is extremely clear that Russia purposely tried to blur the distinction between *terrorism of conflicts* and *international terrorism*. The first is a mode of operation used by non-state actors in an asymmetrical confrontation with a state to achieve more limited goals within a regional context. The infrastructural organization can be internationalized. *International terrorism* 'seeks to create a global outreach and, as such, does not have to be tied to any particular armed conflict'. The aims of international terrorist organizations are 'unlimited and non-negotiable' and the fall of the West or the Western world order is often part of its ideology.⁷⁰ These ambitions were part of the ideology of the International Movement of Uzbekistan as it wanted to establish a caliphate in Central Asia to spread its power from there out.

⁷¹ B. de Graaff, 'The risks of the (overly?) broad-based approach in Dutch counter-terrorism policy' *Merkourios*, 25 (2008) 16-27, 16.

⁷² B. de Graaff, 'The risks of the (overly?) broad-based approach in Dutch counter-terrorism policy' 16.

I will now turn to an analysis of specific threats and interests of Russia in the two regions (the South Caucasus and Central Asia) that provide the background for the cases to follow.

Caucasus

The two most important Russian goals in the South Caucasus between 1992 and 2008 were securing peace and stability (part of this is preventing the territories of these states being used by Chechen resistance groups) and creating a belt of Russia-friendly states, 'reliable partners for bilateral and multilateral cooperation'.⁷³ These goals proved hard to reach, despite Russia's great willingness to fight SC threats to its national security.

The fact that the South Caucasus quickly turned into the hottest of Eurasian hot-spots after independence is a clear sign of the difficulties Russia could expect in achieving its number one goal, peace and stability.⁷⁴ A range of conflicts broke out in Georgia and between Armenia and Azerbaijan. These conflicts had a strong transnational aspect; making Russian borders almost irrelevant. On top of that, the connection between internal Russian security and FSU security is closest in the Caucasus, where 'The ethnic relations ... are so complicated that the Balkans and Afghanistan become simple and clear in comparison'.⁷⁵ The North is part of Russia while the South consists of the independent states of Georgia, Armenia and Azerbaijan. The South is part of the 'middle layer of territories around Russia, the outer layer of which is Turkey and Iran, and the inner layer Chechnya, North Ossetia and Dagestan'.⁷⁶ The fierce anti-Russian independence movements of the North Caucasus are connected in their goal to revive the North Caucasian Mountain Republic as it existed between 1921 and 1924. Northern Georgia is home to the ethnic Chechen Kists, making a spill-over of conflict from Russia to Georgia or vice versa a real possibility. Other conflicts in the South Caucasus, like the Azeri-Armenian war over the province of Nagorno-Karabakh and the Abkhaz and South Ossetian conflicts in Georgia, had similar connections. Chechens are known to have supported Abkhaz warriors, while Azerbaijan and Russia's Dagestan shared

⁷³ V. Nikonov, 'Russia's Interests in the Transcaucasus', A. Aldis, *Shaping an Environment for Peace, Stability & Confidence in South Caucasus – The Role of International & Regional Security Organisations* (Yerevan 2002).

⁷⁴ *Ibidem*, 45.

⁷⁵ Buzan, Waever, *Regions and Powers* 419.

⁷⁶ B. Nygren, 'Russia's relations with Georgia under Putin. The impact of 11 September', Hedenskog, Konnander et al. (eds.), *Russia as a Great Power* 156.

potential problems through Lezgin irredentism⁷⁷, and through the connection between Russia's North Ossetia and the disputed Georgian province of South Ossetia. Russian and South Caucasian national security are so strongly interlinked that they are 'oversensitive to changes in any one of the other relationships in the [regional security] subcomplex'.⁷⁸

Although the difference in strength between Russia and its southern neighbors intrinsically holds a threat for the weaker parties, the aggressive way in which Russia pursued threats to its own national security in the Caucasus intensified this problem significantly. The Russian peacekeeping missions in Nagorno-Karabakh, South Ossetia and Abkhazia were partly in place to contain the secessionist threats originating from the Caucasus in order to prevent them from supporting North Caucasian (mainly Chechen) secessionists. In this regard, both peacekeeping missions and anti-terrorist policy in Georgia were cards in the same game. Secessionist conflicts remained largely frozen until the Georgian-Russian war in August 2008, while the problem of Chechen warriors hiding in the South Caucasus continued to put a strain on Russian-Georgian relations as Russia continued to push for unilateral action. After 9/11 concern arose in the South Caucasus that the conflicts in their states would receive less attention from the international community, providing Moscow with the opportunity to further its own vision on conflict resolution, which would not come for free, as they experienced in the 1990s. In Georgia, Russia indeed unilaterally started a *hot pursuit* of Chechen terrorists. Moscow tried to justify this by presenting Georgia as a weak link in the war on international terrorism.

In its attitude towards conflicts in the Caucasus, Russian national interest determined Russia's position, since:

*'...the Kremlin did its best to avoid any support to separatists in the other Newly Independent states. Such support could provide an additional argument for Russia's own separatists to seek secession. In a broader context, support of the central governments [of the Newly Independent States] was dictated by a need to halt disintegration trends within the former Soviet space..'*⁷⁹ - A. Pikayev

⁷⁷ Buzan, Waever, *Regions and Powers* 419.

⁷⁸ Nygren, *The Rebuilding of Greater Russia* 101.

⁷⁹ Pikayev, 'The Russian Domestic Debate on Policy Towards the Near Abroad', Jonson, Arcer (eds.), *Peacekeeping and the Role of Russia in Eurasia* 51-66, 53.

The second goal, the creation of Russia-friendly states, was greatly hampered by Azerbaijan's and Georgia's search for other international partners directly after independence. The shortlist of candidates included culturally similar Turkey and remaining superpower America. In this strategic setting, Russia's national interest dictated its efforts at improvement of its position in Georgia. 'The Russian government has consistently argued that Russia needs a strong and friendly Georgia as a bastion of stability in the North and South Caucasus'.⁸⁰ Since Russia only maintained strong relations with Armenia, this was deemed necessary. Russia wanted Georgia to be strong in order to function as a bastion of stability in the South Caucasus. As we will see, Russia used its peacekeeping operation to force Georgia into accepting Russian military presence and military bases. Russian Defense Minister Grachev stated in early 1993: 'I will only say that this is a strategically important area for the Russian army. We have certain strategic interests here and must take every measure to ensure that our troops remain'.⁸¹ Russia kept pushing for influence in Georgia, especially after the attacks of 9/11. These attacks led to a continuation of Russia's military stay in Georgia, since they 'influenced Putin's doubts on the wisdom of leaving Georgia'. Azeri and Georgian alignment with the West grew stronger, culminating in the founding of the Organization for Democracy and Economic Development (GUAM) in 2001 (later GUUAM with Uzbekistan joining) and Georgian and to a lesser extent Azeri plans for NATO membership. GUAM was presented as an alternative to security cooperation within the CIS, with its main advantage being that it was Russia-free. Moscow saw the organization as a Trojan horse for American influence.⁸² In 2002 Russia and Georgia had still agreed on only 40 percent of their shared border, and Russia and Azerbaijan on 70 percent.⁸³ In Putin's opinion, 'relations with the countries of the South Caucasus are a priority of Russian foreign policy'.⁸⁴

Central Asia

Russia's most important goals in Central Asia were largely similar to the ones in the South Caucasus: fighting instability (mainly originating from Afghanistan) and friendly,

⁸⁰ Dale, 'The Case of Abkhazia' 127.

⁸¹ Russian Defense Minister Grachev as quoted by Dale, 'The Case of Abkhazia' 127

⁸² M. Malek, 'Terms Of Reference of Security Policy in the South Caucasus', CA&CC Press Online 6 (2003).

⁸³ D. Trenin, *The End of Eurasia. Russia on the Border Between Geopolitics and Globalization* (Washington 2002) 181.

⁸⁴ Putin quoted in *RFE/RL Newslines* 1 June 2001. <http://www.rferl.org/content/article/1142413.html>

pro-Russian states. In Central Asia too, security connections with Russia are strong. In the 1990s, a domino theory was popular which stated that once Tajikistan would fall prey to Afghan fundamentalists, Central Asian states would fall like dominoes, with the last one before the Russian border, Kazakhstan, pushing fundamentalism into Russia's Islamic regions. The quick revival of Islam in Central Asia after the fall of the Soviet Union spurred Moscow's anxiety over the future of this part of its southern tier. Border disputes, ethnic conflict and interstate competition further darkened the Russian perception on Central Asia's future. As celebrated Russia-analyst Dmitri Trenin summarizes, 'the central problem that Russia confronts in the region...is not the borders, but rather the lack of barriers protecting it from the sources of instability farther to the south'.⁸⁵ The most threatening source of instability was Afghanistan, from which a range of transnational threats originated, most importantly terrorism and drugs. Tajikistan, with its long border with Afghanistan, had to be strong if Central Asia and Russia were to stand a chance in containing these Afghan threats. Unfortunately, Tajikistan was anything but strong, and after the outbreak of civil war in 1992, it was close to turning into a second Afghanistan. This did not happen, but it is quite likely that Russia's massive efforts at securing Tajikistan prevented this from happening. The problem, however, is that no real conflict resolution occurred, leading to little change in the weaknesses of Tajik society. As a recent report by the International Crisis Group states: 'Far from being a bulwark against the spread of extremism and violence from Afghanistan, Tajikistan is looking increasingly like its southern neighbour - a weak state that is suffering from a failure of leadership.'⁸⁶ Russia's peacekeeping mission and its efforts at Central Asian anti-terrorist cooperation both were aimed at securing stability to take away threats to both its interests in the region and its national security, but they were aimed at short-term solutions.

