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“Copy That...”: A Russian “Bush Doctrine” in the CIS?

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The fact that national propaganda everywhere so eagerly cloaks itself in ideologies of a professedly international character proves the existence of an international stock of common ideas, however limited and however weakly held, to which an appeal can be made, and of a belief that these common ideas stand somehow in the scale of values above national interests. This stock of common ideas is what we mean by international morality.

E.H. Carr, 1946

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1. Introduction

The large-scale terrorist attacks on the USA on 11 September 2001 have altered the country's threat perceptions radically and engendered significant changes in its foreign and security policies. Before 11 September, some in the Bush administration were convinced that the structural position of the USA as the world's sole remaining superpower had to be translated into a more comprehensive vision for promoting regime change in an anarchic international environment along the belt of unrest stretching from the Middle East to Central Asia. What had been a "vision" within the administration prior to 11 September, however, became a "mission" after the attacks. The new "Bush doctrine" adopted after 11 September and presented through the course of 2002 codified an ambitious leadership role for the USA based on not only the presence of military power, but also the use of it.¹

An important element in this doctrine has been the principle of *pre-emptive strikes*. Speaking at West Point on 17 September 2002, President Bush spelled out this principle: "Given the goals of rogue states and terrorists, the U.S. can no longer solely rely on a reactive posture as we have in the past. The inability to deter a potential attacker, the immediacy of today's threats, and the magnitude of potential harm that could be caused by our adversaries' choice of weapons, do not permit that option. We cannot let our enemies strike first".² The essence in this statement is that weapons of mass destruction proliferation and terrorism constitute a lethal mix, prompting Washington to reconsider traditional elements of security policy, such as *containment* and *deterrence*. Again, according to Bush Jr., "deterrence – the promise of massive retaliation against nations – means nothing against shadowy terrorist networks with no nation or citizens to defend. Containment is not possible when unbalanced dictators with weapons of mass destruction can deliver those weapons on missiles or secretly provide them to terrorist allies".³ The thrust of this argument is that while rallying for support from the international community and international law, the USA will also reserve for itself the right to act unilaterally on the basis of imminent danger, or even the suspicion that some states may have long-term ambitions of inflicting damage on the USA.

An offshoot of this concept is the principle of striking not only against terrorist groups, but also against states that are somehow assisting terrorist networks. On 13 September 2002, President Bush stated clearly that states that in some way assist terrorists in fulfilling their aims should be held responsible for terrorist acts.⁴ Deputy Secretary of Defence, Paul Wolfowitz, made this even more explicit, indicating that US policies would be directed at "ending states that sponsor terrorism".⁵ This new approach was put into effect when Washington, immediately after 11 September, embarked on operation "Enduring Freedom" against the Taliban regime in Afghanistan. The Taliban regime was widely seen as offering a safe harbour for Al-Qaida, providing training and recruitment camps on Afghan territory and deliberately ignoring UN resolutions on extradition of

¹ See Svein Melby, "Hegemonens hamskifte", *NUPI-Report*, no. 270, 2002.

² *Ibid.*, p. 24.

³ *Ibid.*

⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 42.

⁵ *Ibid.*

terrorists from Afghan territory. Moreover, the principle also harboured a vision of promoting democracy in former rogue states. Use of pre-emptive military force to foster regime change was seen as legitimate from the point of view that rogue states are a hotbed for future threats against US security.

While the US posture on pre-emptive strikes and rogue states does distinguish between *de facto* nuclear proliferators and rogue states – or “hostile proliferators” – the USA has still evoked a new calculus of pre-emption.⁶ This calculus involves an element whereby Washington can and will bypass the UN Security Council in cases when US interests and security are under direct threat. There is a strong feeling within the Bush administration that the UN is not effectively addressing the threats of the 21st century, including proliferation issues, and that the UN Charter needs to be updated when it comes to defence issues. Some have contended that a part of the discussion would be to clarify the concept of “imminent threat”, but even in this case, the USA seems to adhere to the principle of establishing coalitions where UN mandate is not possible.⁷ So far, all we know about the application of pre-emptive strikes is derived from the Afghan and the Iraq operations. In the former case, the UN Security Council sanctioned the operation, whereas in the latter case it did not.

Not only is it impossible to predict whether the pre-emptive strike concept will be put to use in the future, very little is also known about the *effect* of the Bush doctrine on the general modus operandi of international relations. Does the US approach to fighting international terrorism contribute to creating a safer world, or will the norms of pre-emptive action be adopted also by other states, thus lowering the threshold for the use of force in international relations generally? What we do know is that the USA is never alone in the world and that the structural position taken by the USA in international security may come to constitute a role model for other states. From a position of unrivalled military superiority, the USA is instrumental in defining legitimate action in international relations. Hence, it should *de facto* be assumed that when Washington lowers the threshold for use of military force, other states might not only choose to bandwagon on US policies in lack of other options, but also consider employing similar strategies in dealing with similar threats.

The underlying theoretical assumption in the study is thus that words, rhetoric and concepts do matter, particularly those coined by the world’s superpower. They become templates for legitimate action, and, when copied by others, they can alter the way in which states may act and interact. There has been an ongoing academic debate about how norms, via different socialisation processes, travel in international relations. However, the primary focus has been on how “positive norms” such as human rights have travelled from the West southwards and eastwards.⁸ The point of this study is to shed some light on how “negative norms” from the West travel to the east, making an imprint on action and interaction.

⁶ Robert S. Litwak, “The New Calculus of Preemption”, *Survival*, vol. 44, no. 4, 2002/03.

⁷ This is asserted by Litwak, *ibid*.

⁸ See for example Thomas Risse, Stephen C. Ropp and Kathryn Sikkink, *The Power of Human Rights*, Cambridge University Press, 1999.

In this study we examine the Russian response to the terrorist threat, stemming from what geographically are adjacent regions to Russia proper – the Caucasus and Central Asia. Has Russia adopted a mirror image of the Bush doctrine in addressing challenges stemming from international terrorism in the CIS space? And if so, what consequences has this had for the mode of interaction in this area? Even though the structural position of today's Russian Federation in international relations is not as strong as that of the Soviet Union, Russian attempts to influence the political situation in Ukraine, unilateral military action against terrorist bases on Georgian territory and Russia's more assertive policies in Central Asia all reveal that Russia has not given up on preventing the CIS geopolitical space from eroding, and preserving the former Soviet Union as a sphere of influence.⁹ Moreover, Russia has retained a sense of reciprocity vis-à-vis the USA in the sense that the Putin administration still believes that Russia is entitled to pursue exclusive security interests in international relations. This is due partly to the heritage from the Cold War, when the Soviet Union was seen as being on a par with the USA. Although Russia is not a global power, there are ample reasons to assume that the Federation will claim for itself the right to apply military power within its sphere of influence.

The current report will examine whether the above-mentioned changes in US security strategy are mirrored in the Russian security discourse and actions. We begin by analysing Russia's Military Doctrine (MD 2000) and National Security Concept (NSC 2000), which were both adopted under Putin's ascent to power in Russia; and then follow the advent of what seems to be turning into a more offensive Military Doctrine and National Security Concept towards 2004. Since there have been numerous claims from Russian officials that the NSC and the MD do not explicitly deal with the emerging security threats and are in for a revision, we have chosen to examine in detail various policy statements made by Russian officials, to glimpse the possible direction of this revision. Our primary focus will be directed at statements that mirror the new security strategy of the USA – that is, Russian officials' arguments pertaining to the legitimacy of unilateral action and more conceptual deliberations on what kind of action Russia is likely to pursue in the future.

Since it has been an objective to assess if and how the adoption of the anti-terrorist rhetoric and concepts pave the way for more offensive action, this report would have been inadequate if the analysis were restricted to policy statements. Hence, we have included case studies on Russian actions in two regions – the Caucasus and Central Asia. These two regions have been chosen for two reasons. First, we assume that Russia is not a global power, so any use of military power would be limited to adjacent regions. Second, both regions are volatile, and have experienced terrorist incursions from 1999 and onwards. The difference between these two regions is that in the Central Asian case the terror threat has been interpreted in the perspective of states trying to control and rebuke incursions from Islamist insurgents, whereas in the Caucasus, the argument has been that of a failed state not controlling its own territory or deliberately harbouring terrorists. This difference is not accidental, since Russia actively has framed the terrorist threat in Central Asia in a supportive mode – namely to strengthen Central Asian states'

⁹ Bobo Lo, *Vladimir Putin and the Evolution of Russian Foreign Policy*, Blackwells, 2003, p. 13.

ability for self-defence under the collective security umbrella of the CIS (basically by using Russian forces) and by actively supporting incumbents in Central Asian authoritarian regimes. In the case of Georgia, however, Russia has not supported the incumbent; it has deliberately offered support for quasi-states on Georgian territory and conducted air strikes against terrorist bases on Georgian territory.

A central question to which we will return throughout the analysis will be whether Russia had codified a more offensive strategy before the 11 September events and backed this by a more assertive mode of action in the CIS space. In other words: has Russia actually “copied” US deliberations on acting unilaterally against terrorists and rogue states? Or was such practice in place before the terrorist attacks on the USA and directly derived from Russia’s experiences as a regional power in the CIS space? In this way, we hope to cast a new light on whether or not Russia actually underwent a “turning point” of Russian foreign and security policies after 11 September.¹⁰ An alternative hypothesis would be that Russia after 11 September more readily could pursue relatively *permanent* interests in the post-Soviet space by bandwagoning on the US coalition against international terrorism – interests that had been articulated and transformed into action before 11 September, but acquired a new legitimacy with the advent of the Bush doctrine.

We shall start by looking at the Russian military doctrine and security concept, both of which were adopted before the Bush doctrine emerged. The aim is to identify whether these Russian documents contain similar threat perceptions and approaches to ensure security as those laid out in the Bush doctrine of autumn 2001. We will also consider how increasing Russian involvement in the CIS is legitimised in these documents.

2. Threats and Approaches: The NSC and the MD¹¹

Threat perceptions: Russia’s National Security Concept (NSC) and Military Doctrine (MD) aroused considerable interest in the West because of their overtly negative view on international tendencies stemming from the “creation of international structures that are based on the dominance over the international system by Western developed countries under the leadership of the U.S”.¹² In the gloomy perspective of the NSC, the West and particularly the United States represented a considerable challenge.¹³ The new scepticism

¹⁰ See Oksana Antonenko, “Putin’s Gamble”, *Survival*, vol. 43, no. 4, 2001–02 and Bertil Nygren, “Russia’s Immediate Security Environment Under Putin, before and after September 11th”, in Bertil Nygren & Yuriy Fedorov (eds), *Russian Military Reform and Russia’s New Security Environment*, Swedish National Defence College, 2003, pp. 171–96.

¹¹ While the security concept deals with broader security issues and responses, the military doctrine specifies the guidelines of the security concept and concentrates on threats and countermeasures.

¹² “Kontsepsiya natsional’noy bezopasnosti Rossiyskoy Federatsii”, *Rossiyskaya gazeta*, 18 January 2000.

