

**NATO-RUSSIA COOPERATION IN PEACEKEEPING
OPERATIONS: FUTURE PROSPECTS OF
INTEROPERABILITY IN RUSSIAN DEFENSE REFORM**

Yuri SERDYUK¹

Since the collapse of the USSR and the end of the Cold War, NATO-Russia cooperation marks an important step towards a more stable, secure world. Joint Peacekeeping Operations (PKOs) have become increasingly important and valuable for both sides, even in March 1999, when the NATO air strikes against Yugoslavia started and almost all Russia-NATO bilateral activities were frozen. Russian units and servicemen worked together with NATO in Bosnia-Herzegovina and Kosovo (Serbia and Montenegro) until mid-summer 2003.

Peacekeeping policies in both Russia and NATO still vary. Though both worked together in Bosnia and Kosovo peacekeeping operations, national concepts of operations and political aims were different. Another negative aspect of the joint Russia-NATO operations is the very low level of interoperability. Russian units integrated into the NATO structure could not cooperate efficiently with NATO troops, as both NATO and Russian servicemen had different visions of what the operation aimed to achieve. The training of participants, as well as command and control systems in the same operation, differed. Supply and maintenance services for the Russian units became a serious burden for the budget, as non-NATO standards for Russian arms and ammunition demanded extra spending, an expense ultimately covered by Russia.

¹ Colonel Yuri Serdyuk (Russian Army), NATO-Russia Fellow at NATO Defense College, Rome (September 2004 to February 2005).

Presently, both NATO and Russian Armed Forces are in the process of transformation, the Partnership has developed and peacekeeping has become key to our cooperation. This activity still needs to develop, and programs should be founded upon a more scientific base, taking into account past errors. The “*Generic Concept of Joint NATO-Russian Peacekeeping Operations*” could form the general basis for this type of cooperation. In this concept we propose some basic definitions, both in English and Russian, which can be used for the development of the NATO-Russia joint peacekeeping doctrine as well as other military or political documentation.

There is an urgent need to improve the chance of reaching international consensus on the issue of terminology and joint doctrines, a matter which has deeply divided those involved in peacekeeping to date. It is essential to distinguish between situations in which a state or a group of states, as well as international unions, claim to act in self-defense; situations in which an international actor is posing a threat to those beyond its borders; and situations in which the threat is primarily internal and the state is trying to protect its own people. In all cases the only yardstick for measuring the legitimacy of action is the UN Charter, and in particular Article 51 (without any extension or restriction of its long-understood scope). A set of guidelines – five criteria of legitimacy – should always be addressed in considering whether to authorize or apply military force: seriousness of threat; adequate purpose; last resort; proportional means; and consequences.

Other major issues also arise during and after violent conflict, including the need for peace enforcement, peacekeeping and peace-building. NATO and other international actors have to be much more forthcoming in providing and supporting deployable military resources for peacekeeping operations. An effective, efficient and equitable, international, collective security system requires strong commitment.

The foreign policy of the Russian Federation is directed in various key directions, the main goal being to achieve military security for Russia by ensuring that the country reacts appropriately to threats. Assisting in settling conflicts, including peacekeeping activities, under

the aegis of the UN and other international organizations, and strengthening the key mechanisms of multinational security, are among the highest priorities of Russia's present political leaders.

Russian military reform started soon after the fragmentation of what used to be the Soviet Union, when Russian Armed Forces became involved in a number of internal conflicts in post-Soviet countries (Georgia, Moldavia and Tajikistan). According to the "*Basic Principles of Military Doctrine of the Russian Federation*" of 1993, as well as "*The Military Doctrine*" of 2000, peacekeeping operations became one of the main tasks for the Armed Forces of the RF in times of peace. More attention has been paid to the problems of maintaining peace and security, not only in Russia and the countries of the Commonwealth of Independent States (CIS), but all around the world. Russian peacekeeping troops have become better equipped and trained since the beginning of their work in UNPROFOR (1992). New organs of control and cooperation in the Russian Army have been founded to maintain the forces in the field.

There were attempts to establish separate military formations and units in the Russian Armed Forces in the 1990s. Three Army divisions (101st, 27th and 45th Mechanized Rifle Divisions), as well as some separate Army units and the Airborne Troops actively participated in peacekeeping operations. They were selected for participation in CIS, UN and NATO-led peace support missions for two main reasons: a) their air and ground transportability, and b) the troops were among the best Russian stand-by military formations and units. Initially Russian soldiers and their commanding officers had little peacekeeping experience; the troops however did their best to fulfill assigned tasks. Our Western partners noticed the adaptability and flexibility of the Russian military during joint peacekeeping operations, as well as their high level professional skills and their dedication.