Regarding the strategic setting, Russian relations were more stable than in the Caucasus, although here too, increasing Turkish and American interests quickly became a cause of concern. In a broader Central Asian perspective, the peacekeeping mission in Tajikistan was part of a strategy to counter the growing Western influence (which already started under the Clinton administration in the 1990s and led to official security ties with the Central Asian states' membership of the NATO Partnership for Peace) and

⁸⁵ D. Trenin, *The End of Eurasia*. 189

⁸⁶ 'Tajikistan: on the Road to Failure', *International Crisis Group Asia Report* 162 (2009) <http://www.crisisgroup.org/home/index.cfm?id=5907>.

the Islamic threat to its national security, in which it bears strong resemblance to the efforts at terrorist cooperation through the CSTO. In April 1993, Kozyrev stated that Tajikistan and the other countries of Central Asia represented a Russian 'zone of special responsibility and interest'. The commander of the Tajik peacekeeping forces, Colonel-General Semenov, said in 1995 that the military exercises his troops executed were 'a show of force meant to impress those who may be cherishing plans to destabilize the region',⁸⁷ while Uzbek president in 1999 temporarily opted out of the CIS security structures under the comment that Moscow used the CIS treaty as a cover for promoting its own national agenda.⁸⁸ As influential Russia-expert Alexei Malashenko states 'Generally, [the CSTO] exists as Russia's political tool to keep this area under its own control'.⁸⁹ The situation in Central Asia under Putin's presidency has frequently been called the New Great Game, as a range of countries⁹⁰ showed increasingly assertive attitude in the pursuit of Central Asia's rich energy sources and strategic position. The new Great Game significantly increased the possibilities for the Central Asian (and South Caucasian) countries to conduct a *multi vector* policy. Russia had to fight harder to fulfill its national interest in its southern region. The Tajik peacekeeping mission and CSTO integration have both been important tools in keeping Central Asia tied to Russia.

Threats originating from Central Asia and the Caucasus are real. But Russia has interpreted the threats in its own way to generate domestic support for fighting them, so that more assets would become available to pursue strategic interests through security policy.

Conclusions

⁸⁷ Lynch, *Russian Peacekeeping Strategies in the CIS* 165.

⁸⁸ B. Pannier, 'Uzbekistan: Minister Announces Plans to Quit CIS Defense Pact', *RFE/RL Uzbekistan Report* 9 February 1999 <http://www.rferl.org/content/article/1090491.html>.

⁸⁹ Carnegie Moscow Center Analyst Alexei Malashenko as quoted in 'Rapid Reaction Force Adds Military Dimension To CSTO', *RFE/RL News* 4 February 2009. http://www.rferl.org/content/Rapid_Reaction_Force_Adds_Military_Dimension_To_CSTO/1379324.html.

⁹⁰ The US, China, India, EU-countries, Iran, Turkey all had growing interests in the region, with the first four having or looking for bases in the region.

Between 1992 and 2008, potential threats originating from the former republics were emphasized, blending with Russia's post-imperial complex and making involvement in conflicts in the *near abroad* look indispensable to Russian national interest. Security policy came to be a tool for dominance in the FSU. Although the costs for achieving this dominance were high, it was perceived as advantageous for Russia's national interest, as it could improve Russia's ability to influence events in the FSU and it could be used to counter outside influence. This traditional geopolitical line of thinking prevented Russian security policy towards the FSU from adapting to the new situation in which the former republics were legal equals. Russian policy made the FSU countries act cautiously in their cooperation with Russia. This was the case during both the Yeltsin and Putin presidencies. Putin's security policy towards the FSU showed more realism towards the reach of Russian power, but security policy continued to be used to secure a dominant role in the region. The cases to follow will elaborate further on the ways in which security policy was used as an aggressive policy tool to retain Russian dominance in the FSU.

II

Russian Security Policy: Case Studies 1992-2008

In this chapter, four case studies of Russian security policy will be examined in order to analyze the level of aggression with which Russian security policy was executed in the FSU between 1992 and 2008. During this period, the undercurrent of pursuing national interest (i.e. domestic support, domination in the CIS, fighting instability) remained broadly the same. However, the banner under which this aggressive security policy was executed changed from peacekeeping in the 1990s to anti-terrorism in the new

millennium. This change is mainly the result of the international climate, in which international Islamic terrorism towards the end of the 1990s replaced secessionist and ethnic conflict at the forefront of international threats. In the four case studies, we will see how little changed in Russia's pursuit of national interest through an aggressive security policy. The threat used to justify Russian interference under the peacekeeping banner was broadly the same as the one used to justify Russian interference under the anti-terrorist banner: instability. Threats to stability took different forms, from the political means of the Hizb-ut-Tahrir party to the conflict-related terrorism of the Chechen independence movement, and from NATO-expansion to the secessionist movements of the South Caucasus.

Below, four examples of Russian security policy are presented, highlighting the ways in which Russia tried to serve its national interest while countering threats. Analyzing two examples of peacekeeping and two examples of fighting terrorism, the case studies aim to present a balanced and informative outlook on Russian security policy between 1992 and 2008. This first part of this chapter starts by analyzing common characteristics of Russia's peacekeeping operations, focusing in particular on the international context. The chapter then continues by examining the Russian operations in Abkhazia and Tajikistan. The same structure will be used for the second part of this chapter, which focuses on two anti-terrorism cases studies following an analysis of common characteristics and the international context. The first case study is the fight against Chechen rebels in Georgia, the second is regional anti-terrorist cooperation in Central Asia.

II.IA

Common Characteristics of Peacekeeping 1992-2000

The sudden disappearance of superpower ‘overlay’ patterns and the subsequent decentralization of the Soviet state structures left many newly independent states with a giant security gap in the initial years after the fall of the FSU.⁹¹ Cohesion in the Kremlin was seriously lacking, which made it hard to tell at which political level specific decisions were made.⁹² In February 1992, Russian aircraft openly attacked Georgian positions around Sukhumi, but officially Moscow denied its involvement.⁹³ Instead, Defense minister Grachev accused Georgian troops of having painted their own aircraft and shot their own troops to be able to use Russia as a scapegoat. On top of that, Moscow had grave problems in establishing political control over its military. In Tajikistan, the Russian 201st Motorized Rifle Division was accused of having given four tanks and six armored vehicles to the Kulyab forces, Moscow’s traditional allies. The commander of the Russian forces, General Stavka, countered these allegations by stating that the vehicles were stolen in the middle of the night, a rather unlikely incident on a military base in the middle of a war zone.⁹⁴

Notwithstanding the lack of political cohesion and the chaotic performance of the Russian troops in these pre-peacekeeping years, Russian involvement in 1992 and 1993 showed a clear pattern which in all missions was in Russia’s favor: ‘Russian forces often used war-fighting techniques to achieve a favorable tactical position before handing over to a peacekeeping regime. Russian forces frequently sided with one of the warring factions, particularly in Tajikistan and Abkhazia’.⁹⁵ After its peacekeeping missions were in place, Russia used its operations in Central Asia and the South Caucasus as part of a *bargain for support*: in order to increase its influence, Moscow struck deals with regional governments, offering its help in fighting threats to national

⁹¹ L. Fawcett, ‘Regionalism in Historical Perspective’, L. Fawcett, A. Hurrell (eds), *Regionalism in World Politics* (Oxford 1995) 9-36, 20.

⁹² Facon ‘Integration or Retrenchment? Russian Approaches to Peacekeeping’ 32.

⁹³ Dale, ‘The Case of Abkhazia’ 123.

⁹⁴ A. Kreikemeyer, A. Zagorski, ‘The Commonwealth of Independent States (CIS)’, Jonson, Archer (eds.), *Peacekeeping and the Role of Russia in Eurasia* 157-171, 159.

⁹⁵ D. Sagramoso, ‘Russian peacekeeping policies’, Mackinlay, Cross (eds.), *Regional Peacekeepers. The Paradox of Russian Peacekeeping* (Tokyo 2003) 13-33, 27.

survival (often supported by Russian soldiers in previous years), in exchange for influence over domestic politics.

The Russian peacekeeping operations in Abkhazia and Tajikistan followed a clear pattern, perfectly summarized by Isabella Facon: ‘While the Kremlin’s peacekeeping action was partly meant to interrupt the violence in neighboring states, thus stemming instability before it extends to Russia’s territory, it also aimed at influencing the local situation in the early stage of Russian intervention in a way favorable to its interests, then at maintaining a certain level of tension justifying that Moscow keeps a military presence and levers on the NIS [Newly Independent States] governments’.⁹⁶

International Aspects of Russian Peacekeeping

Russian operations were executed with reference to Chapter V of the UN Charter, complemented by CIS agreements on peacekeeping.⁹⁷ But the Russian term for its activities, *mirotvorchestvo*, means *peacemaker*, according to the official translation.⁹⁸ When we look at some of the core ideas of UN peacekeeping at the beginning of the 1990s, we see a strong divergence from the principles of Russian missions. UN peacekeeping should be used as an expression of the will of the international community, it should be conducted with the consent and cooperation of the warring sides, the operations should be impartial, the participating troops should be multinational, they should be deployed after a cease-fire and they should only use force for the purpose of self-defense.⁹⁹

Russia’s missions did not fulfill many of these characteristics. None of them were underpinned by a similar level of international concordance; it is debatable whether in any of them the warring parties voluntarily gave their consent; impartiality was non-existent; the peacekeeping troops consisted of Russians with sometimes

⁹⁶ Facon, ‘Integration or Retrenchment? Russian Approaches to Peacekeeping’, 35

⁹⁷ Within the CIS, several peacekeeping agreements were conducted; the most important was the 1992 ‘Agreement on Groups of Military Observers and Collective Peacekeeping Forces’. This agreement stated that a CIS mandate for peacekeeping meant *entre autre* that interposition had to be set *after* a cease-fire; a peaceful settlement of conflicts and disputes had to be facilitated; and human rights had to be respected.