¹³ The perceived threat from the West is apparent in the listing of main external threats to military security in the Military Doctrine. “Voennaya Doktrina Rossiyskoy Federatsii”, *Krasnaya Zvezda*, 9 October 2000. In the NSC, the new scepticism to the West is clearly signalled at the outset of the document, which states that in addition to the first and positive trend of international integration affecting Russia’s place in the world community, a “second trend is seen in the attempt to create a structure of international relations based on the domination of developed Western countries, led by the USA, in the international community and providing for unilateral solutions to key problems of global politics, above all by the use of military force, in violation of the fundamental norms of international law”. “Kontsepsiya natsional’noy bezopasnosti Rossiyskoy Federatsii”, *Rossiyskaya gazeta*, 18 January 2000. For a good comparison of the

towards the West reflected in the documents has to be understood against the background of NATO's expansion eastward, mentioned in the MD as a major threat to Russian security, and the 1999 Kosovo crisis, where the West in Russia's eyes brushed aside international law and undermined the authority of international institutions.¹⁴ Moreover, there was mounting concern in Russia that Western criticism of the anti-terror operations in Chechnya would be followed up by a more intrusive policy into Russia's internal affairs prompted by the concept of humanitarian intervention. Russian officials feared that as NATO was prepared to challenge state sovereignty in the Balkans, the alliance might also harbour ambitions in what Russia perceived as its own legitimate sphere of interest, the Caucasus.¹⁵ Boosting this interpretation, many voices in Russian military and government circles invoked threat perceptions of the bi-polar era, arguing that NATO harboured designs of enlargement and unilateral out-of-area operations and that these ambitions would threaten Russia in its traditional zones of influence.¹⁶ For instance, Russian Minister of Defence, Igor Sergeev, stated rhetorically in November 1999:

Has the anti-Russian campaign over Chechnya been launched to force Russia out of the Caucasus, and then out of Central Asia? The question often raised in Moscow is whether Kosovo and Chechnya are links in a chain of steps toward the creation of a one-dimensional NATO-centered world. Is Chechnya being used as a smokescreen for preparing NATO to assume the role of world policeman, for undermining the fundamental components of strategic stability and reversing the disarmament process?¹⁷

However, the NSC and MD do not merely reiterate old threat perceptions. They also emphasize newer threats and threats closer to home: indeed, the NSC devotes comparatively more space to examining internal threats to the Federation's security than external ones. Putin himself decreed changes in the draft security concept to strengthen the emphasis on fighting terrorism and crime. Terrorism is therefore singled out as a growing problem in the first section of the NSC. As for the MD, it pinpoints separatist, ethno-national and terrorist movements and cross border problems such as organized crime, terrorism, weapons and drug trafficking, as having a destabilizing effect. Territorial claims against the Russian Federation and the escalation of conflicts near Russian or CIS borders are mentioned as among the main external threats to Russian military security. International terrorism is also listed under external threats, but only at

1997 and 2000 NSC which outlines the more pessimistic view of the West in the 2000 version, see Jakub Godzimirski (2000), "Russian National Security Concept 1997 and 2000: A Comparative Analysis" *European Security*, Vol.9, No. 4, pp.73–91.

¹⁴ For Russia's reaction on Kosovo see, for example, Celeste Wallander, "Russian Views on Kosovo: Synopsis of May 6 Panel Discussion", *Ponars Policy Memo* 62, May 1999, and Aleksey Arbatov, "The Transformation of Russian Military Doctrine: Lessons Learned from Kosovo and Chechnya", *The Marshall Center Papers*, no. 2, 2000.

¹⁵ For the Russian interpretation of Western criticism of Chechnya see Igor Ivanov, "The West's hypocrisy over Chechnya" *Financial Times*, 16 November 1999.

¹⁶ See Stephen J. Blank, "Threats to Russian Security: the view from Moscow", July 2000, posted at: <http://www.fas.org/nuke/guide/russia/doctrine/thrussec.pdf>. For an interpretation of the draft military doctrine, which focuses less on the anti-western bias, see C. J. Dick, "Russia's 1999 Draft Military Doctrine", *Conflict Studies Research Centre Occasional Brief* no. 72, 16 November 1999.

¹⁷ Quoted in Lena Jonson, *Vladimir Putin and Central Asia. The Shaping of Russian Foreign Policy*, London: I.B. Tauris, 2004, p. 49.

the very end. Primarily, terrorism is in focus on the list of internal threats, where five out of six identified threats relate to terrorism. Also in the NSC, terrorism is presented primarily as an internal threat and explained as an outcome of grave economic and social conditions and the weakness of the Russian state. A brief reference to international terrorism occurs only at the end of the section outlining external threats.

This focus on terrorism as an internal threat stems of course from the war in Chechnya, which from the very onset in 1999 was defined as an anti-terror operation. As early as in September 1999, in the midst of the incursion of Chechen fighters on Dagestan's territory, Vladimir Putin stated before the State Duma that "in Dagestan and Moscow we're not dealing with self-taught fighters, but with well-trained international saboteurs", who had "far-reaching plans. They are counting on igniting political tensions in Russia, and their main objective is to destabilize the situation in the country".¹⁸ Moreover, in November that year, Putin defined the threat Russia was facing in Chechnya as *international terrorism*. It was emanating, he said, from "extremist circles in a number of Islamic countries," aiming to "seize the whole of the Caucasus" and eventually transfer the entire country "to a war footing".¹⁹

All in all, Russian threat perceptions in 2000 were dominated by a fear of growing Western predominance in international affairs, but the enemy so strongly projected in the later Bush doctrine – international terrorism – was definitely also making its imprint on Russian thinking already at this time. In the first section of the NSC it is even hinted that a community of interest exists between the Russian Federation and "other states" on tackling the problem of international terrorism, and that multilateral solutions to the problem should be widely sought.

That said, the *approach* stipulated in the 2000 documents to meet the threats Russia was facing, is very different from the more offensive Bush doctrine. The general principle determining the nature of the MD is its defensive character.²⁰ The doctrine states that attempts to weaken international law, treaties and international institutions such as the UN and OSCE, have a destabilizing impact on the military political situation. Both documents also criticize the practice of using military force unless sanctioned by the UN Security Council. Consequently, the approach of the Russian Federation to safeguarding security as given in the MD is to abide by and strengthen international law, the provisions of the UN Charter and international treaties in the sphere of arms control and nuclear weapons and proliferation; and to give preference to political, diplomatic and non-military means to prevent or neutralize regional and global threats.

The NSC and the MD include provisions on the use of nuclear weapons to exercise deterrence. The MD makes no direct mention of Russia's right to the first use of nuclear weapons. However, the document maintains that: "the Russian Federation retains the right to use nuclear weapons in response to the use of nuclear arms and other MWD

¹⁸ "Putin predlagaet novyy plan chechenskogo uregulirovaniya", *Nezavisimaya gazeta*, 15 September 1999.

¹⁹ *Vek*, 26 November 1999.

²⁰ Ivan Safranchuk "Russia's New Military Doctrine" *Arms Control Letter*, Center for Policy Studies in Russia, 15 May 2000.

against it or its allies, and in response to a large-scale aggression with the use of conventional arms in situations critical for the national security of the Russian Federation”.²¹ In reality this is declaring a right to the first use of nuclear weapons. It should be underlined, though, that this new emphasis on Russia’s nuclear capabilities is more a sign of Russia’s conventional military weakness than of a new offensive strategy. The nuclear weapons were thought to have a traditional deterrent effect against other states or coalitions of states. At this stage there is no hint of using nuclear weapons against the new asymmetric threat.

As to how to counter the new threats and challenges, the NSC outlines a multilateral approach to combating international terrorism. Recognizing a “sharp aggravation of the problem of transborder terrorism”, the NSC relies basically on multilateral solutions to the problem, not unilateral Russian military action. According to the NSC, the sharp increase of terrorist actions entails a “necessity of uniting the forces of the international community, and an increased efficiency in applying existing measures and methods in combating this threat”.²² Moreover:

[...] On the basis of international law, it is necessary to cooperate effectively with foreign countries, their judicial bodies and special intelligence services, and also with international organizations that have competence in fighting international terrorism... It is also of utmost necessity to make broad use of the international experience in combating this phenomenon, and to create a well-coordinated mechanism to counterbalance international terrorism, cut off possible channels of illegal arms trade and explosives within the country, and also channels from abroad.²³

Notably, concrete unilateral actions against terrorism are limited to actions on Russian territory. Moreover, there are no provisions about utilizing military forces against third countries in the pursuit of international terrorists on their territories. In other words, by emphasizing the importance of international law and treaties, multilateralism and constraint in the use of military means, these provisions of the doctrine seem to directly juxtapose the US pattern of action. Even though Russian officials were increasingly aware of the tendency toward unilateral military action – and indeed had been so since the Kosovo campaign – the NSC does not include any provisions that would make such an option possible for Russia. Putin stressed in his speech to the Russian diplomatic corps in January 2001 that the threat of international terrorism prompts Russia to seek multilateral solutions to the challenge, not unilateral ones. “We have said many times – so much so, in fact – that this has even become part of international parlance”, Putin stated, “that it is quite obvious that a terrorist international community is taking shape, and in that respect we and our partners must streamline and coordinate our efforts. We have a direct stake in helping to create effective mechanisms of international cooperation in all directions”.²⁴

²¹ “Voennaya Doktrina Rossiiskoy Federatsii”, *Krasnaya Zvezda*, 9 October 2000.

²² “Kontseptsiya natsional’noy bezopasnosti Rossiyskoy Federatsii”, *Rossiyskaya gazeta*, 18 January 2000.

²³ Ibid.

²⁴ *Johnson's Russia List*, no. 5054, 27 January 2001.

2.1. The CIS space in Russia's MD and NSC

The “all directions” component of Putin’s statement includes also a focus on the CIS. There is a general impression from the documents that Russia is viewed as having a unique geopolitical position in the world, that the country is not willing to see its position in the world diminished, and that it regards its current weakness as temporary. Thus, according to the NSC “the national interests of Russia in the international sphere boil down to ensuring the sovereignty and reinforcing the position of Russia as a great power and one of the influential centres of the multipolar world”.²⁵ This implies that Russia will fight with all its might to maintain its territorial integrity, as the operation in Chechnya clearly demonstrated, but also that Russia has ambitions in a wider territorial space – primarily in the CIS, which is defined as a top priority in both documents. CIS integration is envisaged as a vital step in building up the influential Russian centre in/of the multipolar world.²⁶

At this point in time, CIS integration is clearly presented as a countermeasure against growing Western predominance. Immediately following the four first external threats that together comprise the image of the new Western challenge, the NSC mentions: “the weakening of the integration processes in the CIS”. The NSC also goes far in insisting upon the need for Russian bases in CIS countries as a means of creating a “military-strategic balance” and ensuring Russian national security. In the MD, strengthening the collective security system within the CIS is presented as one of the main instruments to safeguard military security. Finally, the MD is firm in defining the establishment of foreign military bases in third countries close to Russian territory as an external threat: “the introduction of foreign troops (without the sanction of the UNSC) onto the territory of neighbouring and friendly states of the Russian Federation” is mentioned among the fundamental external threats to Russian security.²⁷

As for the *approach* to secure further CIS integration, the NSC is specific in determining the framework for co-operation, and focuses on enhancing economic co-operation within existing CIS structures, while underscoring the need for developing justice and home affairs co-operation within the CIS. According to the concept, the creation of a single economic space within the CIS has top priority, alongside with a “broadening of mutually beneficial co-operation within justice and home affairs, first and foremost with the member states of the CIS”.²⁸ This priority is also reflected in the “Action program for the development of CIS” adopted in June 2000.²⁹ Although making explicit references to “Russia’s allies”, and holding the “weakening of the integration processes within the CIS”, and the “escalation of conflicts on the perimeter of the Russian Federation and the outer borders of the member states of the CIS” as central security challenges, the NSC does not mention the need for military co-operation among CIS states. Moreover, the

²⁵ “Kontseptsiya natsional’noy bezopasnosti Rossiyskoy Federatsii”, *Rossiyskaya gazeta*, 18 January 2000.

