



NATIONAL DEFENSE UNIVERSITY

STRATEGIC FORUM

INSTITUTE FOR NATIONAL STRATEGIC STUDIES

Number 45, September 1995

Dynamics of Peacekeeping in Georgia

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| Conclusions | Recommendations | Note |

Multilateral Peacekeeping in Abkhazia

Georgia's Abkhazia situation is a characteristic example of post-Cold War intra-state conflicts. The working relations among the various international organizations involved in the UN-sponsored peace operation in Abkhazia are of particular moment.

Relations between the minority Abkhaz and the Georgians--tense for decades--erupted in 1992 in the aftermath of the breakup of the USSR when local Abkhaz authorities attempted to separate from the newly independent Georgia. Resulting developments were complicated if not incited by actions of the Russian Federation, particularly by those of certain military and political elements of the new Russia.

The Abkhazian separatist drive began in 1989, although the Abkhazians themselves numbered less than 97,000 of the nearly half million population of the region. During the Abkhazian unrest in 1992, Georgian military forces entered Abkhazia to restore central government authority. A cease-fire followed on July 27, 1992. But in September, the Abkhazians broke it and defeated the central government troops. When Georgian Head of State Eduard Shevardnadze shortly after that agreed to bring Georgia into the Commonwealth of Independent States, his appeal for CIS (read Russian) assistance was quickly granted. Still, the existence of a *de facto* independent Abkhazia, unrecognized by anyone else, led to the deployment of a complex, multilateral set of peace operations by several international organizations:

- The UN dispatched a number of entrants into the Georgian peacekeeping sweepstakes: a Special Envoy appointed by the Secretary-General; a UN Observer Mission in Georgia (UNOMIG) established by the Security Council; individual UN agencies and programs, notably the UN High Commission for Refugees (UNHCR); and several-single issue special missions (e.g., one for human rights).
- CIS sent a 3,000-man peacekeeping mission to Georgia, mostly Russian troops and a few Tajiks.
- The Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE) formed a resident mission in Georgia that was initially concerned with the South Ossetian situation but more recently has been seeking greater involvement in the Abkhazian situation.
- The Russian Federation (RF) began playing a bilateral role in addition to its major participation in the CIS peacekeeping force.

Key Players Enter the Scene

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In 1992 the UN opened consultations regarding Abkhazia to facilitate political negotiations even as the Russian Federation was fostering political discussions and a tripartite cease-fire agreement. Although the cease-fire collapsed almost immediately, the UN still sent a special mission to Georgia in October and opened a resident UN Mission in Tsibilisi in November. The UN also established a special Inter-Agency Humanitarian Assessment Mission under the leadership of the Department of Humanitarian Affairs in January 1993.

The resident UN Mission in Georgia is composed of several agencies, such as the UN Development Program (UNDP) and the UN High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR). The Mission was not created to deal with the Georgian-Abkhaz political conflict, but in recognition of Georgia's newly independent status. The Mission is therefore charged with normal assistance programs and the particular problems arising from the country's two ethnic conflicts as well.

In May 1993 the Secretary-General appointed the Swiss Ambassador to France as Special Envoy to Georgia responsible for pursuing consultations and negotiations with all the concerned parties in search of a political solution to the conflict. Partially because of these UN efforts, the cease-fire was reestablished in July 1993. Before it collapsed again in September, the UN deployed the advance elements of a military monitoring team to Abkhazia and authorized the creation of the UN Observer Mission to Georgia (UNOMIG). In October, the UN sent another Mission, this time one to look into the human rights situation in Abkhazia.

Meanwhile, in Geneva the Special Envoy initiated the first round of formal negotiations "under the auspices of the UN" on the political issue. The talks, which included representatives of the Russian Federation, OSCE, and UNHCR as well as Georgia and Abkhazia, continued at various venues throughout the winter and early spring, producing in April two documents signed in Moscow by both principal parties: a "Declaration on Measures for a Political Settlement of the Georgian-Abkhaz Conflict" and the "Quadripartite Agreement on Voluntary Return of Refugees and Displaced Persons." These documents requested deployment of a peacekeeping force (to include a Russian contingent) and an expanded mandate for UNOMIG.