⁹⁸ Serrano, ‘CIS Peacekeeping in Tajikistan’, 164

⁹⁹ D. Hellema, ‘Humanitaire Interventie en de Verbreiding van Democratie’, D. Hellema, H. Reiding (eds.), *Humanitaire Interventie en Soevereiniteit* (Amsterdam, 2004) 176-180

contingents of locals; and military force was used excessively and easily.¹⁰⁰ Thus the UN refused to grant the heavily Russia-dominated CIS the role of regional peacekeeper, even sending observer missions out of fear of Russian abuses.¹⁰¹ It has to be said though that comparing Russia's peacekeeping operations to UN operations holds some danger, mainly in that it 'obfuscates the role played by these operations within broader Russian policy towards these states'.¹⁰² Russia's operations in their goals for peace were at most close to the peace enforcement missions of the UN like the mission in Bosnia and the second mission in Somalia, where the military aspect gained importance at the expense of the humanitarian side.¹⁰³

International legitimacy was important for Russia, since it meant sharing the burden and an unquestioned leading security role in the FSU. However, Russia also preferred international legitimacy not to be accompanied by foreign involvement. During negotiations over the status of Abkhazia, UN envoy Eduard Brenner said that from his talks with Russian officials he understood that 'Russia will not permit any excessive control and interference in its affairs',¹⁰⁴ while Colonel-General Kondratyev expressed the Russian position that '[there's] no good reason for our forces to be subordinated to the others'.¹⁰⁵ Yeltsin tried to secure this legal cover through UN recognition for Russia's sole peacekeeping role on several occasions, using the argument that Russia was the only country with the experience, knowledge and willingness to interfere and that the international community should financially and legally support Russia's Samaritan-like efforts. This leads Taylor and Smith to conclude that Russia was in it for the money, since 'International legitimacy and a multilateral peacekeeping umbrella would enable Russia to pass on some of the expenditure to international organizations or to reclaim it as a share of its contribution to the UN budget'.¹⁰⁶

¹⁰⁰ Also due to the training and weaponry of the troops, which was not suited for the kind of soft-pedaled military tasks they had to execute. Facon, 'Integration or Retrenchment? Russian Approaches to Peacekeeping', 35-40

¹⁰¹ Olcott, Aslund, Garnett, *Getting It Wrong* 92

¹⁰² Lynch, *Russian Peacekeeping Strategies in the CIS* 23

¹⁰³ For further reading on Russian peacekeeping and the developments of international peacekeeping, see Utey, R., *Major Powers and Peacekeeping: Perspectives, Priorities and Challenges* (Aldershot 2006), and J. Mackinlay, P. Cross (eds.), *Regional Peacekeepers. The Paradox of Russian Peacekeeping* (Tokyo 2003).

¹⁰⁴ UN Envoy to Abkhazia Eduard Brenner as quoted by Lynch, *Russian Peacekeeping Strategies in the CIS*

¹⁰⁵ Russian Colonel-General Kondratyev as cited by Lynch, *Russian Peacekeeping Strategies in the CIS*

¹⁰⁶ Taylor, Smith, 'The United Nations', 200

Towards the middle of the 1990s, the UN perception of peacekeeping underwent an evolution. The line between peacekeeping and peace-enforcement became thinner, and the idea was favored that regional organizations could bear a large part of the military peacekeeping burden, with the UN operating more as a police officer, steering the regional organization.¹⁰⁷ Russia was a strong proponent of this view, as it wanted the CIS to be the regional organization executing peacekeeping in the CIS. Moscow claimed that the CIS was a peacekeeping authority, and instrumental in increasing the legitimacy and efficiency of its operations. If successful, this would create an image of international legitimacy and could potentially win the organization a UN mandate for regional peacekeeping. Even if the UN did not grant the mandate, the CIS could still be used for burden sharing. The strengthening of the CIS as a regional player can also be seen as part of a larger Russian strategy aimed at emphasizing the need of a multi-polar world as a counterweight to US dominance in world politics.¹⁰⁸

Russia wanted to secure international recognition for its peacekeeping operations without admitting outside control over the operations. International recognition was welcome since it would bring burden sharing and legal protection for its role as Eurasia's security leader. CIS support was instrumental in achieving this. Russia succeeded in neither international recognition nor full backing from CIS members, and therefore the peacekeeping missions were very much unilateral Russian efforts both from an international legal standpoint as well as in practice. The underlying case studies of Abkhazia and Tajikistan will show how Russia aggressively pursued its national interest in these missions.

¹⁰⁷ Hellema, 'Humanitaire Interventie en de Verbreiding van Democratie', Hellema, Reiding (eds.), *Humanitaire Interventie en Soevereiniteit* 176-178

¹⁰⁸ This is part of the idea of a regionalization of world politics, an idea particularly popular in the mid- and late 1990s. At the core of the theory was the assumption that 'regional arrangements can be expected to assume greater importance'. Despite the waning popularity of the idea of regionalization, Moscow continues to use it on numerous occasions, for example in its quest for more influence on Afghanistan, in which the CSTO was put forward as the regional organization indispensable for successful conflict resolution. For further reading on regionalism, see L. Fawcett, A. Hurrell (eds), *Regionalism in World Politics* (Oxford 1995), Fortman, M., MacFairlane, S., Roussel, S., *Multilateralism and Regional Security* (Toronto 1997), B. Buzan, O. Waever, *Regions and Powers: the Structures of International Security* (Cambridge 2003) et al.

II.B

Russian Peacekeeping: the Case of Abkhazia (Georgia)

Characteristics

In the pre-peacekeeping years up to 1994, Russian forces still present in the area supported the Abkhaz. Russian aircraft defended Russian positions and even openly attacked Georgian positions throughout 1992 and 1993. After several failed attempts, Sukhumi and Tbilisi established a sustainable cease-fire under Russian leadership by May 1994. Russia's peacekeeping operation in Abkhazia, to which it referred to as a CIS mission, started on June 1994. According to Moscow, this mission was mandated by a CIS decision of April 15 1994. However, this decision said that preparations should begin for a peacekeeping force. A formal decision including a mandate was not taken by the CIS until October 21, 1994, when it was decided that the mission was to start on November 15. Thus Russia's peacekeeping mission already in place for four months was not a CIS mission, and would not be one for another month.¹⁰⁹ The mission in Abkhazia consisted solely of Russian soldiers and like the other missions, 'grew out of Russian interventions, not CIS mandates'.¹¹⁰

In Dov Lynch's analysis, Russian strategy in Abkhazia was part of a 'strategy of armed suasion' that led to 'an implicit, misconstrued bargain', meaning that Russia used means short of war to lure Georgia into a deal to fulfill Russian strategic goals in the South Caucasus.¹¹¹ Catharine Dale terms Russia's policy towards the Abkhaz conflict 'a clearly coercive strategy' and a 'positive reinforcement game', referring to the attachment by the Russian leadership of an end to the conflict to Georgian concessions and the signing of a full-scale friendship treaty between Russia and Georgia.¹¹² According to John Mackinlay and Evgenii Sharov, 'at the grand strategic level there is circumstantial evidence that Russia behaved with manipulative self-interest' in its interference in Abkhazia.¹¹³

¹⁰⁹ Kreikemeyer, Zagorski, 'The Commonwealth of Independent States (CIS)' 161

¹¹⁰ Brill Olcott, Aslund, Garnett, *Getting It Wrong* 93

¹¹¹ Lynch, *Russian Peacekeeping Strategies in the CIS* 137

¹¹² Dale 'The Case of Abkhazia' 127

¹¹³ Mackinlay, Sharov, 'Russian peacekeeping operations in Georgia' Mackinlay, Cross (eds.), *Regional Peacekeepers. The Paradox of Russian Peacekeeping* 63-110, 106

Threats & Interests

When fighting broke out between Abkhazians and Georgians, only eighteen percent of the population of Abkhazia consisted of ethnic Abkhazians, while Georgians made up 48 percent of the population. During the conflict some 200,000 Georgians were expelled, which made the Abkhaz the majority. The Russian Diaspora in Georgia was estimated at 341,000 people, making it one of the smaller Russian communities in the newly independent states. For Russia, the problems in Georgia were in this regard mainly attached to the way in which conflict would influence the situation of ethnic Russians in its own North Caucasus. The Russian Diaspora was not a target of anti-Russian Georgian policies, since their migration would be economically disadvantageous.¹¹⁴ For Russia, an independent pro-Russian Abkhazia was tempting since it would allow Russia an extra bastion in the South Caucasus. At the same time, it would give off the wrong signal to other secessionist territories. Russian policy towards the Abkhaz conflict was aggressive, forcing Georgia's leader Shevardnadze to comply and use its military support as part of a bargain.

The Policy:

A Misconstrued Bargain

President Shevardnadze saw Russia's intervention as illegitimate from the start. But he, in contrast to large segments of Georgian society and political circles, acknowledged that 'Russia and Georgia will always find themselves in a sphere of mutual interest', that his country had 'to cooperate with Russia', since 'else Georgia will disintegrate and collapse'.¹¹⁵ Despite fierce domestic opposition, Shevardnadze engaged in cooperation with Russia. In turn, Moscow realized that it could not replace Shevardnadze with a more pro-Russian leader, as it had done in Tajikistan. Such an event was likely to infuriate the anti-Russian elements in Georgian society and put Russian national interests in Georgia at risk.

Given these circumstances, an implicit bargain was the optimal outcome for both Moscow and Tbilisi. The core of the deal was securing Georgian statehood in exchange for a pro-Russian Tbilisi. This meant that Russia would support the build-up of a Georgian military by transferring Soviet military assets to Tbilisi; that Russia would

¹¹⁴ N. Jackson, *Russian Foreign Policy and the CIS: Theories, Debates and Actions* (London 2003) 120

¹¹⁵ Georgian President Eduard Shevardnadze as cited by Lynch, *Russian Peacekeeping Strategies in the CIS* 136

support the installment of Tbilisi's state monopoly on violence by fighting militias like the Forest Brotherhood and the Zviadists; that Russia would support Georgian territorial sovereignty by stopping its active support to the Abkhaz; and that it had to ensure the safe repatriation of the 200,000 Georgian Internally Displaced Persons to Abkhazia.¹¹⁶ The costs may seem high, but preventing Georgia from falling apart was to Moscow's advantage. Georgia's part of the deal was that it had to become a member of the CIS and its collective security structures; it had to allow continued presence of troops and bases on its soil; and Tbilisi would share responsibility for Georgian-Turkish border protection. Russia's peacekeeping mission was also part of the bargain, as it would be used to fight militias and pressure the Abkhaz. In reality, the operation resembled very much a 'traditional interposition operation'.¹¹⁷ The official goal of the mission was to 'promote the full-scale settlement of the conflict',¹¹⁸ providing Russia with good reason to stay for an indefinite amount of time in case the full-scale settlement would not come around.

Both parties started to live up to their part of the bargain; Russia moved against the militias and started to secure the border between the Abkhaz and the Georgians, deploying 2,500 troops across a 78 km-long buffer zone along the Inguri river, the natural barrier between Georgian and Abkhaz positions. After several failed attempts, a cease-fire was struck under Russian leadership, thus strengthening the border demarcation Russian forces helped the Abkhaz to establish in the pre-peacekeeping years.¹¹⁹ The bargain marked the switch in Russian policy from active support to opposition to the Abkhaz independence movement. This opposition meant a CIS economic blockade for Abkhazia and Russian political pressure to forge Sukhumi to a compromise with Tbilisi over its status as an autonomous province. Moscow started weapon transfers to Tbilisi and conducted training of the Georgian military. Georgia became a full-fledged member of the CIS, with participation in its security structures, and started the process of ratification on the lease of military bases and joint border protection.

