

Use of Force in Resolving Military Conflicts: Ways to Increase Efficiency

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During the last 15 years Russian Federation has gained the experience of using force in peace-keeping operations at the post-Soviet space, in Yugoslavia and in the course of the anti-terrorist operation in the North Caucasus.

The transformation from the bi-polar to a uni-polar international system and the end of the ideological confrontation between the East and the West made the world safer on macro-level, but at the same time revitalized the lower level conflicts. Internal conflicts, initiated by ethnic groups in order to change their political, cultural, religious, linguistic, etc. status developed in the Soviet Union and then at the post-Soviet space.

The most important features of such conflicts are the high speed of their latent phase, and their quick transformation into military clashes, as it happened in Tajikistan, Nagorno-Karabakh, Georgia (Abkhazia and South Ossetia), and in Moldova (Transnistria). As estimated, at least four of these conflicts resulted in 10 thousand of victims each, which has made the post-Soviet conflicts comparable to the gravest conflicts in the rest of the world in 1980–1990-s. Because of the high intensity of these conflicts (about 15% of military conflicts per 6% of the population), the CIS can be considered as one of the most dangerous and instable places in the world¹.

The CIS Member States apply various methods for the purposes of conflict resolution and for the protection of their vital national interests. Among these, military power plays a special role. As a last resort, it still remains the most efficient instrument of politics. Of course, political, economic, etc. instruments are the

¹ Ремарчук В.Н. Некоторые аспекты использования армии в урегулировании конфликтов в постсоветском пространстве. www.nns.ru/analytdoc/konf.html 1997.

priority for the conflict resolution. As the ancient Chinese military thinker, Sun Tzu, puts it, "The best way of war is to ruin the enemy's plans, then to ruin his alliances, and only often then to destroy his army".²

This rule could well be applied to the CIS and Russia nowadays. One should neither prioritize, nor ignore military power as a conflict resolution instrument. Military power should be used in the course of the armed conflicts resolution only as an exceptional measure, when all other possibilities to transform the conflict from an armed clash into a peaceful dialogue are exhausted. In this context, the structure, the functions and the role of the military power could be defined as follows.

Military Force — the capacity of a State to influence politically other State and/or system of international relations by direct or indirect use of military violence, and to successfully wage war (armed struggle). In the narrow sense, Military Force includes Armed Forces, other troops, military bodies and formations, etc.

S T R U C T U R E

Armed Forces, Other troops, military bodies and formations are the elements of the political structure of the society, and the basic means to achieve political goals of the armed struggle. They are the basic elements of the military power.

Military economics satisfies material needs of the armed forces, and gives a State the ability to be engaged in military struggle.

Science and technology gives a State the ability to equip the armed forces with the most advanced military hardware.

Morale represents the ability of the society and its military structure to go through the war trials, and to achieve political goals of the war

² Сунь-Цзы. Трактаты о военном искусстве/Пер. с кит. М., ООО «Издательство АСТ»; СПб., Terra Fantastica, 2002. — с. 558.

F U N C T I O N S:

- Shaping of a desirable power balance on the global and/or regional levels;
- Maintaining the stability and/or destabilising the situation on the global and/or regional levels;
- Exerting political pressure;
- Economic confrontation (arms race);
- Repelling an aggression, defeating an aggressor.



A p p l i c a t i o n

Direct military violence

Aggressive and defensive wars (global, regional, local, etc.) and military conflicts (military actions, revolts, coups, military terror, etc.), and also peace enforcement operations

Indirect military violence

Threat of using force to achieve defensive (strategic deterrence) and offensive (threatening) goals, by demonstration of military power and readiness to use the military power, and also to conduct peace support operations

Hidden military violence

Involvement of other States into the military politics of a Leader State by means of alliances and partnership relations; arms sales and deployment of arms on the territories of other States; military assistance; construction of military objects on the territory of other States; development of military infrastructure of other States; transfer of military technologies, etc.

Thus the military power can be viewed as a guarantee of national independence, giving the freedom of choice in political decision making, and also as an ultimate means to deter the military threat, if the peaceful means has not worked properly.

The ability of a State to effectively use armed forces for the purpose of conflicts resolution is not only military, but also political instrument to advance its geo-political interests.

At present Russia and its Armed Forces play the main role in the peace support operations at the post-Soviet territories. The CIS Member States would often only declare their intention to participate in an operation. The peace support operation in Abkhazia, conducted under the CIS aegis, in which de facto only Russia participates, is a good example. This is one of the most complicated peace support operations run by the Russian peacekeeping force at the CIS territory, which started in July 1994. By that time the Georgia/Abkhazia conflict had entered into chronic phase.