During the late 1990s/early 2000s, the Russian military paid more attention to the development of theoretical aspects of peace support operations. Military and political analysts and scholars in Russia studied different aspects of conflict management and peacekeeping. Their studies were based on the evaluation and analysis of the initial Russian

NATO DEFENSE COLLEGE
COLLEGE DE DEFENSE DE L'OTAN

peacekeeping operations and the comparative study and analysis of the Western academic and political points of view on this subject. It is important to notice that Russian ideas on peacekeeping and the conclusions of our theorists can differ greatly from those of their Western counterparts.

A separate peacekeeping brigade was established in the military district of the Volga-Urals on 1 February 2005, made up of three motorized rifle battalions, a reconnaissance battalion, and various support units. The brigade is a fully autonomous formation, capable of accomplishing independent missions, and will be involved in the NATO-Russia operational compatibility program. Its mission will be multifold. The first Russian Peacekeeping Brigade was inadequate for Russian requirements and was only suitable for the PKOs inside the CIS, therefore additional units and personnel from non-‘peacekeeping’ formations and military units will be deployed as peacekeepers. The Brigade could become a center for wider peacekeeping training for Russian troops and servicemen from other CIS countries.

One of the most demanding aspects of Russia-NATO cooperation in the field is for troops to fulfill joint tasks in order to achieve the same objective. Acquainting the Russian Armed Forces with NATO’s common procedures will help Russian troops work effectively together with NATO partners (both with and within NATO-led structures). Such developments will also help NATO and Russian servicemen develop like-minded attitudes that will in turn have positive political effects.

Interoperability is defined as “the ability of systems, units or forces to provide services from other systems, units, or forces and to use the services exchanged to enable them to operate effectively together.” To be interoperable, NATO and Russian armed forces should be actively engaged in the ongoing process of ensuring that all respective military and political systems, procedures and cultures are managed in such a way as to maximize opportunities for their joint use. Before using troops for joint peace support operations NATO and Russian politicians and military should conduct facilities for:

- *Political and human interoperability* – it should be clear for every participant what political aims have arisen and what means are available to reach the target. Roles, responsibility and coordination between cooperators have also to be clarified. Training of personnel involved is also essential.
- *Conceptual and semantic interoperability* – joint NATO-Russia concept of peacekeeping should be developed. Both sides have to adapt and use identical terminology and definitions in order to have a mutual understanding within a multilingual environment.
- *Legal interoperability* – a number of national laws both in Russia and NATO member states have to be adapted in accordance with the need for joint troops deployment: a Status of Force Agreement (SOFA) for Russian and NATO troops, legal aspects of the rules of engagement and conformity of given orders with national laws of participants.
- *Technical interoperability* – ensuring involvement in the continued development of data processing, communications, logistics, transport, storage and technical standardization.
- *Military interoperability* – joint tactics, manuals, rules of engagement, standard operations and procedures have to be developed, and servicemen should be trained to work together on a day-to-day basis.

We may envisage three main options for future international peacekeeping forces where Russia and the Alliance can cooperate: first, a force under UN command and control; second, a NATO-led force; and third, a formal NATO-Russia military structure. The most promising and preferable form of NATO-Russia military-to-military cooperation will surely come from the building up of formal military structures within existing and hypothetical future organs of Russian and NATO political and military collaboration. The special formation that will incorporate military units and command and control structures is necessary for the fulfillment of joint tasks, which can vary from combating terror to peacekeeping, and from military to humanitarian relief operations.

A new *NATO-Russia Contingency Command* (NRCC) could include a brigade-size multinational military formation and a staffed headquarters capable of rapid augmentation by pre-selected personnel staff. A combined NATO-Russia Brigade could be established, collocated with the NRCC HQ either in a new NATO member state (e.g. Romania or Bulgaria) or in the South of Russia (Ukraine could become an alternative to Russia). Regarding the brigade's organization, different options may exist. The brigade can include two main parts: *Standing Force* and *Non-Standing Structures*. Optimal strength of the formation can be about 3,000-3,500 troops (5-6 main battalions). While remaining under NRCC and NRC control, the NATO-Russia brigade can be incorporated within NATO's Quick Reaction Force for wider peace support activities. The brigade's area of responsibility can be designated as but not limited to South-Eastern Europe, the Caucasus and the Middle East.

Units from the first Russian Peacekeeping brigade will be able to cooperate with the NATO-Russia brigade on many issues of joint training, planning and practical work in different peace support operations. NATO and Russia need each other and *it's only a question of time therefore, before Russian and NATO peacekeepers are again cooperating in the field.*