However, essential parts of the deal were not met, leading the bargain struck in 1994 to falter already in 1996. Russia had agreed on securing the safe return of the 200,000 Internally Displaced Persons, a crucial aspect of the deal between

¹¹⁶ Lynch, *Russian Peacekeeping Strategies in the CIS* 138-140

¹¹⁷ Lynch, *Russian Peacekeeping Strategies in the CIS* 138

¹¹⁸ Sagramoso, 'Russian peacekeeping policies' 26

¹¹⁹ Mackinlay, Sharov, 'Russian peacekeeping operations in Georgia' 109-112

Shevardnadze and Moscow. The Abkhazians had to be treated as a full-fledged partner in any peace accord, mainly as a consequence of their established statehood. The Abkhaz were happy with the situation as it was, further strengthening statehood through new presidential and parliamentary elections and a new constitution. They virulently opposed any possibility of a return of Georgian refugees or talks on border changes.¹²⁰ The main cause of conflict now was the Abkhaz unwillingness to give up its goals for independence. Georgian President Shevardnadze was prepared to provide the Abkhaz province with independent legislative institutions and give it far reaching autonomy, but the Abkhaz were unwilling to accept.¹²¹ Hence, a settlement on the status of Abkhazia was not reached, while this was part of the Russian side of the deal to restore Georgian territorial integrity.

The Georgians accused Moscow of siding with the Abkhaz, linking the fulfillment of their own obligations to Russia's. The ratification of military agreements was halted, and the Georgian authorities involved in 'low-intensity harassment actions against the Russian military'.¹²² Shevardnadze showed his discontent by criticizing the CIS and by looking for other international partners. Ties with the long-time Russian adversaries Turkey and the US were established, and Georgia became a founding member of GUAM, a multilateral organization providing a Russia-free alternative to security cooperation in the former Soviet Union. Russia saw Georgia's GUAM membership as an outright provocation.

Yeltsin dramatically stated that 'If someone does not want Russia's help, we can withdraw our peacekeepers...it is now high time for the conflicting parties to start making decisions. Russia is ready to assist them in this, but I repeat, making decisions is their exclusive prerogative'.¹²³ The mutual frustration and counteractive policies are the result of what Lynch calls the 'misconstrued' part of the bargain: Georgia and Russia had a fundamentally different perception of the length and terms of the bargain they construed.¹²⁴ Russia in the Georgian perception did not make enough efforts to make the

¹²⁰ Mackinlay, Sharov, 'Russian peacekeeping operations in Georgia' 91 Lynch, *Russian Peacekeeping Strategies in the CIS* 92.

¹²¹ Mackinlay, Sharov, 'Russian peacekeeping operations in Georgia' 91 Lynch, *Russian Peacekeeping Strategies in the CIS* 95.

¹²² Lynch, *Russian Peacekeeping Strategies in the CIS* 142.

¹²³ Yeltsin as quoted in Lynch, *Russian Peacekeeping Strategies in the CIS* 145. Georgia did not want a Russian retreat as long as there was no compromise over Abkhazia's status, and the Abkhaz did not want to lose their protection. In the end, retreat turned out to be a threat that would not be executed. Putin on several occasions used the same threat, again without executing it.

¹²⁴ Lynch, *Russian Peacekeeping Strategies in the CIS* 143.

return of its refugees possible. Russia did not press for conflict resolution because it was unable and unwilling to do so, allowing the conflict to reach a feeble status quo, while its peacekeepers remained in place,¹²⁵ exerting Russian leverage over Georgia. ‘One gets the impression that non-resolution of conflict has appeared as a strategy for fulfilling Moscow’s strategic goals in the CIS’.¹²⁶ The outcome of the situation – a moderately stable Abkhazia with an insecure status within Georgia - provided Russia with the opportunity for continued influence over Georgia.

Whether Russia intentionally steered the conflict to this outcome is hard to say. But Russian policy up to this point has shown great willingness in using the conflict not only to counter security threats, but also to parlay it into a tool for increasing Russian leverage over the CIS and to give in to domestic pressure to protect the Russian Diaspora.

¹²⁵ Nygren, *The Rebuilding of Greater Russia* 131-133. Russia held on to several of the benefits it had derived from the bargain. Putin has put much effort in retaining Russian military bases in Georgia, in 2001 blaming Georgia’s hostile policies for Russia’s refusal to leave the bases. Later, in 2003, tensions in the Pankisi Gorge and Abkhazia were used as an excuse not to withdraw from the bases. After Saakashvili replaced Shevardnadze as Georgia’s president in late 2003, it was decided that Russia’s withdrawal would be connected to a *framework treaty*. Finally, in 2006, Russia retreated from the bases.

¹²⁶ Facon, ‘Integration or Retrenchment? Russian Approaches to Peacekeeping’ 35

II.IC

Russian Peacekeeping: the Case of Tajikistan

Characteristics

The peacekeeping mission in Tajikistan was the most ‘international’ of the Russian peacekeeping missions. It did have a CIS mandate from the start, and small contingents of Kyrgyz and Uzbek soldiers even participated. In order to create the CIS mandate, Russia issued the ‘Agreement on Collective Peacekeeping Forces’ in 1993, which was endorsed by Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Russia, Tajikistan and Uzbekistan. Russia started combined military training with the Central Asian states in an effort to establish a pan-Central Asian peacekeeping army.¹²⁷ However, the Central Asian countries were unwilling to send soldiers, limiting themselves to a symbolic contribution. When attempts at direct burden sharing proved futile, Moscow struck a deal to make Tajikistan ‘instrumental to Russia in securing the support of the Central Asian states in the CIS’.¹²⁸ Russia would bear the costs for peace and stability in Tajikistan in return for which the Central Asian states would ‘give *carte blanche* to Moscow in any intervention in the Caucasus’¹²⁹ – the prime focus of Russia’s ambitions in the early 1990 mainly because it was after the energy resources of the Caspian Sea and the pipeline to the Russian heartland. This turned the Tajik conflict ‘into a legal cover for Russia’s activity in the *near abroad*’.¹³⁰

Despite the semblance of international legitimacy Russia was able to give to the operation in Tajikistan, it very much deflected Russia’s wishes. Of Russia’s peacekeeping missions, the one in Tajikistan was the most genuine in its aim to stop the fighting and bring stability. Due to several policy errors as a result of Moscow’s pursuit

¹²⁷ Efforts at establishing a CIS peacekeeping army have not been very successful. The efforts were not so much aimed at establishing a *peacekeeping* force, but at establishing common forces of any sort. The Putin and Medvedev administrations have struggled to establish a joint Rapid Deployment Force that should be able to execute peacekeeping operation under UN command, but also at countering aggression and fighting terrorism. In March 2009 new documents were signed that seem to bring the establishment of collective CSTO-forces close to reality.

I. Neumann, S. Solodovnik, ‘The Case of Tajikistan’, L. Jonson, C. Archer (eds.), *Russian Peacekeeping and the Role of Russia in Eurasia* 83-103, 92

¹²⁸ Serrano, ‘CIS peacekeeping in Tajikistan’ 179

¹²⁹ Serrano, ‘CIS peacekeeping in Tajikistan’ 179

¹³⁰ Serrano, ‘CIS peacekeeping in Tajikistan’ 178

of national interest, Russia has been fairly unsuccessful in constructing a long-term foundation for peace and stability.

Threats & Interests

The national interest pursued by Russia in its operation in Tajikistan was first and foremost to diminish a threat to its national security by preventing Tajikistan from becoming a failed state. This was a dual threat: the spread of fundamentalist Islam throughout Central Asia into Russia, and the threat this would pose to the Russian Diaspora (comprising over 10 million in 1989) in the region. This went hand in hand with increasing Russian influence in the FSU and preventing outside influence. As we saw above, the burden of stabilizing Tajikistan became instrumental in securing Central Asian support for Russian policies elsewhere in the CIS. Russia did not aim for a feeble status quo as with Shevardnadze, but for a stable puppet regime. Russian interference was in large part responsible for the fall of the uncooperative Iskanderov government and the subsequent installation of the pro-Russian Rakhmonov government.

In the Kremlin's simplified reading of events, the Tajik civil war revolved around two parties: the former communist allies and the radical Muslim fundamentalist Islamic Renaissance Party within the United Tajik Opposition. However, the United Tajik Opposition was comprised of democrats and moderate Islamic groups as well, while the measure of radicalism of the ideology of the radical Islamic parties has been the subject of much debate.¹³¹ Policy makers in Moscow stressed the fundamental tendencies of the Party and the threat it posed to Russia, while many analysts believe the threat was exaggerated.¹³² In a one-sided approach Russia fully supported the familiar

¹³¹ These kinds of distinctions are hard to make in Tajik society, since 'the main identity is the regional one, but the regions do not coincide with the administrative regions', while political groups were mainly based on regional identity and as a result of infighting between the main regional identity groups. L. Jonson, *Tajikistan in the New central Asia* (London 2006) 42.

