

Part II

MODERN THEORY AND PRACTICE OF PEACE OPERATIONS

Peace Support Activities of the CIS and the Role of the Staff for the Coordination of Military Cooperation of the CIS Member States

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The Commonwealth of Independent States, led by Russia, was compelled, literally from the moment of its formation, to prevent and resolve conflicts on the territory of Member States and near to their borders, thereby guaranteeing the military-political stability of their own homelands and not because of mythical the consolidation of «Russia's imperial ambitions».

The peace support activities of the CIS were dependent on the challenges of that time, threats to the collective security of the Commonwealth and the security of each individual Member State.

These threats are well-known. Above all are the "hot-spots", the establishing of the CIS out of the Soviet Union and the complicated process of creating nation-states in former-Soviet Republics, in which were revealed a high degree of aggressive extremism, as well as national and religious intolerance, for example in: Tajikistan; Abkhazia and South Ossetia, Georgia; Transdnestria, the Republic of Moldova; Nagorny Karabakh; the Republic of Azerbaijan and the North Caucasus.

To this day, they have been the bane of the people of the Commonwealth.

These threats forced the Commonwealth to urgently develop a normative-legal base for peace support activities, practically at the same time as the launching of peacekeeping operations, while simultaneously becoming proficient in the theory and practical realization of all aspects of conflict prevention and resolution, and at the same time adapting the experience of the international community to our specific circumstances.

The Staff for the Coordination of Military Cooperation is an inter-state permanently functioning organ of the Council of Ministers of Defence of the CIS Member States and intended to assist the development of all aspects of military cooperation of the Commonwealth States and the coordination of their activities in fulfilling the resolutions of the Council of Heads of State, the Council of Heads of Government and the Council of Ministers of Defence in this area.

In the last ten years the peace support activities of the Commonwealth as a whole, and of each state within the Commonwealth, have not been as well renowned as those of UN, but its achievements so far have been highly significant and tangible.

Considering the military aspects of peace support activities of the CIS States it is possible to subdivide these efforts on the following categories:

- Firstly, the combined activities of the CIS Members in the resolution of conflicts based on the decisions of the Council of Heads of States of the CIS and carried out under the operational command of the Council of Ministers of Defence and the Staff for the Coordination of Military Cooperation. This system has already been in operation for more than 8 years in peacekeeping missions in Abkhazia, Georgia and until September 2000 in the Republic of Tajikistan;
- Secondly, peacekeeping operations are carried out on the territories of the CIS Members based on bi-, tri- or multilateral inter-state accords. Operations such as this were carried out by the Russian Federation and the Republic of Moldova with the participation of military observers from the Ukraine in the Transdnestria region;

- The participation of military contingents and military observers from Commonwealth States in operations carried out by the UN and OSCE, and also other international organizations under their aegis (in former Yugoslavia, Sierra Leone, Lebanon, Bosnia-Herzegovina and Kosovo). Military observers from the CIS States take part in UN and OSCE Missions in many regions of the world;
- Another type of peace support activities covers joint operational and combat training for peace support activities, carried out with the participation of the CIS States according to a plan put together by the Council of Ministers of Defence and the Staff for the Coordination of Military Cooperation of the CIS and also according to the NATO program "Partnership for Peace" with the aim of heightening the levels of readiness of the organs of government, troops and forces to achieve peace support objectives.

However, the most important Commonwealth activities in preventing and resolving conflicts are peace support missions on the territories of the Member States.

To this end a fundamental normative-legal base was created for peace support activities of the CIS in a sufficiently short time (1992-1996) thanks to the task-orientated and active joint participation of the top leadership, foreign policy and the military departments of the Member States and inter-state organs of the Commonwealth. It is based on the UN Charter, general principles and norms of international law, the decisions of the UN Security Council and OSCE documents.

It is possible to divide the relative documents which regulate Commonwealth peace support activities into three groups:

1. Fundamental documents defining the strategy for peace support activities in the CIS. The CIS Charter adopted in January 1993 and the Concept of Prevention and Resolution of Conflicts on the Territory of CIS Member States (1996).

The CIS Charter defines the mechanism of mutual consultation between states in the event of a conflict starting, the order of procedures in resolving it, and also accepting how the objectives should be achieved with the participation of willing states.

The general approaches of the Commonwealth States to peace-keeping, the resolution of conflicts and joint actions to resolve

arguments and disagreements are consolidated in above mentioned Concept

2. Documents regulating the military aspects of peace support, the training and use of collective forces in peacekeeping and groups of military observers and the guidance of their activities.