²⁶ Note also another illustration of the perception of the CIS as a central element in the Russian understanding of Eurasia as a separate pole in the system of international relations in the stated aim to “preserve Russian as a language of interstate communication within the CIS”.

²⁷ “Voennaya doktrina Rossiyskoy Federatsii”, *Krasnaya zvezda*, 9 October 1999.

²⁸ *Ibid.*

²⁹ “Programma deystviy po razvitiyu Sodruzhestva Nezavisimykh Gosudarstv na period do 2005 goda” reprinted in Igor Ivanov, *Novaya Rossiyskaya Diplomatiya*, Moscow: Olma Press, 2001, pp. 318–322.

NSC affirms: “integration within the CIS is in accordance with the principles of international law”.³⁰

Russia’s interest in increasing its influence and control over CIS countries is probably constant, however, although the legitimization for growing influence and the ways of achieving it may change over time. In the year 2000, growing Western assertiveness was presented as the rationale behind CIS integration, and increasing economic co-operation as the legitimate approach to integration. On the other hand, challenges stemming from international terrorism evoked a different focus also on CIS integration. Although this was not envisaged in the official documents, Russia stumbled into recognizing the emerging importance of “transborder” security challenges from 2000 and onwards – as shown by numerous calls to revise the NSC and the MD and scale military forces to deal with this challenge more efficiently. This will be dealt with in more detail below.

2.2. Implementing the NSC: Russian Policies before 11 September

Since the adoption of the NSC and the MD, the Russian Federation has in numerous international settings flagged its perception of international terrorism, not solely as a domestic problem, but also as a global problem. Speaking to the UN General Assembly in 1999, Minister of Foreign Affairs Igor Ivanov stated: “separatism is to an increasing degree closing in on such a misshapen phenomenon as terrorism”.³¹ Signalling Russian support for a UN anti-terrorism conference in 2000, Ivanov proposed that the UN should elaborate and adopt a declaration on the principles for international co-operation against terrorism. In his speech to the 2000 summit of the UN, the tone was more acute. Ivanov addressed the General Assembly by stating that Russia would ratify the UN convention on financing of terrorism, and called for a rapid elaboration of a UN Convention on nuclear terrorism, and a speed-up of the adoption of a comprehensive UN Convention against terrorism.³² According to Ivanov:

The most abnormal form of extremism called international terrorism is a direct threat to security and stability. Today, terrorists of all colours are acting more well coordinated than what is the case for the opponent – the global community. We expect from the UN a more active mobilization of international measures in combating terrorism. The basis for this should be clear-cut principles, formulated in the UNSCR 1269: no support, no harbour for terrorists, and decisive punishment of each terrorist act. The UNSC should consider measures of action against those who violate these principles, in accordance with the UN Charter.³³

At the ensuing press conference, Ivanov identified Afghanistan as the primary source of concern for Russia. Indeed, Russia had already taken action against the Taliban. On 11 May 2000, presidential decree no. 786 on sanctions against the Taliban entered into force. The decree obliged all “organizations under Russian jurisdiction” to meet the demands of UNSCR no. 1267 of 15 October 1999, and introduced a ban on all flights from Afghan

³⁰ “Kontseptsiya natsional’noy bezopasnosti Rossiyskoy Federatsii”, *Rossiyskaya gazeta*, 18 January 2000.

³¹ *Ibid*, p. 69.

³² Igor Ivanov, “Vystuplenie na Assamblei tysyachiletiya—N’yu York, 18 sentyabrya 2000 g.”, in *Vneshnyaya politika Rossii i mir*, ROSSPEN, Moscow, 2001, p. 82.

³³ *Ibid*.

territory over Russian territory. Moreover, the decree also called on blocking finances and bank accounts belonging to the Taliban.³⁴ In the wake of the UN General Assembly in 2000, Ivanov stated:

The task of combating terrorism is directly tied to the regulations of regional conflicts, especially the Afghan conflict. Russia is repeatedly striving for a central aim – that the illegal actions of the Taliban, which openly supports international terrorism, should be put to an end. We assess the ministerial meeting of the 6+2, which is still an important mechanism for regulating the Afghan conflict. The Afghan parties, first and foremost the Taliban, have received a decisive signal that military actions should be halted, and that negotiations on a peaceful settlement should be resumed under UN auspices.³⁵

The basic argument for strengthened global co-operation against terrorism has been that the phenomenon is a negative consequence of increased globalization of world affairs. Russian officials have repeatedly stressed that globalization implies not only positive tendencies – such as increased interdependence and multilateral co-ordination and co-operation among states, but also the withering away of state borders and state control over territory. Putting this to effect after 11 September 2001, Ivanov argued at the 56th Session of the General Assembly of the UN on 24 September: “the recent tragedy is a dramatic revelation of the fact that globalization has given birth to changes in all aspects of the international community – changes that may have a positive and a negative effect on mankind”.³⁶

The perception of international terrorism as the premier threat also increasingly made its imprint on the way Russia framed its relations to Europe. Moving away from the antagonistic relations spurred by the Kosovo crisis, Russia presented the fight against terrorism as the glue in a new Russian–European alliance long before the 11 September events. Russia tried persistently to front its anti-terror operations in Chechnya, launched by President Putin during his ascendancy to power in 1999, as a service rendered to Europe and not solely a domestic concern. In the Russian view, Europe should be more concerned with Russia *not* taking decisive actions in Chechnya, and with the consequences of increased terrorist activity on the arc of instability stretching from the Caucasus to Central Asia. Speaking at the Parliamentary Assembly of the Council of Europe in January 2000, Ivanov maintained:

The tasks that are performed in the anti-terrorist operations in Chechnya, and this I would like to stress as Minister of Foreign Affairs, go far beyond the borders of the region. [...] Russia is actually defending the common borders of Europe from a barbaric intrusion of international terrorism, which persistently and with consequence are building an axis of influence from Afghanistan, to Central Asia, Caucasus and the Balkans. All of these

³⁴ “Ukaz Prezidenta RF no. 786”, available at <http://document.kremlin.ru/index.asp>.

³⁵ Igor Ivanov, “Vystuplenie na press-konferentsii posvyashchennoy Assamblee tysyachiletiya”, in *Vneshnyaya politika Rossii v epokhu globalizatsii*, Olma-Press, Moscow, 2002, p. 70.

³⁶ Igor Ivanov, “Vystuplenie na 56-y sessii General’noy Assamblei OON”, in *Vneshnyaya politika Rossii v epokhu globalizatsii*, p. 73.

regions of instability are today in the grip of active international terrorism. Unlike the international community, the terrorists are united and active.³⁷

President Putin proceeded in the same vein in an interview in *Paris Match* reproduced in the Russian press. Asked when he was going to end the war in Chechnya, Putin retorted: “there is no war in Chechnya. There is a counter-terrorist operation”.³⁸ According to Putin, the so-called independent Chechnya had transformed itself into a “footing for attacks on Russia”, and the former executive had not paid sufficient attention to this. Adding that few in the international community were aware that Russia stood at the forefront of the war against Islamic extremism, Putin continued:

Today we are witnessing the creation of some sort of extremist international along the arc of instability starting on the Philippines and ending in Kosovo. This is very dangerous, also for Europe, where there is a large Muslim population. [...] As you may know, one of the extremist organizations, which is led by extremist number one in the world, Osama bin Laden, the International Islamic Front, has in my opinion an ambition of creating an Islamist caliphate, an Islamist united states. This unit is to consist of a row of Muslim states, some Central Asian former Soviet republics and a part of the current territory of the Russian Federation. [...] Russia is at the forefront in fighting against international terrorism. In the larger picture, Europe should be grateful and bow deeply for us fighting this phenomenon, unfortunately, so far by ourselves.³⁹

The reference to Central Asia and “some former Soviet republics” was illustrative with regard to Moscow’s more assertive drive to frame international terrorism as a primary threat to the stability of the CIS area, and also a major prerequisite for revamping the CIS security structure. Moscow was no longer simply fighting a separatist movement in Chechnya, but was gradually adopting a “mission” for rebuking terrorist incursions in the CIS space. In fact, while Putin in 1999 had interpreted the Chechen conflict in a specific “domino scenario”, claiming that: “What’s the situation in the Northern Caucasus and Chechnya today? It’s a continuation of the collapse of the USSR”,⁴⁰ by 2000 he was presenting a more amplified version of the Islamist confederation nurtured by radical Islamist insurgents in Chechnya.⁴¹ The rhetorical shift from separatism to Islamism in Russia’s security discourse was made even more explicit by then Secretary of the Security Council, Sergey Ivanov. Commenting at length on the division of labour between the Security Council and other state agencies, Ivanov in November 2000 also touched upon the situation in Northern Caucasus and Central Asia. In his words, “the situation is complex, but controllable”, but still:

³⁷ Igor Ivanov, “Vystuplenie na sessii Parlamenskoy assamblei Soveta Evropy, Strasburg 27 yanvarya 2000 g.”, in *Vneshnyaya politika Rossii i mir*, p. 195.

³⁸ “S chechentsami my budem dogovarivat’sya”, *Nezavisimaya gazeta*, 8 July 2000.

³⁹ Ibid.

⁴⁰ Quoted in Matthew Evangelista, *The Chechen Wars. Will Russia Go the Way of the Soviet Union?*, Washington DC: Brookings Institution Press, 2002, p. 86.

⁴¹ For a detailed discussion of these aspirations in the Chechen movement in the interwar period, and also of the background for the Islamist incursions in Dagestan in 1999, see Evangelista, *The Chechen Wars*, pp. 50ff.

The major threat to stability here is international terrorism, which is an active destructive force, and an ideological weapon in the hands of separatists, who receive substantial funding from external sources. The activities of international terrorists are highly coordinated. This is well reflected by the events in Central Asia (Afghanistan) and in the Middle East. Do you remember the impudent announcement of Basayev that he was prepared to send 150 fighters to Palestine? For all the unfoundedness and propaganda-like features of this statement, it still confirms the close connection between terrorists marauding various regions of the planet.⁴²

It is quite clear then, that international terrorism was gradually perceived and presented as threat number one by Russian authorities already *before* the World Trade Centre tragedy and the adoption of the Bush doctrine. The 11 September events merely reinforced the ascendant threat perception and pushed aside the “Western” threat scenario, because it opened up new possibilities for alliance with the former “Western” foe. However, the more traditional threat perspectives of the NSC and the MD remained present in Russian rhetoric. Igor Ivanov argued in December 2001 that “today, while we are facing the challenge from international terrorism and other threats and challenges of a global scope, mechanical enlargement of the Alliance will not add to the security of the members or states that in the future may raise the question of NATO membership”.⁴³

2.2.1. The multilateral approach:

Despite the increasing focus on the international terrorist threat, the Russian authorities, in line with the provisions of the 2000 NSC and MD, persisted in pushing a multilateral approach. Commenting on the 11 September events at the 56th Session of the General Assembly of the UN on 24 September, Ivanov stated that the UN should be the most important format for dealing with negative changes brought about by globalization:

In the sphere of combating new threats, the most important of which is international terrorism, the central task should be to create a global system to counterbalance new threats and challenges. This system should include adequate multilateral mechanisms for cooperation, including a system for early warning and prevention of emerging threats, and a system for decisive and relevant reaction against all revelations in this sphere within the framework of international law and under the central and coordinative role of the UN.⁴⁴

Russian officials have persistently argued that their country has been not only at the forefront of fighting international terrorism in Chechnya, but also in drawing the attention of the UN to the matter. According to Minister of Foreign Affairs, Ivanov, the UNSC started already in 1999 to debate on complex measures against terrorism on the initiative of Russia.⁴⁵ Since then, Russia has supported UNSC resolutions on terrorism, starting with UNSCR 1269 of October 1999, and continuing with UNSCR 1368, 1373, 1377

⁴² “Strategiya bezopasnosti Rossii”, *Nezavisimaya gazeta*, 29 November 2000.