¹³² 'The biggest myth would have us believe that Muslim fundamentalism is dangerous for Russia or Russia's state interest', Yury Gankovsky as quoted by Lynch, *Russian Peacekeeping Strategies in the CIS* 156. Lynch states that 'many academic experts played down the dangers of Islamic fundamentalism, distinguishing it from a moderate revival of that faith'. Also, the Soviet experience and regional religious differences set a threshold for the spread of Islamic extremism in Tajikistan. This is not to deny that Islam provided an ideological outlet for discontent in repressive, impoverished Tajikistan, and that the United Tajik Opposition did not contain Muslims with fundamentalist ideas. Moscow solely focused on these elements, without having a realistic impression of the dangers Islam in Tajikistan held for Russia.

side of former communist Rakhmonov, making Russia ‘more a ‘player’ than a ‘referee’ in this civil war’.¹³³

The Policy:

Unconditional support falling between ‘two stools’

Russia only started its full support to the government after its preferred candidate, Rakhmonov, was elected president by the Supreme Soviet. While the UN stated that the presidential and parliamentary elections that brought Rakhmonov to power did not have ‘a semblance of democracy’, Russia accepted them as legitimate.¹³⁴ After his election, Russia and Rakhmonov had an implicit agreement: Russia would fully back him in return for a pro-Russian and anti-Islam government. One of Rakhmonov’s first acts as president was calling for a CIS intervention, thus paving the way for Russia’s peacekeeping mission. It nevertheless remains difficult to discern whether Russia put Rakhmonov in power as part of a premeditated plan. Serrano thinks not: ‘It can hardly be said that Russia masterminded the return of former communists to power, but it is undeniable that the direct involvement of the 201st MRD on the side of the Kulyabi and Leninabadi clans (due mostly to the indigenous roots of many officers) contributed to their victory in 1993.’¹³⁵ Dov Lynch expresses a more suspicious view: ‘Only after Soviet power arrangements had been reinstated was Russia willing to create a ‘peacekeeping operation’ to support the new government’.¹³⁶

Whatever the case, Russia fully backed Rakhmonov from 1993 on, when he started to repress the opposition. In order to increase the legitimacy of the mission, Russia judged the conflict not as a civil war, as the UN did, but as a government under attack from outside powers.¹³⁷ It quickly became clear to Moscow that Rakhmonov would not be able to defeat the opposition. A large-scale attack on Russian border post No. 12 on July 13, in which 24 soldiers were killed and 18 wounded, made Russia realize it had to change its operation in order to make it useful for the fulfillment of its national interest.¹³⁸ Bringing to memory the disaster of the Afghan quagmire and the

¹³³ Lynch, *Russian Peacekeeping Strategies in the CIS* 24

¹³⁴ UN Declaration cited by Lynch, *Russian Peacekeeping Strategies in the CIS* 165

¹³⁵ Serrano, ‘CIS peacekeeping in Tajikistan’, Mackinlay, Cross (eds.), *Regional Peacekeepers. The Paradox of Russian Peacekeeping* 178

¹³⁶ Lynch, *Russian Peacekeeping Strategies in the CIS* 157

¹³⁷ Lynch, *Russian Peacekeeping Strategies in the CIS* 157

¹³⁸ Neumann, Solodovnik, ‘The Case of Tajikistan’, 105

humiliating retreat in the 1980s, Russia realized its strong emphasis on military action might not be wise.

As a solution, Russia started to push Rakhmonov for reconciliation. This was a mixed success at most. Rakhmonov initially withstood Russian pressure for conflict resolution, pushing Russia's commitment to its limits in order to oust the opposition. A window for conflict resolution was created only after continuing military successes of the opposition made Rakhmonov realize he risked his political survival if he did not accept the possibility of reconciliation. The combination of Russian pressure and, mostly, the military successes of the opposition made possible the 1997 Peace Treaty in Moscow. Through the Treaty it was decided that Rakhmonov would share power with the United Tajik Opposition.¹³⁹

In the aftermath of the civil war Russia remained committed to defending Tajikistan's Southern border. The 201st Motorized Rifle Division continued to be stationed in Tajikistan and Russia maintained a military base on Tajik territory, although the Division increasingly looked like a 'lost legion', far away from Moscow and operating largely on its own initiative.¹⁴⁰ In September 2000, just after Putin became president, Russia's CIS peacekeeping mandate ended, and it was announced that efforts to combat 'international terrorism' and 'extremism' were to replace the peacekeeping activities.¹⁴¹

¹³⁹ Lynch, *Russian Peacekeeping Strategies in the CIS* 169.

¹⁴⁰ Baev, 'Counter-terrorism in Putin's Regime' 329.

¹⁴¹ Nygren, *The Rebuilding of Greater Russia* 190.

Conclusions on Russian Peacekeeping

Russian peacekeeping was driven by several factors. Firstly, peacekeeping was aimed at ‘appeasing anti-reformist domestic forces’ by safeguarding the Russian Diaspora; fulfilling the domestic wish for a strengthened Russian international position; if possible, helping traditional allies while defending its sphere of influence; and silencing domestic anxiety over conflict spillover. Secondly, peacekeeping was aimed at increasing Russia’s long-term geopolitical goal of regional hegemony to be a Great Power again. Thirdly the aim was to avoid threats to Russian national security from developing and spilling over, most notably secessionism and radicalism, and foreign influence in the *near abroad*.

The cases of Abkhazia and Tajikistan show that Russia aggressively pursued these goals under the overarching umbrella of peacekeeping. Conclusions should be drawn carefully, since there is not enough evidence to support the claim that Russia masterminded the Russian peacekeeping brand to be a disguise for the geopolitical pursuit of national interest. What we *can* conclude, is that when during peacekeeping missions opportunities for direct gains for the aforementioned aspects of Russian national interest occurred, the Kremlin would choose to pursue these opportunities. This definitely outweighed sustainable conflict resolution.

II.IIA

Common Characteristics of Anti-terrorist Cooperation 2000-2008

Russian anti-terrorism operations were accompanied by less military pressure and intervention than Russian peacekeeping operations, due to four major factors. Firstly, the Russian military had retreated from many of the bases it had occupied in its former life as the Soviet Red Army, making military intervention more costly than it was in peacekeeping times. Secondly, the army was in a debilitated condition. Money for reforms was lacking,¹⁴² manpower was short as it was concentrated in the North Caucasus and self-esteem was low due to the failing Chechen wars.¹⁴³ Thirdly, the states and state structures of the FSU countries were more institutionalized, both domestically and internationally, than in the 1990s. And lastly, ‘Pooty-poot’¹⁴⁴ as president Bush nicknamed Russia’s new strong man and KGB-veteran, would risk losing Russia’s newfound image as a major ally in the American anti-terrorism coalition by ruthless military action in the FSU.

Despite all this, we will see that the basic traits of Russian security policy continued. With a gulf of terrorism hitting Russia at the end of the 1990s, many Russians started to believe that their nightmare of a giant caliphate at Russia’s borders was coming true. Putin’s ‘spectacular arrival to the Kremlin on the ‘war ticket’’,¹⁴⁵ and his strong anti-terrorist stance suited the anxious climate of the period. Putin skilfully used the terrorist threat to justify increasing presidential powers and to fight security threats at home and abroad while simultaneously increasing Russian influence in the FSU. These benefits, as influential Russian analyst Pavel Baev states, made the Russian *war on terror* not just about fighting it, but ‘about having it’.¹⁴⁶

¹⁴² The immediate cause was the financial crisis that hit Russia hard and reverberated throughout the 1990s. Russia was in a poor state and a broad range of other pressing issues needed government money, from infrastructure to healthcare. Only in the second part of the 2000s has the military budget been rising again.

¹⁴³ Brill Olcott, Aslund, Garnett, *Getting It Wrong* 95.

¹⁴⁴ American President Bush quoted in ‘Analysis: Bush and Putin on nickname terms’, *BBC News World Edition* 23 May 2003. <http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/americas/2000197.stm>.

¹⁴⁵ Baev, ‘Counter-terrorism in Putin’s Regime’ 326.

¹⁴⁶ Baev, ‘Counter-terrorism in Putin’s Regime’ 330.

The International Aspect of Anti-Terrorism

Putin continued Yeltsin's efforts at international recognition for Russia's role as Eurasia's security leader. Terrorist attacks in the FSU were turned into a pan-FSU problem that needed a common, Russian led approach. As Putin saw it, 'One can clearly trace an interconnection in the actions of international terrorism in various regions of the world: in the Balkans, in the Caucasus and in Central Asia'.¹⁴⁷ Putin even went as far as to couple Russia's efforts in the international war on terror to 'the degree and quality of understanding' it received from other countries.¹⁴⁸ Putin used the new terrorist threat to push the boundaries of legitimate action abroad. This bears strong resemblance to the practices surrounding peacekeeping, when Vladimir Lukin, then ambassador to the US said in 1993: 'Events in Chechnya and Tajikistan confirm the vested interest of Islamic radicals in supporting protracted collisions in the Northern Caucasus and in Central Asia on the basis of the coordinated action of nationalism, separatism and Islamic extremism',¹⁴⁹ and Yeltsin asked international organizations to sponsor Russian efforts to bring security and peace to the FSU.

Distinguishing between different kinds and causes of secessionism and terrorism was not in Russia's interest. The distinction between so called *terrorism of conflicts* as a mode of operation in an asymmetrical conflict between state and non-state actors, and *super-terrorism* with a global outreach and global goals was not made by Russian officials.¹⁵⁰ If the conflicts were the same, the same cure was needed, and Russia was the obvious and eligible Eurasian partner to fight them. International terrorism became a scrap heap for threats to Russia and the Central Asian 'authoritarian mafia-like regimes'.¹⁵¹ The decision of the CSTO to include moderate Islamic groups like the Nurchilar and Salafiylar parties on its list of extremist organizations, a move loudly protested by international human rights organizations,¹⁵² showed terrorism to be a tool to 'domestically and internationally justify repression and rigorous centralized political

¹⁴⁷ Statement Putin,

http://www.kremlin.ru/eng/speeches/2000/03/10/1432_type82913type82914_134551.shtml

¹⁴⁸ Statement Putin, <http://www.rferl.org/content/article/1142329.html>.

¹⁴⁹ Russian Ambassador V. Lukin as cited by Lynch, *Russian Peacekeeping Strategies in the CIS* 153.

¹⁵⁰ Stepanova, 'Russia's Approach to the Fight Against Terrorism' 301.

¹⁵¹ G. Gleason, 'Why Russia is in Tajikistan' *Comparative Strategy* 20 (2001) 77-90, 83.

¹⁵² 'CSTO Adds Islamic Groups To Extremist List', *RFE/RL News* 6 May 2009.

http://www.rferl.org/content/CSTO_Adds_Islamic_Groups_To_Extremist_List/1622623.html.

control'.¹⁵³

When after 9/11 NATO member states came to use former Soviet military facilities in the FSU, Putin did not initially perceive this as problematic as the potential stabilization of Afghanistan was a promising perspective for Russia. The country had been a major threat to Russian interests for decades. And even if the Taliban was not defeated, the NATO mission would act as a terrorist magnet. However, in the second half of the 2000s, Russia came to impatiently await a Western retreat, since a longer-term NATO presence is perceived as rivalling Russia's dominant security role and geopolitical position in the region. American-Russian relations have cooled down correspondingly in recent years.