The fundamental document in this group is the Status of Collective Peacekeeping Forces in the CIS (1996). It expands and develops on a significant amount of agreements, protocols, conditions, directions, the leadership, programs and strategy.

3. Finally, documents concerning specific peacekeeping operations on the territory of Commonwealth States. Decisions by the Council of the Heads of State about launching an operation, extending its timeframe, appointing commanders and specifications of Mandates of the Collective Peacekeeping Forces and also other documents included in the third group.

Consequently it may be noted that a significant part of the documents regulating peace support activities in the CIS were developed by the Staff for the Coordination of Military Cooperation of the CIS or with the active participation of its generals and officers.

Now let's move on from the theory to the practice of peace support activities.

Four peacekeeping operations utilizing military contingents from Commonwealth States have been carried out in the Post-Soviet territories.

In our opinion, despite sometimes negative assessments by experts, politicians and analysts, Commonwealth operations (in the Republic of Tajikistan, and Abkhazia, Georgia) and operations of CIS Member States (in South Ossetia, Georgia; Transdnestria, the Republic of Moldova) are examples of unique types peace support operations in resolving specific conflicts which have their own particular features.

All operations on CIS territories are in their own way unique. Speaking of these features, distinguishing them from the classic UN peacekeeping operations, it is worth mentioning that these traits are frequently predetermined by the specific conditions of intra-state armed conflicts and correspond fully to the

fundamental tendencies of the evolution of modern peace support.

The operation in Tajikistan was launched following an appeal from only one of the conflicting parties, the Government of the Republic, in order to guarantee the ceasefire agreement, which is not characteristic to inter-state conflicts. In this operation no demarcation line was drawn between the conflicting parties, there was no security zone and no arms limitations and control since the conflict had involved practically all territories of the country.

The presence of representatives of the conflicting sides in South Ossetia and Transdnestria as part of the peace support contingent formally contradicted to the principles of peace support.

The lack of the necessary financial and material means of the Commonwealth presupposes that the Russian Federation has to take part in the operations. Russia is obliged to take the fundamental task upon itself since at the moment no one else can.

However, at the same time, no operation has been carried out beyond the borders of the Commonwealth and none of them have been of a coercive nature; in these operations the limits of necessary use of force have not been exceeded. Their distinguishing feature is close cooperation with the structures of the UN and the OSCE, which launched parallel operations in each of the conflicts zones of the Commonwealth, or with its members coordinating the Observer Missions of the UN and OSCE .

The activities of military contingents of the CIS States in the operations mentioned above have been wholly legitimate and, without question, successful.

In order to display in more detail those catastrophes which were halted by the joint activities of the CIS States, it should be reminded that according to UN figures, as a result of the inter-Tajik confrontation alone, more than 50,000 people died and around a million became refugees and displaced persons. One may only guess how tragic the events would have been and how much more destructive for Tajikistan and the Tajik people it would have been if the conflict had not been resolved.

Peace support forces in every operation fulfilled their main objectives: the separation of the conflicting parties, preventing any

further mass bloodshed and securing the conditions for the political resolution of the conflicts and post-conflict peace-building.

These results seem indisputable.

But it does not mean that in the sphere of peace support the Commonwealth does not have any unresolved problems which decrease its effectiveness. Undoubtedly, they lay in its multi-systematic character: international laws, military-political, financial-economic of varying importance and difficulty, and perspectives of resolution. Work to overcome these problems and search for more modern methods and mechanisms of preventing and resolving conflicts in the CIS are currently underway.

Now, many aspects of peacekeeping operations on the territories of the CIS are contributing to the theory and practice of international peace support and may be of real use to the international community.

The Commonwealth of Independent States in its peace support activities has not displayed a yearning for self-isolation; it is looking to play a significant part in the UN, OSCE and other international organizations in the resolution of conflicts on the territories of the CIS, which threaten not only regional but global security.

The development of cooperation in the sphere of peace support in a Russia-NATO format and within the boundaries of the NATO "Partnership for Peace" program could mean the additional cooperation of military structures of the CIS and NATO in exchanging their experiences in the resolution of conflicts, the formation and training of multi-national peace support contingents and the carrying out of operational and combat training.

During the ten year existence of the CIS, peace support activities have played a significant role in the increasingly complicated and intricate system of relations between states in the Commonwealth.

In the opinion of the Heads of States and Heads of Governments of the Commonwealth¹, in the last ten years the Staff as an active organ of the Council of Ministers of Defence of CIS Member States, has fulfilled its functions and contributed to the resolution of a spectrum of peace support problems.