⁴³ Igor Ivanov, “Vystuplenie na press-konferentsii po itogam zasedaniya Sovmestnogo Postoyannogo soveta Rossiya-NATO”, in *Vneshnyaya politika Rossii v epokhu globalizatsii*, p. 248.

⁴⁴ Igor Ivanov, “Vystuplenie na 56-y sessii General’noy Assamblei OON”, in *Vneshnyaya politika Rossii v epokhu globalizatsii*, p. 74.

⁴⁵ *Ibid.* p. 27.

(2001), 1438, 1440, 1450, 1452 (2002), and 1455, 1465, 1516 (2003).⁴⁶ UNSCR 1373 on the financing of terrorism has been viewed as especially important from Russia's side, as a first step in co-ordinating a financial war against terrorism, and creating a Counter-terrorism committee under the UNSCR.⁴⁷ Moreover, Russia has proposed the creation of a centre for the co-ordination of state support after acts of terrorism.⁴⁸

While Russian support for making the UN a "headquarter for a global system of combating terrorism" has been relatively consequent and persistent, Russia's pledge has been coloured by the fear that stronger states may front geopolitical gains and act unilaterally in fighting international terrorism. Again, according to Ivanov, strengthening the UN has been viewed as a means to create a more "democratic world order" based on international law, to counter tendencies toward unilateralist actions. In line with this approach, Russia offered conditional support for the "anti-terror" coalition in Afghanistan, albeit accompanied by the claim that Russia had known in advance the scale and scope of the terrorist threat. Speaking on 11 September, Putin claimed for instance that the events "confirmed the topicality of Russia's proposals to unite the efforts of the international community in the struggle against terror, the monster of the 21st century. Russia knows by experience what such terror is".⁴⁹ Igor Ivanov has suggested that the very nature of the threat implies not only that Russia decisively has sought multilateral channels in resolving it (with the exception of Chechnya), but that other states should do so as well. The global fight against terrorism is "impossible to resolve unilaterally or at the level of [military] blocs".⁵⁰ While supportive of the common united front of states against terrorism after 11 September, Ivanov stated that the "practice of unilateralist actions might split the anti-terror coalition, and deprive the world of the capacity to jointly counter the threats against global stability and security".⁵¹

The European vector in Russia's call for multilateral co-operation against international terrorism has entailed Russian support for the Multidisciplinary committee for fighting terrorism under the Council of Europe,⁵² and an annex to the Joint Declaration of the EU and Russia from November 2003, where the war against international terrorism and the prevention of proliferation of WMD are singled out as yet another "keystone of Russia-EU security co-operation".⁵³ Russia has also used the OSCE as a base for flagging increasing concerns about international terrorism. Speaking to the OSCE Council of Ministers in Vienna on 27 November 2000, Ivanov called on the OSCE to play a more

⁴⁶ Mark A. Smith, "Russian Perspectives on Terrorism", *Conflict Studies Research Centre*, January 2004, p. 13.

⁴⁷ Igor Ivanov, "Rossiya i mir v epokhu globalizatsii", in *Vneshnyaya politika Rossii v epokhu globalizatsii*, p. 28.

⁴⁸ Ibid. p. 29.

⁴⁹ Quoted in Smith, "Russian Perspectives on Terrorism", p. 9.

⁵⁰ Igor Ivanov, "Rossiya i mir v epokhu globalizatsii", in *Vneshnyaya politika Rossii v epokhu globalizatsii*, p. 27

⁵¹ Ibid. p. 31.

⁵² Igor Ivanov, "Rol' Rossii v evropeyskikh delakh. Vystuplenie na zasedanii Postoyannoy kommissii PACE, Sankt-Peterburg 26 marta 2002 g." in *Vneshnyaya politika Rossii v epokhu globalizatsii*, p. 256.

⁵³ Smith, "Russian Perspectives on Terrorism", p. 14.

active role in combating these challenges. According to Ivanov, the OSCE should become an indispensable organization in dealing with new global challenges:

Among these we have international terrorism and aggressive separatism, inter-ethnic and religious conflicts, illegal trade of drugs and weapons, organized crime and attempts to undermine the non-proliferation regime.⁵⁴

In sum, Russia proposed a markedly multilateral approach in addressing international terrorism in the period from 1999 to 2001, backed by a unilateral concern – the struggle against terrorism in Chechnya. Russia recognized that international terrorism had to be combated not only by military means, but by the “whole spectrum of political, economic, financial and humanitarian measures”,⁵⁵ and that the southern rim of Russia was particularly unstable.

However, in stark contrast to these words, the Russian approach to the terrorist problem in Chechnya rested exclusively on the use of unilateral military force. More so, Russia did not, in fact, employ humanitarian measures in order to deal with the grave problems in Chechnya. Although it is common knowledge that the Chechen incursion into Dagestan in August 1999 and the apartment bombings in Moscow initiated the second Chechen campaign and Russia’s anti-terrorist operation, the Kremlin had planned a military intervention since March 1999 and stepped up military action in June 1999.⁵⁶ In July 1999, Moscow ordered what was then termed a “preventive strike” against rebel bases on the border to Dagestan. Minister of the Interior, Vladimir Rushailo, had warned in the Federation Council in early July 1999 that Russia would undertake pre-emptive strikes to neutralize “criminals, bandits and the drug mafia”; and on 5 July MVD troops launched a mortar and helicopter attack on Chechen rebels on Chechen territory.⁵⁷ Although Putin stated that Russia would react harshly against Chechen incursions but refrain from further strikes, other officials, like the Minister of Nationalities and State Duma deputies, stated that unilateral military action would be taken against Chechen rebels if co-operation on “cleaning up” Chechnya failed.⁵⁸

Thus, clearly the unilateral, offensive approach later laid out in the Bush doctrine was tried out in *practice* by Russia before the US doctrine appeared. At this time, however, preventive action was taken more covertly and had not acquired any level of legitimacy. In the following we will analyse whether this principle has become a part of Russian security rhetoric in dealing with external affairs after the events of 11 September.

2.3. Changing the MD and the NSC: Russian Statements After 11 September

As observed by Bobo Lo, the events of 11 September 2001 marked a watershed for Russia, in the sense that “previously accused of behaving in a barbaric manner, the Putin administration has promoted itself as having been ahead of the game, divining the true

⁵⁴ Igor Ivanov, “Vystuplenie na vos’moy vstreche Soveta ministrov inostrannykh del OBSE”, in *Vneshnyaya politika Rossii v epokhu globalizatsii*, p. 222.

⁵⁵ *Ibid.* p. 30.

⁵⁶ Evangelista, *The Chechen Wars*, pp. 61 ff.

⁵⁷ *RFE/RL Newslines*, 7 July 1999.

⁵⁸ *Ibid.*

nature of the threat before anyone else”.⁵⁹ Putin’s almost unconditional embrace of a US military presence in Central Asia, with pledges of intelligence support and humanitarian assistance, has been depicted as a u-turn in Russia’s foreign and security priorities under Yeltsin.⁶⁰ While a positive offshoot of this was that the Federation suddenly occupied a more central role in international relations, the effect of the *volte-face* in Russian security policies should not be underestimated. The oft-promoted principle of multipolarity – to counter Western predominance by building alliances to other poles in the world – was undermined when Moscow aligned with the coalition against terrorism. Russia’s foreign policies stood out as more *multi-vectoral* than multipolar – meaning that the Putin administration would construct vectors for Russian foreign policies with whichever state or coalition and for purely pragmatic reasons.⁶¹ Any coalition – even one led by the USA and involving NATO – would do, as long as Russia could be on the same train.

This said, Russia aligned with the coalition without initially shedding what had been central priorities, such as the primacy of the UN in global security affairs, and a more diffuse ambition to play a more central role in the CIS. Although Putin gave immediate and unconditional support to Bush’s anti-terror campaign after 11 September, Russian authorities still voiced concern about relying exclusively on military force to fight the terrorist problem and called for a multilateral and “inclusive” approach.⁶² The first reason given by Putin for not joining the military campaign in Afghanistan was that the participation of Russian forces in military action on foreign territory would be in contradiction with the Constitution of the Federation. He also proposed that the 6 plus 2 Group (8) should work out non-military means, such as political, economic and educational means, to counter terrorism.⁶³ Moreover, at the December 2001 CIS meeting between heads of state, CIS states on the one hand praised the formation of an international coalition against the Taliban regime, while on the other stating that the CIS should form a core of “a global system to counteract terrorism in close coordination with all interested nations and organizations, and with the UN and Security Council playing the leading role”.⁶⁴

It is worth noting that when Bush announced the concept of pre-emption in 2002, not a single negative comment was forthcoming from Moscow.⁶⁵ Gradually, the provisions of the Bush doctrine were adopted by the Russian authorities and presented as legitimate conduct for a state facing the atrociousness of the new threat. On the first anniversary of the 11 September attacks, the Russian president, emulating President Bush, in a letter to world leaders said that Russia had a right to self-defence against Chechen attacks, and

⁵⁹ Bobo Lo, *Vladimir Putin and the Evolution of Russian Foreign Policy*, Chatham House Papers, Blackwells, 2003, p. 84–85.

⁶⁰ Oksana Antonenko, “Putin’s Gamble”, *Survival*, vol. 43, no. 4, 2001/02.

⁶¹ For a discussion of the multi-vectoral policies, see Lena Jonson, *Vladimir Putin and Central Asia. The Shaping of Russian Foreign Policy*, I.B. Tauris, 2004, pp. 137–38.

⁶² “Prezident reshaet filosofskie voprosy”, *Nezavisimaya gazeta*, 20 September 2001 and “Moskva prizyvaet zapad k sovместnym deystviyam”, *Nezavisimaya gazeta*, 22 September 2001.

⁶³ “Putin protiv uchastiya Rossii i SNG v novoy amerikanskoj voyne”, *Nezavisimaya gazeta*, 22 September 2001.

⁶⁴ *RFE/RL Central Asia Report*, 6 December 2001.