As the Security Council considered establishing a peacekeeping force, direct negotiations in Moscow preempted UN action with a new Georgian-Abkhaz cease-fire that included an agreement for a CIS monitoring force. The UN, the CIS, and the RF discussed the relationship between UNOMIG and the CIS peacekeepers. Then, on July 21, the Security Council approved resolution 937 (1994) expanding the mandate of UNOMIG to include monitoring the new cease-fire and observing the CIS peacekeeping force. The peacekeeping force deployed in Abkhazia in June 1994, primarily along the cease-fire line, and remains there to monitor the cease-fire line and help the return of refugees.

The role of the OSCE is more ambiguous. The OSCE has had a resident mission in Georgia since 1993, initially concerned with the South Ossetian separatist problem. In the spring of 1994, however, the OSCE Committee of Senior Officials widened the mandate of its Mission to include the promotion of human rights in the whole of Georgia. It accomplished little until mid-1995 when meetings with Abkhaz authorities began and efforts to launch an active human rights program (with UNDP cooperation) followed.

All these players who entered the Georgia scene with different agendas were encouraged by a desperate Georgian government that, since its own efforts to resolve the problem by military force had failed, turned to outsiders for help--if only to use the international community to inhibit Russian ambitions.

Following the Georgian decision to join the CIS in 1993 and the emergence of the Chechnyan situation in December 1994 (with its obvious implications for Russian policy toward separatist movements), the objectives of Georgia and Russia have become more compatible, and the coordination of programs and policy has improved.

Relations Among International Organizations

All the outside players, including Moscow, have agreed to the following elements of a political settlement:

- Georgian territorial integrity;
- Freedom of refugees and displaced persons to return home;
- A significant degree of autonomy for the Abkhaz people.

The most recent Security Council resolution (993\1995)--the latest of 12 on the Abkhaz situation--attempts to lay out the relationships among the various international actors:

- It expresses satisfaction with "the close cooperation and coordination between UNOMIG and CIS peacekeeping force."
- It extends the mandate of UNOMIG.
- It calls for continued negotiations "under the auspices of the UN with the assistance of the Russian Federation as facilitator, and with the support of the OSCE."
- It encourages cooperation between UNOMIG and the CIS peacekeeping force to provide for the return of refugees.
- It urges governments to contribute funds for humanitarian programs in Abkhazia.

On the ground, there appears to be the following division of labor:

- The UN Special Envoy conducts the negotiations for the political settlement, with the participation and assistance of the RF and the OSCE.
- The CIS monitors the cease-fire, with UNOMIG in turn monitoring the CIS.
- The Russian Federation provides the CIS force (apart from a few Tajiks) and pursues bilateral contacts with the Abkhaz authorities and the Georgian Government.
- The OSCE pursues a parallel consultation process focusing on human rights.
- The UNHCR attempts to arrange the care and return of refugees (both as an independent process and as part of the longer term settlement of the conflict).
- Other UN agencies (WFP, DHA, UNICEF, UNDP) support the peace process while pursuing their regular assistance and development programs.

Despite the Security Council's injunctions, the division of labor between the participants reflects their different agendas:

- The UN's reluctance to take on another problem,
- The Russians' concern with a whole range of national interests in the geographic region they call the "Near Abroad" and their role as putative regional hegemon,
- The OSCE's effort to define its role as the most inclusive European regional organization,
- The UNHCR and other UN specialized agencies' balancing their responsibility toward the formal UN peacekeeping operation with their individual organizational mandates.