II.IIB

Anti-terrorist Policy: the Case of the Georgian Gorges

During Putin's presidency, Georgian-Russian relations have gone downhill; hitting rock bottom right after Putin stepped down for his close associate and former classmate Dmitri Medvedev to take over the presidency in August 2008. One of the major causes for this deterioration can be found in the second Chechen war. Russia's concern that Chechen warriors would find a safe haven in the Pankisi Gorge in the North of Georgia was turning into reality at the end of the 1990s. The Pankisi Gorge was home to a Chechen population called the Kists. At the start of the second Chechen war, in August 1999, some 8,500 refugees, of whom 1,500 warriors, entered the Gorge. Russia accused Georgia of allowing the fighters 'safe havens' and 'springboards' for military action into Russian territory; of harbouring some 20 Chechen bases; and even of high-ranking Georgian officials cooperating with Chechen terrorists.¹⁵⁴ In fighting Russia's domestic Chechen threat on Georgian territory, Russia showed the will to unilaterally 'search and destroy' Chechen rebels abroad. Georgia's biggest concern was preventing Russian

¹⁵³ R. Allison, 'Virtual regionalism, regional structures and regime security in Central Asia', *Central Asian Survey* 27 (2008), 185 - 202, 190.

¹⁵⁴ 'Russia Again Criticizes Georgia On Fight Against Terrorism', *RFE/RL News* 1 October 2002. <http://www.rferl.org/content/article/1100945.html>.

unilateral action on its soil. Former experiences in its relations with Russia led Georgia to be cautious of Russian interference on Georgian territory. While officials in Moscow claimed that their sole goal was to ‘secure Russia proper against incursions by Chechen fighters’,¹⁵⁵ officials in Tbilisi claimed that Russia aimed to destabilize Georgia in order to bolster its strategic influence in the Caucasus.¹⁵⁶

It proved difficult to expel the Russian soldiers once they were in place. Moscow pressed Tbilisi to allow military actions in the Pankisi Gorge, stating that the Gorge would remain a source of instability unless Russian troops participated in an anti-terrorist operation in the region: ‘Georgia will never resolve this problem without Russia’s participation, without Russia’s armed forces and special-operations troops’.¹⁵⁷ Georgia feared to be drawn into the Chechen conflict. Despite the lack of Georgian consent, on several occasions in 1999 and 2000, Russian helicopters intruded Georgian airspace.¹⁵⁸ Georgia officially denied Russian allegations of unwillingness to tackle the Chechen problem, although Shevardnadze admitted the presence of Chechen fighters on Georgian territory. In its turn, Russia denied Georgian accusations that the Russian air force conducted operations on Georgian territory, despite several eyewitnesses confirming Russian military actions.¹⁵⁹

To be able to better withstand Russia’s accusations, Georgia tried to appease Russia by emphasizing the common ground between the two countries and that Russia and Georgia ‘are bound to have exemplary friendly relations worthy of our ancestors’,¹⁶⁰ while simultaneously making an effort to fight the problems in its northern region by mapping the Chechen presence and strengthening its border control.¹⁶¹ Also, high level Georgian politicians resumed talks with Moscow on the issue. Despite these efforts, Russian claims of Georgia opposing its anti-terrorist efforts resurfaced with a vengeance in the summer of 2001. On top of accusations of Georgia supporting the Chechen resistance, Moscow claimed that the Pankisi Gorge had

¹⁵⁵ S. Blagov, ‘Moscow May Seek International Backing for Pankisi Military Operation’, *Eurasia Insight* 14 August 2002. <http://www.eurasianet.org/departments/insight/articles/eav081402.shtml>

¹⁵⁶ J. Devdariani, ‘Georgian Security Operation Proceeds in the Pankisi Gorge’, *Eurasia Insight* 3 September 2002, <http://www.eurasianet.org/departments/insight/articles/eav090302a.shtml>

¹⁵⁷ Russian Defense Minister Ivanov as cited by S. Blagov, ‘Moscow May Seek International Backing for Pankisi Military Operation’, *Eurasia Insight* 14 August 2002. <http://www.eurasianet.org/departments/insight/articles/eav081402.shtml>

¹⁵⁸ C. Waters, ‘Pankisi Tension and International Law’, *Eurasia Insight* 20 December 2002

¹⁵⁹ Nygren, ‘Russia’s relations with Georgia under Putin. The impact of 11 September’ 165.

¹⁶⁰ Blagov, ‘Moscow May Seek International Backing for Pankisi Military Operation’, *Eurasia Insight* 14 August 2002. <http://www.eurasianet.org/departments/insight/articles/eav081402.shtml>

¹⁶¹ D. van der Schriek, Georgia’s Pankisi Gorge Still Seems Less Than Secure’, *Eurasia Insight* 2 May 2003. <http://www.eurasianet.org/departments/insight/articles/eav020503a.shtml>.

become ‘practically occupied’,¹⁶² posing an ‘acute threat to the national security of Russia’,¹⁶³ and thus establishing Russia’s terrorist problem as part of the international terrorist threat. The aim was to enable self-defense against an acute threat to Russian national security, although oddly enough it would be self-defense against a home-grown threat.

The attacks of September 11 2001 changed Russian-American relations for the better, a development Georgia feared. Russia linked the terrorist attacks of 9/11 with Chechen terrorism, trying to turn Chechnya into Russia’s Afghanistan. Defense minister Ivanov stated that the two countries were ‘two branches of the same tree’.¹⁶⁴ Russia hoped that the bitter *war on terror* would lessen Washington’s opposition to Russian unilateral action in Georgia.¹⁶⁵ This indeed happened, with Bush even supporting the Russian side by saying that ‘terrorists working closely with Al-Qaeda operate in Pankisi Gorge near the Russian border’.¹⁶⁶

Besides the Chechen warriors in the Pankisi Gorge, several hundreds of Chechen fighters entered the northern Abkhaz Kodori Gorge, ‘a haven for paramilitary groups’,¹⁶⁷ both Georgian and Chechen. These fighters wanted ‘to engage the Russians in order to alleviate Russia’s military pressure on Chechnya’,¹⁶⁸ and Muslim Chechens started fighting on the side of the Christian Georgian paramilitary against the Muslim Abkhaz. Just like in the Pankisi Gorge, Russian aircraft entered the Kodori Gorge in an effort to stop the Chechen intrusions. A high ranking politician stated that Moscow believed that it would be within the bounds of international law to take preventive measures against hostilities spilling over onto its territory.¹⁶⁹ Georgia and Russia

¹⁶² Defense Minister Sergei Ivanov as cited in *RFE/RL Newswire* 10 December 2001. <http://www.rferl.org/content/article/1142576.html>.

¹⁶³ Defense Minister Sergei Ivanov as cited in *RFE/RL Newswire* 10 December 2001. <http://www.rferl.org/content/article/1142576.html>.

¹⁶⁴ Russian Defense Minister Sergei Ivanov as cited in M. Katz, ‘Can The United States Afford Russia As An Ally?’, *Eurasia Insight* 26 September 2001. <http://www.eurasianet.org/departments/insight/articles/eav092601.shtml>.

¹⁶⁵ *RFE/RL Newswire* 21 March 2002 <http://www.rferl.org/content/article/1142640.html>.

¹⁶⁶ American President G.W. Bush as quoted by Nygren, *The Rebuilding of Greater Russia* 127.

¹⁶⁷ Eurasia Insight, ‘Military Issues Block Russian-Georgian Détente’ <http://www.eurasianet.org/departments/insight/articles/eav010603.shtml>.

¹⁶⁸ Nygren, *The Rebuilding of Greater Russia* 134.

¹⁶⁹ ‘Russia Claims Right to Respond to Kodori Crisis’ *Eurasia Insight* 27 July 2006. <http://www.eurasianet.org/departments/insight/articles/eav072706.shtml>

mutually accused each other of intentionally exacerbating the conflict for political reasons.¹⁷⁰

Russia warned Georgia it had to stop the intrusions, because it was causing tensions for the Russian peacekeeping mission still present in Abkhazia. On one occasion, Russian helicopters even bombed villages in the Kodori Gorge, to which Shevardnadze reacted by calling it an outright provocation and that while Georgia had overlooked the 1999 bombing by Russian helicopters of the Georgian village of Shatili, this time its response would be 'severe'.¹⁷¹ Tensions over Chechens in the Kodori Gorge continued throughout 2002, with the continuous threat of the Abkhaz conflict starting again only just being diverted on several occasions: 'wide-scale military actions would probably have begun and led to the renewal of the conflict in Abkhazia'.¹⁷²

When Defense Minister Ivanov claimed that 'The situation in Pankisi gorge is posing an acute threat to the national security of Russia', and claimed that parts of Georgian territory were 'practically occupied'¹⁷³ by Chechen warriors, a Russian attack seemed eminent. In August 2002, Russia bombed the Pankisi Gorge with unmarked airplanes. Russia officially denied Georgian allegations, despite eyewitnesses reporting the events.¹⁷⁴ When Chechen leader Gelaev entered the Kodori Gorge and soon thereafter four Russian peacekeepers were taken hostage, Shevardnadze expected a war with Russia to be eminent. This feeling was strengthened by America saying that its 'strong support' for Georgian independence would continue and by offers of international mediation. In the end, Washington urged Moscow to give Georgia time and urged Tbilisi to act more straightforward to tackle the Chechen problem.

According to Russia-analyst Sergei Blagov, the fact that Moscow did not execute its extreme threats indicates that it was part of a tactic to rebuff the Americans from getting more involved in Georgia.¹⁷⁵ Even after Georgian actions to expulse Chechen warriors had intensified and seemed to have been successful in 2003, Russia continued its allegations. After a short period of improvement in Russian-Georgian relations after Shaaksvilli took over the presidency from Shevardnadze in the Rose

¹⁷⁰ 'Russia Claims Right to Respond to Kodori Crisis' *Eurasia Insight* 27 July 2006.

<http://www.eurasianet.org/departments/insight/articles/eav072706.shtml>

¹⁷¹ <http://www.eurasianet.org/resource/georgia/hypermail/200110/0041.html>

¹⁷² Shevardnadze as cited by Nygren, *The Rebuilding of Greater Russia* 136.

¹⁷³ *RFE/RL Newslines* 10 December 2001. <http://www.rferl.org/content/article/1142576.html>.