⁶⁵ Dmitriy Litovkin, “Putin menyaet doktrinu”, *Izvestia*, 29 October 2002.

threatened unilateral strikes against “terrorist bases” in the lawless Pankisi Gorge without Georgia's permission. He claimed that Georgia could well be sheltering not only top Chechen “terrorists” but also some of those who had carried out the previous year's attacks on the United States.⁶⁶

Moreover, as the international terrorist threat the Russian authorities had claimed to face in Chechnya gradually became a self-fulfilling prophecy, the Bush doctrine increasingly came to function as a blueprint for legitimate Russian counteraction. The hostage crisis at the Dubrovka theatre in Moscow in late October 2002 was clearly and squarely framed as international terrorism. Putin himself was adamant that the seizure of the theatre by Chechen separatists was masterminded abroad and that it was part of the same chain as recent terrorist acts in Indonesia and the Philippines.⁶⁷ Accordingly, all Chechen separatists were branded as terrorists, also the former Chechen president Aslan Maskhadov, whom Putin compared to Osama bin Laden. This branding automatically brought with it the uncompromising rejection of any negotiated solution to the Chechen conflict.⁶⁸ Putin stated that “Russia will make no deals with terrorists”.⁶⁹ Later his aide Sergey Yastrzhembskiy suggested that it was necessary to simply “wipe out all the commanders of the movement”.⁷⁰

The hostage crisis also prompted Russian officials into public statements echoing a gradually more assertive view on how Russia should tackle international terrorism *outside* its borders. During a meeting of the cabinet on 28 October 2002, President Putin announced that Russian armed forces would play a more central role in combating international terrorism, and that he had issued detailed instructions to the General Staff on this. “If anyone tries to use weapons of mass destruction or the equivalent against our country, Russia will respond with measures commensurate with the threat, wherever the terrorists, the organizers of their crimes, and their ideological and financial supporters might be. I underline, wherever they might be,” Putin stated, stressing the preparedness of Russia to strike against terrorists independently of their location.⁷¹ Putin also indicated that “International terrorism is becoming bolder, acting more cruelly, and, here and there around the world, threats are heard from terrorists to use means comparable to weapons of mass destruction”.⁷²

Similar statements were made in the wake of a meeting between Putin and Defence Minister Sergey Ivanov, Chief of the General Staff Anatoliy Kvashnin, Foreign Minister Igor Ivanov, Federal Security Service (FSB) Director Nikolay Patrushev, Interior Minister Boris Gryzlov, and other security chiefs on 29 October 2002. During the

⁶⁶ Eric Engleman “Putin sends letter to world leaders”, *Moscow AP*, 12 September 2002.

⁶⁷ “Vlast usilennno boretsya s vnezapnoy slabostyu”, *Nezavisimaya gazeta*, 26 October 2002.

⁶⁸ For a discussion on how Russia's policies contributed to squeezing the Maskhadov regime into closer collaboration with radical Islamists, see Julie Wilhelmsen, “Between a Rock and a Hard Place: The Islamisation of the Chechen Separatist Movement”, *Europe-Asia Studies*, vol. 57, no. 1, 2005, pp 35–59.

⁶⁹ *Reuters*, 28 October 2002.

⁷⁰ *AFP*, 16 July 2003.

⁷¹ “Putin menyaet doktrinu”, *Izvestia*, 29 October 2002.

⁷² “Russia: Chechens Fear Abuses In Moscow's Crackdown On Terrorism”, *RFE/RL Special report*, 31 October 2002.

meeting, Putin announced that the National Security Concept (NSC) from 2000 should be revised in the light of more pressing threats from international terrorism. Defence Minister Sergey Ivanov added that the Russian government believed that threats to Russia's national security were on the rise, and that Russia is prepared to use military force not only against terrorists, but also against those who sponsor or finance them.⁷³

As the internal debate on revising the NSC and the MD picked up, Minister of Defence, Sergey Ivanov, presented a more elaborate version in an *Izvestiya* interview on 5 November 2002. Ivanov stated that “war has been declared on Russia, a war without frontlines, borders, or visible enemies”, and that Russia should develop special weapons to conduct precise targeted operations against terrorists wherever they might be. Specifying that Russia had no intentions to send Russian soldiers abroad, Ivanov suggested that Russia’s President had meant that Russia reserves the right to use precision-guided weapons to strike training bases or other objects related to international terrorism.⁷⁴ Moreover, following up on Putin’s announcement that the NSC should be revised, Ivanov stated that the FSB would have a leading role in combating international terrorism, and that the doctrine should take into consideration the fact that most terrorist threats, as well as their financial, organizational, and informational support, came from abroad. Noting that, although the former NSC mentioned the word “terrorism” 18 times, Ivanov suggested that:

We – that is – the Ministry of Defence, should reconsider our military planning and the use of military force given the acuteness of the terrorist threat and the developing ties between the terrorists and international terrorist networks. You already know the geography of these threats.⁷⁵

The revision of the NSC was, according to Ivanov, not an open process, and one that in the first stage involved the MFA and the MOD. Ivanov refused to go into detail, but indicated that the ambition of the president was to “infuse in the NSC separate provisions on the use of military force in combating terrorism”.⁷⁶ Responding to a question on whether the revised doctrine would imply changes in Russia’s foreign policies, Ivanov maintained: “This is already happening, first and foremost in the protest notes that the MFA now is distributing around the world, where there is a more offensive position. At a deeper level, I would contend that our bilateral relations increasingly would depend upon how this or that country approaches the problem of international terrorism”.⁷⁷

Viewing these statements together, we can see clear signals of a more offensive Russian strategy. The components are an increasing willingness to use military force, including nuclear weapons, to counter the new threat, and also to use this force pre-emptively outside the borders of the Federation under the pretext of neutralizing those who support or shelter terrorists.

⁷³ *RFE/RL Newslines*, 30 October 2002.

⁷⁴ *RFE/RL Newslines*, 6 November 2002.

⁷⁵ “Nam obyavlena vojna bez frontov i granits”, *Izvestiya*, 5 November 2002.

⁷⁶ *Ibid.*

⁷⁷ *Ibid.*

In spring 2003 Russia vehemently opposed US unilateral military action against Iraq without UN sanction and the use of pre-emptive strikes. However, the very concepts that were so harshly criticized eventually crept into what some regard as a new Russian military doctrine in October the same year. On 2 October, a “Doctrine on the Modernization of the Armed Forces” was presented at a meeting of the Ministry of Defence in Moscow. Although this cannot be considered a new official Military Doctrine, as the Russian president never signed it, it did formalize many of the concepts that had already entered Russian rhetoric in the course of 2002.

Defence Minister Ivanov stated during the presentation of the document that the Russian armed forces had adjusted to new global realities, noting in particular that a global nuclear war or a large-scale conventional war with NATO or any US-led coalition had been excluded from the list of probable armed conflicts.⁷⁸ The spotlight in combat training had been shifted to peacekeeping operations, including operations to keep or enforce peace, special operations, the struggle against terrorism and participation in local wars.⁷⁹

Ivanov added that, according to the doctrine, Moscow will not exclude the possibility of conducting pre-emptive strikes in various regions of the world, if this should be required to defend Russia’s or its allies’ interests. He noted that in addition to such external threats as the proliferation of nuclear weapons and international terrorism, Russia now faces new threats such as “intervention into her internal affairs by foreign states or by organizations supported by foreign states and instability in its border regions resulting from the weakness of central governments in some neighboring states”.⁸⁰ The latter statement clearly referred to Georgia, and stretched the right to conduct pre-emptive strike beyond targeting the enemy to also targeting those *sheltering* the enemy. Although he pledged to adhere to the policy of multilateralism and UN sanctions in general, this type of legitimacy did not seem to be required to undertake the referred pre-emptive strikes.⁸¹ Elaborating on Russia’s right to undertake pre-emptive strikes under the terms of the “Ivanov doctrine”⁸² in Reykjavik a few days later, Ivanov said that Moscow might also opt for such a measure if it found itself threatened with reduced access to regions of the world where it has crucial economic or financial interests; further, that Russia might use military force within the CIS if a complex, unstable situation develops or if there is a direct threat to Russian citizens or ethnic Russians.⁸³ These additions, then, broadened the right to use pre-emptive strikes not only against military threats, but to secure broader economic or ethnic/cultural interests.

⁷⁸ However, the document and the presentation of it were full of contradictions. The mention of the downscaling of NATO and the West as a threat was – for example – contradicted by other statements and provisions suggesting a readiness for a war against NATO, illustrating the continued uneasiness about NATO expansion in broad circles of the Russian military. See Aleksey Nikolskiy, “One war is not Enough”, *Vedomosti*, 3 October 2003.

⁷⁹ Viktor Litovkin, “New Russian military doctrine for the globalised world”, *Ria Novosti*, 3 October 2003.

⁸⁰ Nikolskiy, “One War is Not Enough”.

⁸¹ Yevgeniy Krutikov, “The Ivanov Doctrine”, *Versia*, 7 October 2003.

⁸² This has become the nickname for what is not yet an official military doctrine, but a blueprint for it. The draft doctrine is termed the “Doctrine for the modernization of the Armed Forces”.

⁸³ *RFE/RL Newslines*, 6 October 2003

During the presentation of the “Doctrine on the Modernization of the Armed Forces” on 2 October 2003, Ivanov had also indicated that Russia might use nuclear weapons to “preventively attack its neighbors to stop acts of aggression”.⁸⁴ Ivanov said that the role of nuclear weapons remains crucial to the Federation’s defence and that there was even the possibility of transforming Russia’s “nuclear weapons into a real combat tool”.⁸⁵ Although nothing was said about what this would imply, it seemed to resonate with US pledges to build “mini-nukes”, nuclear weapons with relatively low explosive force, which could be used against more limited targets. These provisions were obviously aimed at the Russian audience. Only a week later, at a meeting in Colorado Springs with 19 NATO defence ministers, Ivanov retracted the statement and said: “under no circumstances would Russia be the first to strike with nuclear weapons”.⁸⁶

Interestingly, Putin defended the adoption of the concept of pre-emptive strike by stating: “We do not like this, but we retain the right to launch a pre-emptive strike, if this practice continues to be used around the world by others”.⁸⁷ With this, he was saying explicitly that the new and lower Russian threshold for the use of military force in response to different threats was copied from a pattern laid out by foreign states. The point here is not whether Russia actually has the capability to convert these concepts into action, or whether Russia could have taken such action without these rhetorical moves had it had the capability, but that such concepts have now acquired a new level of legitimacy that will make their translation into action more probable, once the capability is in place.

In sum, the “Winnie-the-Pooh” attitude of having it both ways continued to dominate the rhetoric of Russian authorities. In a recent article published in *Russia in Global Affairs* (2004) Sergey Ivanov writes: “Russia consistently advocates minimising the role of military force in addressing international problems. [...] However, recent developments in the world have motivated Russia’s military-political leadership to amend its vision concerning the role and place of its military policy and military assets”. Although basically a blueprint of the white paper delivered in October, the article goes far in insisting on the importance of strict observance of international law and the strengthening of the UN Security Council, and warns of the danger caused by broadening the sphere for employing military force, for example in defence of economic interests.⁸⁸ At the same time, Ivanov states explicitly that revisions are to be made to the NSC with the aim of introducing wider provisions for use of military force. Moreover, the threat assessment present in Ivanov’s article seems far more elaborate with regard to linking external, internal and transnational threats together in a joint threat assessment and thereby calling for a more assertive response:

Meanwhile, even traditional external threats are acquiring new aspects. These include interference in Russia’s internal affairs by foreign states or organizations supported by

⁸⁴ Pavel Felgenhauer, “Ivanov’s Defense Manifesto”, *Moscow Times*, 9 October 2003.

⁸⁵ *RFE/RL Newslines*, 3 October 2003.

⁸⁶ “Russia shares 1st-strike doctrine”, *The Denver Post*, 10 October 2003.

⁸⁷ *RFE/RL Newslines*, 10 October 2003.