Official Moscow maintained the neutrality in the course of the conflict, blaming the human rights violations, and introducing sanctions against both parties at war.

The deployment of the peacekeeping force was preceded by the lengthy preparatory phase. Both sides agreed to ceasefire. Russia insisted that the UN agreed on the status of this operation as the CIS peace support operation. The UN peacekeeping mandate was elaborated in detail, and the area of the operation was limited to the Gali region of Abkhazia adjacent to inner parts of Georgia. The UN observers were supposed to monitor the situation in the conflict zone. After all other details were agreed upon by June 26, 1994, the Russian peacekeepers entered Abkhazia.

During the first months of the operation joint battalions of the Batumi and Akhalkalaki Divisions of the Russian Army also entered the zone of the conflict. Local residents, including citizens of Georgia, have been recruited by these military units (now military bases).

As a result, the following scheme of the peacekeeping force deployment was adopted. Three battalions were deployed on the territory of Abkhazia, and one battalion in Mingrelia, in the city of Zugdidi, neighboring Abkhazia. The Commander of the force and

the headquarters were deployed in Sokhumi, Deputy Commanders — in Zugdidi and Gali (in Abkhazia). The primary task of the Russian force was to separate parties at war and to set up checkpoints at the river of Inguri, which has become the demarcation line. Within the short period of time, the peacekeeping force established control over the key bridges and fords, although the groups of Georgian and Abkhaz militants still cross the river from time to time disturbing the population.

The next task of the peacekeeping force was to demilitarize the Kodor Gorge, the last area of Abkhazia, populated by Georgian Svans and controlled by the government of Georgia. After the long period of negotiations, the level of confrontation was decreased, the parties at war were separated, and heavy weapons were removed from their arsenals. Although it was not possible to totally de-militarize the Gorge, the intensity of shootouts decreased substantially.

The peacekeeping force also launched large scale de-mining operations, thus enabling population of Abkhazia to start farming. Mine clearance was complicated by the absence of mining maps, but within the first month of the operation the peacekeeping force cleared a 12 kilometers wide area within their zone of responsibility. The peacekeeping force established control over the Inguri hydroelectric power station, which provided electricity for the whole region.

The peacekeepers failed to achieve the goal, which was very important for Georgia, i.e. the return of the refugees. Many in Georgia interpreted the peacekeeping agreement as an obligation of Russia to bring back refugees by force, although the Russian forces were only to provide for security of the returning refugees. The authorities of Abkhazia did their best to prevent refugees from returning to the Gali district.

The operation had been criticized from the very beginning for the absence of political functions of the peacekeepers in the zone of their control. The Georgian side first thought the peacekeepers were able to bring back to it political control over the territory of Abkhazia, but from spring 1995 it started to demand the police functions for the peacekeepers.

Authorities of Abkhazia continuously insist on drastic reduction of the peacekeepers' functions. They think that the law enforcement bodies of the Republic should protect the local population, including those Georgian refugees who come back, from criminal elements.

At present, the scenarios of possible developments in Abkhazia and Georgia could be summarized in the Table, as follows:

Table 1

Scenarios of possible developments	Reaction of Abkhaz leadership	Reaction of Georgia leadership	Reaction of peacekeeping force
Total independence of Abkhazia	positive	negative	negative
Abkhazia remains as a part of Georgia	negative	positive	negative
Autonomy of Abkhazia and its partial reintegration with Georgia	negative	positive/ /negative	positive

It is obvious that none of the scenarios mentioned above, is acceptable for all sides of the conflict. The military participants of this peace support operation think that any action disturbing the fragile peace could again provoke the armed conflict. It will take quite a time to reach resolution of the conflict more or less acceptable for all participants.

Martti Ahtisaari, former President of Finland, comments on the resolution of the conflict in the Balkans, similar to the Georgia/Abkhazia conflict, as follows:

"I always compare the situation in the Balkans to what we have learnt in other regions of Europe. Take the unification of Germany as an example. My German friends were telling me during the unification that this process would demand a generational change. But I have met people dealing with these problems recently, and they said it would take at least two generations. This is not only a matter of administrative decisions, but also a mental and psychological process. If they need two generations for this

in Germany, they will definitely need more time in the Balkans»³.

To conclude, as far as the CIS is ready to maintain its presence in Abkhazia, one can set up short-term practical goals and develop peaceful conflict resolution.

Various conflict situations in the world and at the post-Soviet space in particular, require a differentiated approach to each of the conflicts, for planning, preparation and implementation of the peace support operations.

To separate parties at war is not enough, and it is necessary to increase multi-functionality and to raise efficiency of a peace support operation. In this context broad interpretation of peace-building is required, including restoration of the peaceful life in the conflict zones, from recreation of statehood to school education⁴.