¹⁷⁴ *RFE/RL Newslines* 23 August 2002. <http://www.rferl.org/content/article/1142744.html>.

¹⁷⁵ S. Blagov, 'Moscow May Seek International Backing for Pankisi Military Operation', *Eurasia Insight* 14 August 2002. <http://www.eurasianet.org/departments/insight/articles/eav081402.shtml>.

Revolution of 2003, the Russian accusations of Georgia harboring Chechen terrorists and of Georgian unwillingness to act continued again,¹⁷⁶ seemingly becoming part of a rhetorical ritual.

Russian actions in the Gorge were clear examples of using the threat of terrorism to push the boundaries of international law, contributing to concern over the legal consequences of the international war on terror similar to the ones over America's Iraq invasion. As Antonio Cassese, former President of the International Criminal Tribunal for the former Yugoslavia points out: 'the response to the appalling tragedy of 11 September may lead to acceptable legal change in the international community only if reasonable measures are taken...Otherwise, the road would be open to the setting in of that anarchy in the international community so eagerly pursued by terrorists.'¹⁷⁷

Russia's concerns over its national security were real, as Chechen warriors used Georgian territory to regroup and threatened Russian troops in Abkhazia. However, Russia exaggerated the connection between Chechen and international terrorism, which against the background of the American *war on terror* could serve as a legitimate excuse for Russian unilateral action on Georgian soil. Furthermore, Russia used the threat of a large scale intervention to make Tbilisi comply with its demands. The background and history of Russian-Georgian relations make Russia's threats all the more serious and are another case confirming Russia's unchanged aggressive attitudes in its security policy towards the Former Soviet Union.

¹⁷⁶ Nygren, 'Russia's relations with Georgia under Putin. The impact of 11 September' 171.

¹⁷⁷ Antonio Cassese, former President of the International Criminal Tribunal for the former Yugoslavia as cited in C. Waters, 'Pankisi Tension and International Law', *Eurasia Insight* 20 December 2002. <http://www.eurasianet.org/departments/insight/articles/eav122002.shtml>.

II.IIC

Anti-terrorist Policy: the Collective Security Treaty Organization

Already in the 1990s Russia pushed the possibilities of regional security cooperation within the FSU. In 1992, Armenia, Belarus, Kazakhstan, Russia and Tajikistan signed the Collective Security Treaty within the CIS. While economic cooperation within the FSU developed in a reasonably successful way, security cooperation proved more difficult to achieve due to several factors, most notably differences in strength among member states; Russian post-imperial tendencies; lack of political commitment and the emergence of different alliances within the CIS. The CIS thus started as a divided organization with little future prospects, quickly earning it the nickname 'the Commonwealth of Weak States'.¹⁷⁸ After 9/11, Russia tried to elevate pan-FSU security cooperation. Afghanistan had become increasingly problematic during the 1990s, especially after the Taliban ceased power in 1996, but under Putin's presidency, terrorism became the overarching rationale for security cooperation.

The Collective Security Treaty Organization (CSTO) emerged as the pro-Russian re-launch of security cooperation within the CIS, and anti-terrorism was the main pillar of cooperation. However, the organization was based on an unequal relationship and part of the broader aim of preserving the FSU within its sphere of influence. Indicators of this are the configuration of CSTO-troops, CSTO-exercises, the *war of norms* and the *war of bases*. After 2004, with the prolonged Western presence in Central Asia and the democratic revolutions throughout the FSU –which, in the Russian consciousness, were linked - the organization increasingly became part of Russian opposition to Western influence. Despite the fact that the problems blocking CIS integration reverberated throughout the CSTO as well, Russia was able to achieve some tangible results with its coalition of the willing. Efforts were focused on Central Asia as a practical necessity due to the make-up of its membership.

Putin, at the beginning of his presidency, pushed for increased anti-terrorist cooperation, which in 2000 led to the establishment of a CIS anti-terrorist centre. According to Putin,

¹⁷⁸ K. Aliyev, 'The Commonwealth Of Weak States', *RFE/RL Commentary* 2 September 2008. http://www.rferl.org/content/The_Commonwealth_Of_Weak_States/1195654.html.

this was a 'crucial step forward in the fight against religious extremism and terrorism in the post-Soviet sphere'.¹⁷⁹ The 2002 founding of the CSTO added an important tool to Russian anti-terrorist security policy. The organization was to have its own army, budget and secretariat - a revolutionary structure for security or defense cooperation in the FSU. One of the major tasks of the organization was to tackle terrorist organizations. According to the CSTO doctrine, it sought to 'establish favorable and stable conditions for the full development of the States Parties to the Treaty and to ensure their security, sovereignty and territorial integrity',¹⁸⁰ while the CSTO Rapid Reaction Force was to 'deflect military aggression, and carry out special operations against international terrorism and extremism, trans-border crime, and drug trafficking'.¹⁸¹ Half of the Rapid Reaction Forces were to be delivered by Russia. Besides the strong security aspects of the organization, it also comprised defense cooperation, most visibly in chapter III of the doctrine,¹⁸² which reminiscent of NATO states that aggression against one signatory would be perceived as aggression against all signatories. Despite these impressive developments, in practice the situation was less bright.

In the years before the Rapid Reaction Force was implemented in 2009, the member states earmarked forces for participation in CSTO exercises. Since 2002, the Russian military presence in Central Asia has increased by the installation of Russian forces and bases in Central Asia earmarked for the CSTO. In 2002, joint exercises were executed, *Antiterror*, aimed at countering attacks by insurgents like the Islamic Movement of Uzbekistan. Plans were unfolded for the opening of a base at Kant, Kyrgyzstan, and already in the same year Russian aircraft were delivered. In 2003, the new base was opened, a highly symbolic event as it was the first newly opened base abroad with a 'sound legal basis'¹⁸³ since the demise of the Soviet Union. In 2004, the first Rubezh-counterinsurgency operations were held that became a yearly event.

The configuration of Russian forces and bases installed for CSTO cooperation raises questions about what its goals actually were, and how they differed from Russia's unilateral Central Asian presence. The base had to counter land attacks by insurgents of the kind that was quite common in Tajikistan, Uzbekistan and Kyrgyzstan at the

¹⁷⁹ Russian President Putin as quoted in *Nygren, The Rebuilding of Greater Russia* 29.

¹⁸⁰http://untreaty.un.org/unts/144078_158780/5/9/13289.pdf.

¹⁸¹ 'Rapid Reaction Force Adds Military Dimension To CSTO', *RFE/RL News* 4 February 2009.

http://www.rferl.org/content/Rapid_Reaction_Force_Adds_Military_Dimension_To_CSTO/1379324.html.

¹⁸² A. Weinstein, 'Russian Phoenix: The Collective Security Treaty Organization', *The Whitehead Journal of Diplomacy and International Relations* 8 (2007) 167-180 170.

¹⁸³ Russian President Vladimir Putin as quoted in *Nygren, The Rebuilding of Greater Russia* 45

beginning of the millennium. The aircraft at the Kant base had to support the Rapid Deployment Forces of the CSTO. However, according to Central Asia specialist Roy Allison, the Russian troops in Kyrgyzstan and Tajikistan are able to ‘repel air attacks, escort heavy troop-carrying and cargo-planes, and intercept targets over Afghanistan and Pakistan’, while ‘they would not, by contrast, be effective against small groups of insurgents or terrorists in mountainous terrain’.¹⁸⁴

Furthermore, Russian plans for a base in Tajikistan in 1999 and a second base in Kyrgyzstan in 2009 raised questions due to their geographical location and their added value to the goals Russian officials stated for establishing them.¹⁸⁵ In the case of the Tajik base, it remained unclear altogether what official goal the base had to serve, leading the Uzbek president Karimov to ask: ‘If both sides are finding a common language, if all the opposition's armed forces were moved to Tajikistan, if there is no such serious powerful military force in Afghanistan, the question is -- what is the necessity of creating a new military base?’¹⁸⁶ In the case of the Kyrgyz base, according to an official declaration, Russian forces will be charged with ‘protecting Kyrgyz sovereignty’ and repelling attacks by international terrorist groups.¹⁸⁷ The geographical closeness to rebellious Uzbekistan and the geographical distance to Afghanistan, the terrorist core of the region, and the presence of an American base on Kyrgyz soil are all elements that make the true purposes of the bases questionable.

The same goes for the large-scale Russian military exercises in Central Asia. In August 2002, Russia conducted an exercise in the Caspian Sea, with the official scenario of destroying terrorist groups on land and at sea. The exercise was executed in the much disputed energy-rich Caspian Sea on an excessive scale, indicating that it was not only aimed at fighting terrorism, but also at intimidating the Central Asian countries.¹⁸⁸ Both CSTO troop configuration and exercises seem to be aimed at either fighting external invasions or being deployed if one of the Central Asian regimes faces an indigenous threat.

¹⁸⁴ R. Allison, ‘Strategic Reassertion in Russia’s Central Asia Policy’ *International Affairs* 80, 2 (2004) 277-293, 287.

¹⁸⁵ B. Pannier, ‘Tajikistan: Uzbek President Criticizes Proposed Russian Base’, *RFE/RL Tajikistan Service* 9 April 1999. <http://www.rferl.org/content/article/1091030.html>.

¹⁸⁶ Uzbek President Islam Karimov as quoted by B. Pannier, ‘Tajikistan: Uzbek President Criticizes Proposed Russian Base’, *RFE/RL Tajikistan Service* 9 April 1999. <http://www.rferl.org/content/article/1091030.html>.

¹⁸⁷ ‘Russia, Kyrgyzstan Sign Deal At CSTO Summit’, *RFE/RL News* 1 August 2009.

http://www.rferl.org/content/Russia_Kyrgyzstan_Sign_Base_Deal_At_CSTO_Summit/1790351.html.

¹⁸⁸ Baev, ‘Counter-terrorism in Putin’s Regime’, 329.