⁸⁸ Sergey Ivanov, “Russia’s Geopolitical Priorities and Armed Forces”, *Russia in Global Affairs*, no.1, January–February 2004.

them, instability in the neighbouring countries caused by the weakness of their governments and several other aspects which are relatively new for Russia's military planning. ... External threats require that the Russian armed forces should perform various kinds of tasks in various regions of the world. *One should not absolutely rule out the preventive use of force, if this is required to defend Russia's interests or its allied commitments* [author's emphasis].⁸⁹

The basic argument presented for pursuing a more unilateralist approach and a lower threshold for the use of military force is precisely that external and internal threats now conflate in transnational threats. Hence, Ivanov argues that several apparently "domestic" threats are in fact "external" and include not only activities of international terrorist organizations on Russian territory, but also "the training of armed groups on the territory of other states for actions on the territory of Russia or its allies". These threats are of such urgency that Russia also has to consider applying military force against third countries.⁹⁰ This is a major change compared to the NSC (2000), which, as suggested above, primarily located terrorism as an explicitly *domestic* threat, and sought to combat internal threats by engaging in multilateral co-operation.

In 2004 came a new wave of devastating terrorist attacks. The explosion of two passenger airplanes, suicide attacks in Moscow and the school hostage-taking in Beslan, North Ossetia, triggered Russian emulation of the Bush doctrine concepts and pushed Russia one step further toward codifying them in new a National Security Concept and a Military Doctrine. Despite their obvious domestic roots in the Chechen separatist conflict, the terrorist acts were framed as "international terrorism" by Russian authorities. The clearest examples was the completely unfounded "news" presented by Deputy Public Prosecutor General Sergey Fridinskiy during the hostage crisis that there were ten Arabs among the hostage takers and the fact that Putin, when giving a ten-minute talk on the Beslan tragedy on 4 September, failed to use the word "Chechnya" once, but several times spoke of "international terrorism".

The diagnosis of the plague Russia was "at war" with was swiftly followed by suggestions of the now recognized cure.⁹¹ Giving his comments alongside NATO's Supreme Allied Commander in Europe on 8 September 2004, Colonel-General Yuriy Baluyevskiy, chief of the general staff of Russia's armed forces, asserted Russia's right to strike terrorists beyond its borders: "As for carrying out preventive strikes against terrorist bases, we will take all the measures to liquidate terrorist bases in any region of the world".⁹² That Baluyevskiy's stand was endorsed from the very top was demonstrated the next day when Ivanov justified the Federation's right to pre-emptive strike. "War has been declared against us and, as the proverb goes, War is war," he said. "We reserve the

⁸⁹ Ibid.

⁹⁰ Ibid.

⁹¹ After the Beslan hostage drama, the idea that Russia was "at war" with terrorism was frequently articulated. Sergey Ivanov said in an interview on NTV 12 September that "although Russia had been at war with terrorism for a long time, the string of recent terrorist attacks shows that this war in taking on a systemic character". The same day on RTR the head of the State Duma Committee, Colonel General Vasilev, said that the notion "terrorist act" has been exhausted and the country should operate under the category of "war". *RFE/RL Newslines*, 13 September 2004.

⁹² Quoted in Steve Gutterman, "Russia threatens to strike terror bases", *Moscow AP*, 9 September 2004.

right to use all available means in confronting the enemy. We will react adequately to all terrorist threats and will not inform anybody in advance”.⁹³ In a speech on 13 September 2004, Putin followed suit by saying: “Russia needs a system that is capable of carrying out preventive action and destroying criminals in their den and, if the situation requires, reaching them abroad”.⁹⁴ Shortly thereafter, Putin confirmed that plans for pre-emptive strikes were already being worked out, but said that Russia would act only within the limits of international law.⁹⁵ US officials, having openly declared their own intention to conduct such strikes, could nothing but confirm Russia’s right to pre-emptive strikes on terrorists, also on foreign territory. State Secretary Colin Powell did as much in an article in *Washington Times* on 17 September. Defence Secretary Donald Rumsfeld had given a similar endorsement of Russia’s right to pre-emptive strikes against terrorist bases abroad a few days earlier while visiting the Russian Embassy in Washington.⁹⁶

Talk of a new national security concept aimed to match the terrorist threat resurfaced in September 2004. “We face new threats that demand new approaches”, said Igor Ivanov, Security Council Secretary, when presenting the work on a new NSC.⁹⁷ Although it is too early to say what this new NSC will look like, it seems clear that it will not be as strictly defensive as the 2000 document and that the concepts and language traced above will be given some doctrinal sanction in Russia, albeit not necessarily by the international community.⁹⁸

It is noteworthy that although Russia still insists that the UN should have a co-ordinating role in the struggle against international terrorism, Russia’s actual UN approach has become more conditional. Although suggesting that terrorism should not be fought on the basis of military blocs, Russia has simultaneously called on the world organization to utilize existing regional structures where Russia is a member. Russia’s new Minister of Foreign Affairs, Sergey Lavrov, stated at the UN General Assembly on 4 September 2004 that the UN should “adopt a new resolution to ensure that the Counter-terrorist Committee of the UN [Russia held the chairmanship of the committee in 2004] is working effectively, that it in good time recognizes its weak ties to the anti-terrorism network, and embarks on forging a practical co-operation with international and regional organizations like the CIS, Collective Security Treaty Organization (CSTO) and the Shanghai Co-operation Organisation (SCO)”.⁹⁹ Moreover, Lavrov’s statement contained a warning that Russia would build relations to other states depending on whether or not they applied “double standards” in fighting terrorism. The latter statement suggested, as

⁹³ *RFE/RL Newswire*, 10 September 2004, *Lenta.ru*, 9. September 2004.

⁹⁴ *RFE/RL Newswire*, 14 September 2004.

⁹⁵ *Lenta.ru*, 17 September 2004.

⁹⁶ *RFE/RL Newswire*, 10 September 2004.

⁹⁷ *RIA Novosti*, September 29 2004.

⁹⁸ For early speculation on the new concept see Mark Galeotti, “Russia’s emerging security doctrine”, *Jane’s Intelligence Review*, November 2004.

⁹⁹ “Lavrov nazval klyuchevye kriterii otnosheniy Rossii s lyubym gosudarstvom”, *Izvestia*, 4 September 2004. At: <http://www.izvestia.ru/politic/article434061> and “Vystuplenie ministra inostrannykh del S. V. Lavrova”, *Russia’s MFA press Release*, 24 September 2004, at: http://www.in.mid.ru/brp_4.nsf/2fee282eb6df40e643256999005e6e8c/5aa70fe79a107bbbc3256f18007e49f8?OpenDocument.

is evident in the case of Georgia examined below, that Russia would defend its interests in the event of states harbouring terrorists on their territories.

Although Lavrov's September 2004 statements in the UN seemed to underscore that Russia wanted a UN mandate for regional security constellations, Russian officials were also increasingly adamant that Russia would act unilaterally and conduct pre-emptive strikes without any mandate from the UN, nor without any warning to the international community. When Sergey Ivanov spoke to the foreign military attachés in Moscow in December 2004 on Russia's defence planning, he seemed to suggest that Russia would not have to wait for any UN sanctions, but considered the UN resolution passed after the Beslan events a sufficient mandate for striking against terrorist groups.¹⁰⁰ "Russia would not tell anyone in advance about such a strike. Otherwise the effect would be zero", Ivanov stated.¹⁰¹ Moreover, he contended that: "Russia is by no means the only country that has said it could use preventive [*sic*] strikes. We did not think this up [...] Secondly, we see in practice that such strikes are conducted – in Afghanistan, in Iraq, in other regions of the world [...] It exists, it is already a *norm of life* [author's emphasis]".¹⁰² The reference to "norms" is crucial, since it illustrates the point made above: states may not only bandwagon on coalitions, but also adopt negative norms themselves.

While Russian officials claim that they are only following the example of unnamed states – that is, the USA – our interpretation would be that since 1999 Russia has indeed been promoting the international terrorist threat as enemy number one and also been active in trying out a more consolidated offensive military posture to meet this threat in the CIS, several times conducting pre-emptive strikes on CIS territory. The effect of the Bush doctrine has thus been an escalation of the rhetoric and subsequently the open adoption of a more offensive, unilateral approach by Russia. Apparently the new approach has now acquired such a level of legitimacy that it will be formalized in the Federation's new Military Doctrine and National Security Concept.

In the following, we will first analyse developments within the Collective Security Treaty of the CIS. We then turn to two cases where the ambitions of invigorating collective security and an offensive military capacity have been put into effect: the Caucasus and Central Asia.

3. From Peacekeeping to Combating Terrorism: The CIS Security Framework

Russia's gradual incorporation of the use of pre-emptive military force in official rhetoric has been paralleled by an increasing focus on reinvigorating the lingering CIS security

¹⁰⁰ Ivanov's reference was to UNSC Resolution no. 1566, adopted on 8 October 2004, which explicitly reminds "states that they must ensure that any measures taken to combat terrorism comply with all their obligations under international law, and should adopt such measures in accordance with international law, in particular international human rights, refugee and humanitarian law". UNSC Resolution no. 1566, 8 October 2004. At:

<http://daccessdds.un.org/doc/UNDOC/GEN/N04/542/82/PDF/N0454282.pdf?OpenElement>.

¹⁰¹ Ibid.

¹⁰² Steve Gutterman, "Russian defense chief reserves right to conduct preemptive strikes", *Associated Press*, 10 December 2004.

framework as a foothold for combating international terrorism.¹⁰³ Already in the Joint Declaration of the CIS states from 2 April 1999, the CIS states pledged to increase their efforts to “fight organized crime, terrorism and illegal drug trading”.¹⁰⁴ This focus, which was fronted more actively from 2000 and onwards, has co-existed with a more traditional military ambition from the Yeltsin period – that of CIS peacekeeping. In the action programme for the CIS Toward the Year 2005, adopted in 2000, the CIS states confirmed their “devotion to a rapid regulation of armed conflicts on the territory of CIS member states by peaceful means and utilization of UN and OSCE mechanisms and resources”.¹⁰⁵

Throughout the Yeltsin period, however, the “utilization of UN and OSCE mechanisms and resources” was more a catchword for what Russia did not do than what it did. First, Russian forces stationed in former Soviet republics performed so-called CIS peacekeeping functions by inertia and not by international mandate, and often in contradiction with the wishes of the states involved.¹⁰⁶ In most cases, Russian military presence was simply “transformed” into CIS peacekeeping units that have continued to bear heavily on the host states, and that have been subject to prolonged negotiations and logrolling within the CIS on extending the mandate for the troops. Second, at the height of the Kosovo crisis, most states in the CIS area realigned themselves with the transatlantic security community and tried to bring a conflict settlement in under an international umbrella. The CIS summit in April 1999 failed to produce a uniform statement on the Kosovo campaign, and the Collective Security Treaty (CST) signed in May 1992 in Tashkent was only partially renewed, since CIS states sought to align in sub-regional structures linking up to the Western security structures.¹⁰⁷ In April 1999, only six of a total of nine initial signatory states affirmed their intentions to prolong the Treaty, leaving out Georgia, Uzbekistan and Azerbaijan.¹⁰⁸ At the NATO summit in

¹⁰³ The main security body for the CIS is the Collective Security Treaty (CST) signed by Tajikistan, Belarus, Kazakhstan, Uzbekistan, Kyrgyzstan, Azerbaijan, Armenia, Georgia and Russia in Tashkent 1992. Both Georgia and Uzbekistan terminated their membership in the CST in 1999 and joined the GUUAM subregional unit of other defectors from the CIS security cooperation. Uzbekistan later quit GUUAM in 2003. Ukraine, Moldova, Turkmenistan and the three Baltic states had refrained from joining the CST from the very beginning.

¹⁰⁴ “Deklaratsiya glav gosudarstv – uchastnikov SNG ob osnovnykh napravleniyakh razvitiya Sodruzhestvo Nezavisimykh Gosudarstv”, in Igor Ivanov, *Novaya rossiyskaya diplomatiya*, Olma Press, 2001, pp. 314–318.