Although it is understood that mandates of the peace support operations are the result of the compromise of parties at war, these mandates should be more precise. Security of the population, normal condition of people's life, inter-ethnic peace and reconciliation, etc. are the key pre-requisites for the solution of the main problems of peace-keeping.

It is important to analyze the whole chain of interconnections in the process of a peace support operation. To increase the efficiency of peacekeeping, one should comprehend the complex nature of the armed conflicts resolution, which is a system of the more simple operations, being its structure elements. These simple operations include:

- Defining of political and military goals of a peace support operation;
- Timely political decision making regarding the use of force;
- Time for the preparation of the peacekeeping force for the armed conflict resolution;
- Amount of military force required for the conflict resolution;
- Possible damage to the local population, economy and the environment, and possible losses of the personnel and military hardware in the course of the conflict resolution;

³ НАТО Вестник: Мартти Ахтисаари — международный примиритель/По ред. К. Беннета., НАТО, Бельгия, — 2001., -№ 49., с. 24 — 25.

⁴ См.: Чубаненко Ю. «Голубые каски» меняют ориентацию. ООН разрабатывает новую концепцию миротворчества//«Коммерсант». № 156. 24 августа 2000.

- Financial and material resources necessary for the implementation of the operation.

To increase efficiency of a peace support operation, timely decision and strong political will of a decision-making body (UN Security Council, OSCE, CIS Council of the Heads of State, etc.), is needed. Peacekeeping forces should have clear, justified and realistic tasks, which is not less important.

The efficiency of a peace support operation depends on the following:

- If the scale and complexity of the armed conflict are wrongly estimated, the conflict could come out of control;
- The UN and/or CIS peacekeeping mandate should provide for substantial responsibilities and amount of military force enough to localize the conflict.

The initial periods of the peace support operations in Tajikistan, Transnistria, Abkhazia, North Ossetia, Chechnya, Yugoslavia, etc., give the examples of the situations coming out of control, because the amount of military force did not match the scale and intensity of the conflicts, as mentioned.

Analysis of the key stages of the conflict should define the goals and methods of the conflict resolution. They should be defined in accordance with their specific details, i.e.: the first stage is the initiation of the conflict; the second — escalation; the third — the beginning of combat actions; the fourth — crisis; the fifth — military actions/conflict resolution. Peace-building could be considered as a separate, sixth stage⁵.

This taxonomy is of a conditional nature. The case of Yugoslavia shows that the peaceful conflict resolution was still possible during the fifth stage, when the military actions started.

The analysis of the conflict resolution shows that the peaceful means usually cover the first three stages. Force, as a means of deterrence, could also be used during the first and second stages of the conflict. The preliminary and actual use of force starts from the third stage.

⁵ Барынькин В.М. Оценка эффективности мер по разрешению военных конфликтов на ранних фазах их развития//Военная мысль. — 1996. — №, с. 2–9.

Each of the stages of the conflict resolution should have its own goals and objectives, plan of implementation, budget and resources estimation, calculation of the force structure, expected results and possible consequences, etc.

The scenario for each stage of the conflict resolution should include the options of the escalation and the peaceful solution, as well as the pre-conditions to achieve the goals of the next stage. Such kind of planning should be done by the central body of the conflict resolution and by the regional structures of operative command and control, with their own command and monitoring systems.

The practical importance of such an approach lies in the real possibility to put the armed conflict resolution under control during each stage of the conflict, as described, and to apply the peaceful means for the de-escalation of the conflict.

One could agree with the experts, who suggest that the efficiency of a peace support operations should be measured by the ability of the Collective Peace Support Force to timely reach its goals and objectives, considering human losses suffered and financial and material resources spent⁶.

To estimate the efficiency of peacekeeping force, the criteria of efficiency should be defined. To put it systematically, the criteria should be divided into two separate groups. The first is to estimate the preparation of the operation. It includes the following:

- The timely political decision-making;
- The quality of the Collective Peace Support Force training;
- The delivery of comprehensive resources;
- The actions of the parties at war and their readiness for the peaceful solution;
- The timely deployment of the peacekeeping force in the zone of the conflict.

The second group of criteria includes the following:

- The ability to reach the goals of the operation;
- The implementation by the peacekeeping force of the tasks assigned;

⁶ Основные термины и понятия коллективной безопасности миротворческой деятельности для государств-участников СНГ/Штаб по координации военного сотрудничества государств-участников СНГ. М., 1995. С.13.

- The time period of the operation;
- The material and environmental losses;
- Complete human losses of the peacekeeping force;
- Spending of financial and material resources, etc.