In the early years of the CSTO it became clear that the organization wanted to cooperate with NATO rather than to try to be a counterweight to it. This corresponds with the attitude of the early Putin years, when anti-terrorism cooperation with America increased Russia's allure. Fear of outside influence continued to be a cause of concern. After 9/11, the possibilities of the Central Asian and South Caucasian countries to conduct a *multi vector* policy had increased significantly as the US and in its wake NATO made strong inroads in the Central Asia and the South Caucasus. However, following the Colour Revolutions in Ukraine, Georgia and Kyrgyzstan between 2003 and 2006 and the accompanying American rhetoric on democratization, preparedness to cooperate with US decreased significantly. Russia filled the void and came to occupy 'a central position in a broad strategy of what can be termed 'authoritarian resistance' to democratization'.¹⁸⁹

Russian Defense Minister Ivanov remarked in December 2002 during surmounting tensions in the Kyrgyz capital of Bishkek that in the event of an attack on Kyrgyzstan (or any other member of the CIS Collective Security Treaty), the air contingent from the Russian air base at Kant would 'fulfill its basic mission' of bombing and destroying the enemy.¹⁹⁰ He even admitted that, when Kyrgyz President Akayev was ousted in a democratic revolution in 2005, 'Russia had been prepared during the uprising unilaterally to airlift troops to Bishkek'.¹⁹¹ While Putin initially approved a short-lived American military stay, he actively opposed longer-lasting American political influence. Right after 9/11 Putin had already initiated a more active Central Asian policy with the founding of the CSTO. In 2005, American forces were expelled from Uzbekistan following Washington's condemnation of Karimov's harsh reprisals after riots had broken out in Andijan. While Western governments and human rights organizations expressed their believe that the riots were the result of domestic political discontent, Russian Duma Speaker Boris Gryzlov expressed the hope that the leadership in Tashkent 'gains control of the situation' and that the organizers of the unrest be punished,¹⁹² while his counterpart of the Russian Federation Council, Sergei Mironov, said that 'The Uzbek authorities took an absolutely pragmatic and logical

¹⁸⁹ Sergei Ivanov as quoted in Allison, 'Strategic Reassertion in Russia's Central Asia Policy' 286

¹⁹⁰ Russian Defense Minister Sergei Ivanov as quoted in *RFE/RL Newslines* 6 December 2002.
<http://www.rferl.org/content/article/1142813.html>

¹⁹¹ Allison, 'Virtual regionalism, regional structures and regime security in Central Asia' 194

¹⁹² Russia's Duma Speaker Boris Gryzlov as quoted in *RFE/RL Newslines* 16 May 2005.
<http://www.rferl.org/content/article/1143399.html>

step' by kicking the Americans out.¹⁹³. Now that the antiterrorist operation in neighboring Afghanistan was over, it was 'time for the Americans to leave Uzbekistan'.¹⁹⁴

After Putin's initial approval of America's presence, he now started to actively oppose it. At a summit of the Russian- and Chinese- dominated Shanghai Cooperation Organization in 2005, the final declaration stated that 'respective members of the antiterrorist coalition set a final timeline for their temporary use of the above-mentioned objects of infrastructure and stay of their military contingent on the territories of the SCO member states'.¹⁹⁵ This presented a clear reversal of Russia's stance, but did not stop the trend of periodical offers of CSTO-support to NATO. The organization at least verbally continued to express a willingness to cooperate with NATO on numerous occasions. This had to present the Russian-led organization as a valuable contributor to the solution of the Afghan problem, and was a tool of Russia's strategy at establishing a multi-polar world, opposing the current American uni-polar world.¹⁹⁶

While Russia achieved some tangible results in security cooperation through the CSTO, development was held back by the unwillingness of some crucial member states, most notably Uzbekistan. The CSTO should be placed in the line of efforts aimed at securing Russia's dominant position in Central Asia. The organization inhibits the goals of fighting threats to Russian national security and preserving a Russian sphere of influence to protect Russian energy interests and enhance Russian Great Power status. We can perceive CSTO cooperation as part of a series of events under Putin's presidency that indicate an increasingly assertive Russian policy. The latest event of the series, the war in Georgia, served to show that 'Russia has returned to the world stage as a responsible state which can defend its citizens',¹⁹⁷ and was followed a year later by the Duma's acceptance of a bill allowing Russia 'to rebuff or prevent an aggression against

¹⁹³ Russia's Federation Council Speaker Sergei Mironov as quoted in *RFE/RL Newline* August 2 005. <http://www.rferl.org/content/article/1143451.html>

¹⁹⁴ Russia's Federation Council Speaker Sergei Mironov as quoted in *RFE/RL Newline* August 2 005. <http://www.rferl.org/content/article/1143451.html>

¹⁹⁵ *RFE/RL Central Asia Report* 14 July 2005. <http://www.rferl.org/content/article/1342122.html>

¹⁹⁶ When NATO organized a SCO-led meeting on Afghanistan on March 27, just days before a NATO-conference in the Hague on the same topic. Russia claims it should be involved on the basis of its proximity, but this proximity is only based on its leverage over the CSTO-countries.

¹⁹⁷ Statement Russian Foreign Minister Sergei Lavrov. http://www.geneva.mid.ru/press/e_2008_31.html.

another state'.¹⁹⁸ The reinvigorated plans for a Central Asian army and bases show the Kremlin's geopolitical approach on security cooperation in the *near abroad*.

Conclusions on Russian Anti-terrorism Cooperation

The Russian war on terror was accompanied by Moscow's efforts to achieve as many benefits to national interest as possible. The Russian *war on terror* came to serve as an excuse and a motivation for an aggressive Russian security policy in the FSU, making it not so much about fighting it as about having it.¹⁹⁹

Putin used anti-terrorism in several facets of his foreign policy. He achieved considerable successes in his first term, but during his second term Russia had lost what credibility it had as a reliable security partner to the West. Russian anti-terrorist policy was shown to be rather narrow in its scope, as it was mainly aimed at the home-grown Chechen civil war and some efforts within the CSTO. While Russia was certainly not the only country to serve a broader range of national interests with its terrorist cooperation, this must not blind us from the aggressive way in which Moscow pursued its national interests in the FSU under the anti-terrorist banner.

The two case studies show that Russia used the threat of unilateral anti-terrorist intervention to pressure governments to act, and to expand Russian control over the *near abroad*. It is highly likely that in the Georgian case, if it had not been for American mediation, large-scale Russian military action would have been executed without the consent of Tbilisi, justified by self-defense against the threat of terrorism. Moscow is the main driving force behind continuing CSTO integration, and it uses the organization as a means to expand its influence in Central Asia and to rebuff influence of other states.

¹⁹⁸ A. Kovalyova, 'New Rules For Rough Play', *Russia Profile* 12 August 2009. <http://www.russiaprofile.org/page.php?pageid=Politics&articleid=a1250096505>.

¹⁹⁹ Baev, 'Counter-terrorism in Putin's Regime' 330.

Conclusions

Between 1992 and 2008 the rationale behind Russian security policy towards the FSU remained largely unchanged. The thesis, 'Between 1992 and 2008, Russian security policy showed strong continuity in the aggressive pursuit of national interest', has been tested positive. Although it has not been the aim of this thesis to give a moral judgment of Russian policy, it is hard to avoid some cynicism. While we must not forget that it is rather common, even *natural* for a state to pursue its national interest in security cooperation, it is the degree of aggression and the lack of consent in the pursuit of national interest through security policy that sets Russia apart.

Russian security policy has been driven by a threefold undercurrent of national interest strongly influenced by its post-imperial complex. Firstly, security policy was used as a tool to generate electoral support and to handle domestic oppositional forces either through appeasement or elimination. Secondly, it served to restore Great Power status through establishing Russia's 'natural' position as the *primus inter pares* of the FSU. Thirdly, security policy towards the FSU had to fight off threats to Russian national security. In fighting these threats, sovereignty and consent of the relevant states were of significantly lesser importance than safeguarding Russian security. Under Yeltsin's presidency as well as under Putin's, threats to Russian national security originating from the FSU have been stressed as being one step away from destroying Russia. This was done in order to justify and generate support at home and in the international community for Russian interventions.

Many western analysts emphasize changes instead of continuity between the Putin and the Yeltsin era, stressing Putin's use of diplomacy, economic tools and more patient stance towards unwilling FSU states as proof of the renewed Russian foreign policy. As I have shown in this thesis, under Putin, the Russian political mindset has not changed. Putin merely adapted Russian foreign policy as a reaction to the incentives presented by changing international and regional military, political and economic factors. Russia's enormous military problems and its ongoing struggle in the North Caucasus, the benefits of being a trustworthy ally to the west, and the increasing importance of Russian energy sources provided the incentives for Putin's shift to a less

blatant security policy. One can refer to these changes as a 'significant evolution' or even a 'radical change' as some analysts have done, but the question is whether this is the logical perspective from which to analyze Russian security policy, since the underlying factors and motivations for Russian security policy remained the same, leading to a continuation in the aggressive pursuit of Russian national interest through security policy. The two main themes in Russian security policy between 1992 and 2008, peacekeeping and anti-terrorism, functioned as security policy banners under which geopolitical goals were to be achieved, while the threats they had to fight were roughly the same: North Caucasian warriors, political instability, disobedient governments and foreign influence. Although this tactic was beneficial to the Russian national interest on the short term, on the longer term it provided a strain, as Moscow's aggressive policies negatively influenced Russian relations with the outer world.

In the closing years of the Bush presidency, with the ongoing but seemingly fruitless anti-terrorist projects in Iraq and Afghanistan, the war on terror seems to be on the verge of losing its all-encompassing position on the international security agenda. In the same period, Russia has quickly lost its image as a reliable partner to the west in security cooperation. It is my expectation that Russian policy will once again mimic developments on the international security agenda, this time steered by the new wind that is blowing out from Barack Obama. With the war in Georgia in August 2008, we are witnessing the prelude of a third period of Russian security policy under Russia's new president Dmitri Medvedev, in which anti-terrorism will be replaced by another policy banner. Research on what this new policy banner will be and on the correspondence between this policy banner and developments in the international community can tell much about the development of Moscow's geopolitical thinking. Such research is critical for understanding Russia's relations with both the FSU and the west.

Like the 1990s, at the closure of the first decade of the new millennium the Russian vision of the world is fundamentally based on *Realpolitik*. Taking this into account, the war in Georgia in August 2008 was a landmark event in Russia's anxious attempt at countering a development Moscow knows it cannot halt over a longer period of time - encroaching foreign influence and a consequent loss of Russia's privileged position in its former imperial territories. The strong undercurrent of geopolitical thinking in

Moscow's political circles diminishes chances for a true hit on the 'reset button' for Russia's relations with the outer world.

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