¹⁰⁵ “Deklaratsiya glav gosudarstv – uchastnikov SNG”, p. 317.

¹⁰⁶ Russian forces do not perform CIS peacekeeping functions in all former Soviet republics. In Armenia, which has been more benevolent toward Russian military presence, Russia maintains the 102nd military base at Gyumri close to the Turkish border, MiG-23 and MiG-29 aircraft, and S-300 V anti-aircraft systems. An estimated 8,000 military personnel basically perform border guard functions, while some also serve the Russian base (127th motorized rifle division). In Ukraine, Russian military presence is linked to the Black Sea Fleet (with a total of 20,000 personnel). Russian presence there is the direct result of an agreement which gives equally divided jurisdiction over the Black Sea Fleet. In the case of the breakaway republic Transdnestr in Moldova, Russia maintains a presence of 2,600 personnel that are basically leftovers from the 14th Soviet army. See Hannes Adomeit and Heidi Reisinger, “Russia’s Role in Post-Soviet Territory. Decline of Military Power and Political Influence”, *Norwegian Institute for Defence Studies Policy Paper*, no. 4, 2002.

¹⁰⁷ *RFE/RL Newslines*, 2 April 1999.

¹⁰⁸ “Rossiyu ozhidaet ocherednaya golovolomka”, *Nezavisimaya gazeta*, 26 May 2000.

Washington in April 1999, Uzbekistan swiftly joined the security “splinter movement”¹⁰⁹ GUAM (Georgia, Ukraine, Azerbaijan and Moldova), a loose pro-Western alignment of newly independent states (NIS) centred on securing energy transports and interacting with Western Euro-Atlantic structures, such as the EAPC.

The realignment of CIS states during the Kosovo campaign and the rapid erosion of political authority in Russia brought a devastating blow to Russia’s alleged “CIS peacekeeping” functions. One telling example can be found in the attempts to renew the CIS peacekeeping mandate in the Abkhaz–Georgian conflict at the April 1999 CIS summit. The summit decision was that the CIS mandate would be prolonged by six months only if the Abkhaz and Georgian sides agreed on a settlement and on the resumption of peace talks. Consultations between the Georgian and Abkhaz authorities in late April were no success,¹¹⁰ and Georgia opted for tying the withdrawal of Russian CIS troops to the revised CFE Treaty on flank reductions. In May 1999, Georgian officials stated that the treaty allowing Russian CIS bases in Georgia would not be ratified;¹¹¹ then in July, Georgian authorities refused to discuss CFE quotas with Russia at the bilateral level, and signalled a revision of all earlier agreements on the stationing of Russian forces in Georgia.¹¹² Hence, Russian officials gradually recognized that the major paradigm for keeping Russian bases in the CIS area could no longer be sustained with any credibility, let alone serve as a motor for integrating the CIS space. An illustrative example of the latter is Putin’s support to terminating the CIS peacekeeping mandate in Tajikistan in June 2000. At the June 2000 CIS summit, the notorious Head of the Ministry of Defence’s International Department, General Leonid Ivashov, stated that the peace process in Tajikistan had reached a stage where peacekeeping activities needed to be replaced by concerted efforts by the country’s police and armed forces to combat “international terrorism” and “extremism”. Putin supported this, but added that this did not imply that Russia would not focus on Central Asian security.¹¹³

The focus on Central Asian security had in fact dominated Russian threat perceptions in 2000. As the first anti-terror exercise in the CIS, “Southern shield–2000”, commenced in April that year, Head of the Security Council, Sergey Ivanov, stated that Russia might conduct bomb raids on Afghan territory if “the aggressive onslaughts attain a more massive character”.¹¹⁴ Following Ivanov’s statement, Head of the General Staff, Anatoliy Kvashnin, did not exclude the use of pre-emptive strikes against Afghan territory, given a mandate from the CIS Heads of State to conduct such an operation.¹¹⁵ Russian security forces insisted that the situation in Afghanistan was out of control, and that the Taliban was preparing an onslaught in Russia or in the CIS region already in July/August 2000. Reaffirming this, a press leak from Kremlin spokesman Sergey Yastrzhembskiy in May

¹⁰⁹ See Bertil Nygren, “Russia’s Immediate Security Environment under Putin, before and after September 11th”, in Bertil Nygren and Yuri Fedorov (eds), *Russian Military Reform and Russia’s New Security Environment*, Swedish National Defence College, 2003.

¹¹⁰ *RFE/RL Newslines*, 27 April 1999.

¹¹¹ *RFE/RL Newslines*, 24 May 1999.

¹¹² *RFE/RL Newslines*, 2 July 1999.

¹¹³ *RFE/RL Newslines*, 22 June 2000.

¹¹⁴ “Prizrak vtorogo Afganistana”, *Dipkur’er-NG*, 18 May 2000.

¹¹⁵ *Ibid.*

2000, reportedly supported by the MOD, framed the emerging security concerns of the new administration by once again mooted the possibility that Russia was preparing pre-emptive strikes against Taliban on Afghan territory.¹¹⁶

In other words, the administration seemed to have been considering a more offensive posture long before 11 September, and also to have viewed the terrorist threat against the CIS as imminent.¹¹⁷ While these had the character of trial balloons, they served a purpose: to introduce a new rationale for CIS security integration. When Vladimir Putin made his first trip abroad as Russia's president – to Tajikistan, Kyrgyzstan, Turkmenistan and Uzbekistan in mid-May 2000 – Russian press outlets interpreted Putin's travel as a specific expression of Moscow's desire to “restore Moscow's lost economic and political positions in the region” and improve security co-operation on the situation in Afghanistan.¹¹⁸ Moreover, Putin's travel was co-ordinated with a meeting of Heads of State of CST in Minsk on 23 May 2000. Anticipating this meeting, the Secretary General of the Council of Collective Security, Vladimir Zemskiy, stated that the incursions of the Islamic Movement of Uzbekistan in Kyrgyzstan in 1999 had revealed that the CST should be more than simply a leftover from the Yeltsin period.¹¹⁹ Aspirations were that the CST could become an effective tool in stopping attacks and the spillover of conflicts from Afghanistan. As a step in this, Russian authorities wanted the CST to prepare a new memorandum, obliging CIS members to deal with the “new geopolitical situation and the struggle against international terrorism”.¹²⁰

The early statements on reviving the CST are important, since they underscore that although Russian officials later on claimed to have “given up” on CIS integration,¹²¹ Moscow seemed from 2000 and onwards deliberately to defocus on economic affairs, and refocus on security.¹²² In an article in *Nezavisimaya gazeta* on 31 May 2000, Zemskiy

¹¹⁶“Talibov dostat' budet trudno”, *Nezavisimaya gazeta*, 24 May 2000. Russian papers argued that “for precision bombings of terrorist bases, the Russian air force is not prepared at all”, and that the Western security structures would not look favourably on unilateral Russian action in Afghanistan.

¹¹⁷ For an early analysis of the possible rapprochement between Russian and Western security structures under a common banner of combating international terrorism, see Armen Khanbabayan, “Obshchaya ugroza kak faktor sotrudnichestva”, *Sodruzhestvo NG*, 31 May 2000. According to this source: “the emergence of a new geostrategic alliance between Moscow and former satellites can attain a paradoxical configuration. Facts are that the current regime in Kabul and the so-called ‘Bin Laden problem’ arouses no less an allergic reaction in the West—specifically in Washington—than in Moscow and among its allies”.

¹¹⁸ See “Rossiya i Turkmeniya po-prezhnemu nuzhny drug drugu”, *Nezavisimaya gazeta* 25 May 2000, “Moskva vvela sanktsii protiv Talibov”, *Nezavisimaya gazeta*, 13 May 2000, “Putin ponyal Karimova”, *Nezavisimaya gazeta*, 20 May 2000.

¹¹⁹ “Oborona budet effektivnoy”, *Nezavisimaya gazeta*, 23 May 2000.

¹²⁰ Ibid.

¹²¹ Sergey Ivanov claimed, for one, that Moscow realized that “an accelerated development of the Commonwealth into a fully-fledged and well-integrated association is not possible in the near future. As a result, a choice has been made in favor of ensuring Russia's national security interests, first of all through the development of bilateral relations with the CIS countries”. We argue, however, that Russia did focus on national security interests, and framed these as a collective concern for the CIS. Quoted from *Johnson's Russia List*, 5 February 2001.

¹²² In fact, on 18 May 2000 Putin dissolved the Ministry of CIS Affairs and sent Minister of CIS Affairs Drachevskiy to the post as presidential envoy to Siberia. Focus was put more explicitly on “no-necktie” meetings with CIS leaders, both bilaterally and in the CIS framework. This did not imply that Russia

referred to the CST as a “most important element of the CIS co-operation”, and stated that the CST should “work in accordance with the priorities of the UN Charter and OSCE and become a part of the future security system of Europe and Asia”.¹²³ Later, Russian officials retracted on this, however. Although Secretary of the Council of CIS Ministers of Defence, Aleksandr Sinayskiy, anticipating the 19 June meeting of the Ministers of Defence of the CIS, claimed that: “the authority of the President plays a unifying role”,¹²⁴ Russia had problems in untangling the complex CIS structures, let alone managing to press through considerable gains. A major flaw of the CIS was the fact that the CIS and the CST structures were two separate entities, Sinayskiy asserted,¹²⁵ and continued: “We take as point of departure the assertion that the adaptation of the CST to a new situation and the reanimation of the Treaty should not contradict the well-established system of multilateral co-operation between CIS countries, but rather facilitate the development of military-political relations between the CIS states”.¹²⁶

The primary gain for Moscow from these meetings was that a new process had been initiated. The meeting in May adopted a package consisting of nine documents meant to streamline the CST to a new geopolitical situation, and a separate memorandum on speeding up the modernization of the CST. The memorandum envisaged measures against proliferation of weapons of mass destruction and their means of delivery, weapon smuggling and drug trafficking, international terrorism and “ethno-religious extremism”.¹²⁷ A partial ambition was also to activate the co-operation within the sphere of a unified ground-to-air defence system initiated in 1995, but this was more of a declaration.¹²⁸ The most important decision was, however, reached at the meeting of CIS Heads of State on 21 June 2000, when participants agreed to create an Anti-terrorist Centre (ATC) for the CIS on the basis of the FSB.¹²⁹ The ATC was to be located in Bishkek, Kyrgyzstan, and should co-ordinate intelligence and gather information about international terrorism.¹³⁰ Commenting on the 21 June 2000 summit of the CIS, President Putin called the decision to establish a joint anti-terror centre under the CIS in Bishkek and the promotion of the FSB official Boris Myl’nikov to lead the centre a “crucial step

wanted to focus less on CIS affairs, but that it wanted to do so at a higher level and with less surrounding bureaucratic red tape. “Minsodruzhestvo veleno zakryt”, *Sodruzhestvo NG*, 31 May 2000.

¹²³ Vladimir Zemskiy, “Vazhneyshiy element sotrudnichestva”, *NeGa Sodruzhestva*, 31 May 2000. The CST included an article of collective defence that had been pending in the Yeltsin period. According to the article: “In the event of any act of aggression against any of the states-participants of the treaty, all other states-participants will provide the necessary assistance, including military assistance, and they will also provide other means of assistance available in the event of the right to self-defence in accordance with paragraph 51 in the UN Charter”.

¹²⁴ “My gotovy k konstruktivnomu vzaimodeystviyu”, *Nezavisimaya gazeta*, 16 June 2000.