Other factors, which are not easy to define, could also influence the operation. They include information sharing with local authorities; readiness of the local population to co-operate with the peacekeeping force; overcoming language barriers; respect for national and local traditions; weather conditions; timely planning of the operation; co-operation, co-ordination, and chain of command; refugees and victims among the local population; the presence of nuclear and chemical sites in the zone of the conflict, etc.

The ability to reach the goals assigned is the key criteria of the efficiency of a peace support operation. The operation should be considered as effective, if 90-100% of the goals are met, partially effective, if 80 — 90% of the goals are met, and non-effective, if less than 80% of the goals are met.

The new approaches to the resolution of actual and potential conflicts on the global and regional levels should consider economic, social, demographic, political, etc. factors of instability. The key initial pre-requisites on the global level are the analysis and prognosis of the development of the key civilizations; the creation of a system of indicators; the analysis of the indicators selected; economic and mathematical modeling of conflict and stability management; identification of the regions, especially at the cross-border of different civilizations, in which local conflicts could emerge⁷.

The system of indicators should be designed in view of various groups of factors, which include macro-economy; demography; resources; military potential; ethnic and religious characteristics, etc.

Increase of military spending could indicate the growth of instability. One should carefully watch the dynamics of the military potential of the neighboring states. One should predict the

⁷ Варшавский А.Е., Варшавский Л.Е. Конфликты на глобальном и локальном уровнях: экономико-математические методы и модели исследования стабильности. М.: ЦЭМИ РАН, фонд стратегических приоритетов, 1995, 55 с.

moment of potential break of stability by defining the period of equalizing of the military spending of neighboring states.

As for criteria of ethnic and religious differences, one should consider that at present nearly all of the New Independent States are heterogeneous. Quota of various ethnic and religious groups within the total population of a country could be used as criteria of ethnic and religious differences in various civilizations.

Complex analysis of indicators for the neighboring states, as described, could help to define the dynamics of stability on the global level. It can also be effective for predicting the probability of emerging local conflicts.

The conflict resolution at the post-Soviet space displayed the clash of the two approaches among Russian political and military establishment to peace support operations:

- diplomatic, when a peacekeeping force is being used to solidify the results of negotiations;
- and the use of force per se, based on purely military resolution of a conflict.

The latter presumes the use of a peacekeeping force as a matter of common sense, sometimes beyond the legal limits of a peacekeeping mandate.

The second approach seems more natural for Russian public leaders, who came to power during the collapse of the Soviet system. Though being of democratic nature, this transformation produced a new negative behavioral stereotype in Russia, i.e. ignoring of legal norms and principles for the purpose of reaching a practical result.

From this viewpoint, the peacekeeping policies of the two Deputy Ministers of Defense, Boris Gromov and Georgy Kondratyev, reflect not only differences in their personal perception of peacekeeping, but rather certain periods of Russian political life. Colonel-General Gromov, the former commander of the Soviet troops in Afghanistan, who was considered to be the advocate using force by peacekeepers, in fact denied the use of force as a means to stop the armed conflict: «Combat units, authorized to separate the parties at war by force, find themselves in the situation, in which they have to fight each of these sides, and to

become an enemy for the both. In practical terms, they take a side and de facto lose their peacekeeping status»⁸. General Kondratyev, who normally advocated compromise solutions for the parties at war, was ready to use force to make the authorities of Abkhazia agree with the return of Georgian refugees.

The analysis of the conflict resolution and peace support operations gives the key approaches to solution of some of the peacekeeping problems, and justifies the necessity of a joint command and control body, able to generate and to implement the strategic concept of the Russian peacekeeping, training of the peacekeeping force, etc.⁹

A certain organ or structure could be created within or by the Presidential Administration, with the following functions assigned to it:

1. Monitoring and analysis of the conflict situations, expert advice for the political and military decision-makers.
2. Elaboration of the strategic concept and/or doctrine of the Russian peacekeeping.
3. Compliance of the Russian view of peacekeeping and the legislation with international norms and standards.
4. Advising the President of Russia on Russia's participation in peace support operations.
5. Introduction of Peacekeeping studies as a state-authorized teaching course.

Various conflict situations in the different regions of the globe require an individual approach to planning, preparation and implementation of peace support operations. The efficiency of the operations will depend on a coherent approach by the global community, and its readiness to act for the purposes of international peace and security.

To conclude, the analysis of effective use of force in peace support operations is a kind of applied research. Despite various ways of modeling conflict prevention, crisis management and post-conflict peace-building, the main problem of building new world order, i.e. the ratio of forced and peaceful methods of effectively resolving armed conflicts, still remains unaddressed.

⁸ Interview by General Boris Gromov to «Krasnaya Zvezda», 27 November 1993 г.

⁹ Лавров С. Инициативная записка//Военный дипломат. Апрель. 2003, с. 42-45.