Organizational Dynamics

The age-old problem of organizational turf battles is widespread. For example, UNOMIG's Blue Beret officers insist on the purity of their monitoring activities. OSCE, UNHCR, and Russian representatives participate in political negotiations chaired by the Special Envoy while, independently of the peace talks, they concentrate on more limited programs, such as human rights. The CIS force performs its cease-fire duties but carefully avoids taking any action on the refugee problem, while the UNHCR grows increasingly frustrated by its inability to carry out its role--either alone or in cooperation with others. And other UN agencies continue to act as semi-autonomous organizations in their traditional manner. Possibly most important of all, the Special Envoy operates separately from the conditions and activities on the ground in Abkhazia and Georgia.

While the refugee problem is a central question of the political discussions, the UNHCR, OSCE, and the Russians pursue independent negotiations with Abkhaz authorities, which add to the sense of legitimacy (and maybe obduracy). These linked questions are not being negotiated as a comprehensive peace package. If peacekeeping in Cambodia exemplifies one extreme in which all activities (political, military, economic, social, humanitarian) are fully integrated under a single mandate and unified management, the international peacekeeping effort in Georgia-Abkhazia is at the opposite end of the spectrum.

Does Integration Produce Synergism?

The Cambodian experience suggests that integration of the various elements of a complex peacekeeping operation is most conducive to the desired political resolution. Although unity of command may be too rigid a concept for peacekeeping operations, unity of *purpose* is essential. In Georgia, however, the Special Envoy is conducting peace negotiations, while others are concerned with actual refugee and human rights problems, specifically with the maintenance of the cease-fire. In other words, there may be a looming conflict between political and humanitarian objectives, a conflict that has bedeviled many peacekeeping operations, and therefore little unity of purpose.

Questions have also been raised as to the *bona fides* of the CIS, given the predominance of Moscow in that organization. The current relationship in Abkhazia sets a bad precedent if it provides the CIS legitimacy without responsibility. However the CIS is operating in Georgia in response to Georgian Government requests and under a UN mandate. The UN was receptive to a CIS role because of its own limitations, and the CIS was interested in partnership with the UN to obtain legitimacy and funds. The existing arrangement provides the CIS with that legitimacy, if no funds. The CIS monitors the cease-fire (with Russian bilateral pressure on both parties to ensure it holds), while the UN monitors the monitors on behalf of the international community. In fact, after a murky role in the early days of Abkhazian activism, Russia now appears to be performing its limited peacekeeping role responsibly.

If the carrot for the Russians is increased legitimacy and cost sharing, the price is extensive international involvement in, and consequently greater transparency of Russian activity in the "Near Abroad." Abkhazia has become a testing ground for Russian behavior in the "Near Abroad" and for the *bona fides* of the CIS as a legitimate regional organization. The model, of course, is the United States role in the UN Observer Mission in Haiti.

On a broader level, the Russian government claims to be searching for a new relationship with its much smaller neighbors and argues that the overwhelming role of Russia in the CIS and in the peace-keeping force is only a temporary reflection of the current capabilities of CIS members. By searching for a more

prominent niche, the OSCE is abetting the CIS quest for legitimacy. Unfortunately, however, the peace process appears stalled. Although the Abkhazians continue to participate, they deny the principle of Georgian territorial integrity and continue to obstruct movement on the refugee question.

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INTERNET DOCUMENT INFORMATION FORM

A . Report Title: Dynamics of Peacekeeping in Georgia

B. DATE Report Downloaded From the Internet: 10/01/01

**C. Report's Point of Contact: (Name, Organization, Address, Office
Symbol, & Ph #): National Defense University Press
Institute for National Strategic Studies
Washington, DC 20001**

D. Currently Applicable Classification Level: Unclassified

E. Distribution Statement A: Approved for Public Release

**F. The foregoing information was compiled and provided by:
DTIC-OCA, Initials: __VM__ Preparation Date 10/01/01**

The foregoing information should exactly correspond to the Title, Report Number, and the Date on the accompanying report document. If there are mismatches, or other questions, contact the above OCA Representative for resolution.