¹²⁵ Ibid.

¹²⁶ Ibid.

¹²⁷ “Prioritet voenno-politicheskim otnosheniyam”, *Nezavisimaya gazeta*, 25 May 2000.

¹²⁸ Rossiya ozhidaet....”. According to the press report, Uzbekistan and Turkmenistan were members of the co-ordination committee on an irregular basis, while Russia, Belarus, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan and Armenia shared the system.

¹²⁹ Russia had lobbied for this since early 2000. See “V iune – sammit SNG”, *Nezavisimaya gazeta*, 28 April 2000. According to *Nezavisimaya gazeta*, the budget for 2000 should be 3.3 million RUR, to be taken from personnel changes in the executive organs of the CIS.

¹³⁰ For an outline of the functions of the ATC, see an interview with Boris Myl’nikov in “Do korennogo pereloma v bor’be s terrorizmom eshche daleko”, *Dipkur’er NG*, 10 June 2002.

forward in the fight against religious terrorism and extremism in the post-Soviet space”.¹³¹ Clearly, although Moscow was facing serious obstacles in transforming and modernizing the CST structures, a platform was created for preparing a common threat perception in the CIS space.

As stated above, Russia has in the period after 11 September more readily blurred the lines between internal and external threats by conflating this in transnational threats. While we have found reasons to claim that this has been more evident in post-11 September rhetoric, it is important to underline that, already from 2000 and onwards, Moscow seemed to distinguish poorly between internal threats to Russian security (Chechnya) and external threats involving the CIS territory. This is evident in Chief of Russia’s Security Council, Sergey Ivanov’s deliberations in November 2000, when he rebuffed allegations that Russia was actually preparing for the “last war” by focusing on reviving the collective security space of the CIS. “The leadership of the Russian Federation”, he claimed, “clearly understands the necessity of implementing cardinal measures in order to intercept the strategic initiative, deter and eliminate the sources of instability in the Northern Caucasus”.¹³² Moreover, commenting on the June meeting in the CST and a subsequent meeting in Bishkek on 11 October 2000, where CST members adopted a four-year plan for development of the CST, Ivanov stated: “An important step has been made toward military-political integration, which will enable us to stave off any attempt from extremist forces to test the solidity of the external border of the CIS in the South”.¹³³ Ivanov did not separate internal threats to Russia from the task of staving off incursions on the CIS territory – they were in fact two sides of the same coin.

The process of framing international terrorism a principle threat to CIS security commenced at the CIS summit in Yerevan on 25 May 2001, when signatories of the CST declared that they were in a common front against terrorism and agreed to proceed with setting up a joint 3,000 personnel rapid reaction force (CRRF) to repel any incursions of radical Islamist forces on Central Asian territory.¹³⁴ The joint force was to consist of one battalion each from Armenia, Belarus, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Russia and Tajikistan, and be headquartered in Bishkek. Following up on this, on 24 August, the collective CRRF forces held an exercise “Friendship–2001” consisting of officers preparing and sounding out tactics for blocking the incursion of Islamist forces in the Batken province of Kyrgyzstan.¹³⁵ Although this was primarily a staff exercise, CRRF spokesmen stated that the exercise was aimed at “crushing terrorists in Central Asia” and preparing for collective defence. According to CRRF head Sergey Chernomordin, CRRF forces would be activated in the event of Taliban incursions on Tajikistan’s territory.¹³⁶ Hence, Russia was gradually and persistently building a case for being recognized as a legitimate military power in the CIS territory. Even after the onset of the “Enduring Freedom” operation, Russian officials readily took credit for the reduction of terrorist activities in

¹³¹ *RFE/RL Newswire*, 22 June 2000.

¹³² “Strategiya bezopasnosti Rossii”, *Nezavisimaya gazeta*, 29 November 2000.

¹³³ *Ibid.*

¹³⁴ *RFE/RL Newswire*, 25 May 2001.

¹³⁵ *RFE/RL Central Asia Report*, 30 August 2001.

¹³⁶ *Ibid.*

Central Asia. Secretary of the CST, Valeriy Nikolayenko, suggested in November 2001 that the CRRF and the ATC in Bishkek had been pivotal in reducing terrorist activity in Central Asia, and claimed that the CST had emerged as a fully-fledged tool for fighting international terrorism.¹³⁷ Moreover, in 2002, Igor Ivanov argued that the CST had already become a regional security organization for conflict settlement in the CIS space, and that the United Nations should view the CIS structure as such.¹³⁸

When the heads of the CST states met in Yerevan on 9 April 2002, Russia again launched the proposal to transform the CST into an international security organization under the UN Charter.¹³⁹ According to Nikolayenko, the CST would not aim at drawing new members into the treaty, but focus on consolidating the treaty in three separate “circles” of allies: Belarus–Russia, Armenia–Russia and Russia, and the three Central Asian signatories.¹⁴⁰ At a subsequent meeting between heads of state of the CST countries on 14 May 2002, Russia added fuel to integrationist efforts by pointing to the Afghan situation and the situation in Northern Caucasus. According to Security Council Secretary Vladimir Rushailo: “the countries of the CST are facing new threats and challenges that touch upon common interests” – such as increased terrorist and separatist activities in Afghanistan and Northern Caucasus.¹⁴¹ This strategy was coupled with a draft proposal from the Russian side to integrate the dispersed CST Staff for co-ordination of military co-operation with the Russian General Staff, transform the CST to an organization for a future “Euro-Asian” security network and a separate security organization under paragraph 8 of the UN Charter. In the same vein, the May 2002 summit decided to upgrade the CST to a regional security organization (Collective Security Treaty Organization – CSTO), to co-operate in military training and to trade weapons at internal Russian prices.¹⁴²

Although CIS members of the CSTO failed to endorse a joint military command structure under the Russian General Staff at the May 2002 summit,¹⁴³ the April 2003 summit adopted the decision. A major reason for this was the onset of the US military campaign in Iraq. Russian officials were adamant that the US campaign marked a watershed in the territorial redivision of the world, through which each state had to create its own security sphere. For Russia’s part, Andrey Kokoshin, former Deputy Defence Minister, remarked: “Russia’s sole sphere of interests is the post-Soviet space”.¹⁴⁴ Outlining the contours of what he termed the “Putin doctrine”, Kokoshin argued that the time had come for the CSTO to become a fully-fledged security organization, and that CSTO members should

¹³⁷ “CIS Summit Talks up Economic Integration, Antiterrorist Cooperation”, *RFE/RL Central Asia Report*, 6 December 2001.

¹³⁸ See for instance Igor Ivanov, “Rossiya i mir v epokhu globalizatsii”, *Vneshnyaya politika Rossii v epokhu globalizatsii*, Olma Press, Moscow, 2002, p. 45.

¹³⁹ *RFE/RL Newslines*, 10 April 2002.

¹⁴⁰ Russian officials claimed otherwise in official statements, underlining that the CSTO would be open for new members. See for instance *RFE/RL Newslines*, 12 April 2002.

¹⁴¹ “Rossiya vozvrashchaet sebe rol’ pravoflangovogo”, *Nezavisimaya gazeta*, 15 May 2002.

¹⁴² *Ibid.*

¹⁴³ According to some observers, adoption would have implied the creation of a new “Warsaw Pact”. See *RFE/RL Newslines*, 14 May 2002.

¹⁴⁴ Igor Torbakov, “Moscow Seeks to Take Advantage of the Iraq Conflict to Reassert Leadership in the CIS”, *Eurasianet*, 9 April 2003.

have a vested interest in this, since “after the developments in Iraq, many rulers [in the CIS member states] whom the West regard as corrupt, anti-democratic, autocratic and even totalitarian have started thinking of what may happen to them in the future”.¹⁴⁵

Russia’s views apparently had an effect. Signatories agreed to a joint military command with Russia for the Central Asian CRRF,¹⁴⁶ and former Secretary of the Russian Security Council, Nikolay Bordyuzha, was made Secretary General of CSTO. Central Asian states also joined in providing troops for the CRRF. Russia contributed a battalion of tactical troops, Kazakhstan an airborne assault battalion, Tajikistan an infantry battalion and Kyrgyzstan a mountain infantry battalion.¹⁴⁷ A joint command structure was to be set up before 1 January 2004, basically by drawing on Russian General Staff resources and led by Head of the General Staff, Anatoliy Kvashnin.¹⁴⁸

All this indicates that the importance of the CST process should not be underestimated, not the least since Putin himself puts an emphasis on it. Recent confirmation of this can be seen in a speech to the top brass of Russia’s military forces on 17 November 2004, where Putin stated:

We have achieved noticeable progress in cooperation with our allies in the Collective Security Treaty Organization. The deployment of Russian bases has seriously strengthened the system of collective security in Central Asia. It is clear that with this help, conditions are being created to neutralize terrorist and extremist attacks in the region, and on the whole the defence potential of Russia and its allies in the southern strategic area is increasing.¹⁴⁹

On 23 November 2004, the Russian State Duma ratified an agreement signed in 2003 on military-technological co-operation within the CSTO. According to the Russian Deputy Minister of International Affairs, ratification of the agreement and the amendments “creates a base for increased deliveries of military hardware to the signatory states of the CSTO”.¹⁵⁰ According to Secretary General of the CSTO, Nikolay Bordyuzha, members of the CSTO also discussed at a meeting in November 2004 to quadruple the current CRRF forces in Central Asia consisting of contributions from Russia, Kyrgyzstan, Kazakhstan and Tajikistan to a number of 10,000 personnel.¹⁵¹ The location of these forces would be the permanent Russian base in Tajikistan, and the Kant airbase

¹⁴⁵ Ibid.

¹⁴⁶ *RFE/RL Newslines*, 2 May 2003.

¹⁴⁷ Ibid.

¹⁴⁸ “Sammit pobezhdennykh”, *Nezavisimaya gazeta*, 25 April 2003.

¹⁴⁹ “Russian President Vladimir Putin’s Opening Speech at the Meeting of the Leading Personnel of the Russian Armed Forces, Moscow, Defence Ministry, November 17, 2004”, Embassy Press Release, 19 November 2004.

¹⁵⁰ “Ministerstvo oborony protivitsya novomy geopoliticheskomu peredely SNG”, *Nezavisimaya gazeta*, 26 November 2004. At: http://www.ng.ru/cis/2004-11-26/6_sng.html.

¹⁵¹ Initially, members of the CSTO had discussed the option of increasing the number from 1,500 CRRF forces to about 4,000. See: “Zato s nashivkami”, *Izvestia*, 9 December 2003. At: <http://www.izvestia.ru/politic/article42052>.

in Kyrgyzstan.¹⁵² Finally, Russian officials also signalled that Russia would spend about 15 million USD on training of CSTO officers in 2005, which allegedly was more than the 11.5 million USD spent by the USA on similar activities.¹⁵³

In sum, the Russian Federation has gradually reasserted its positions by playing on post-Soviet relations, strategic friendship agreements and military aid. Russia had focused on combating international terrorism already from 2000 and onwards – before the 11 September events. In fact, ATC officials have maintained that Russia was in the forefront in this regard. In June 2002, Boris Myl'nikov stated that the intelligence exercise “South Anti-terror-2002” held in April 2002 was “planned in advance and adopted by the Council of heads of security services long before the 11 September events”.¹⁵⁴ Clearly, the Anti-terror Centre had long-term ambitions in the CIS that were linked to “co-ordinate competent intelligence organs among the member-states of the CIS in the field of combating terrorism, analysing information and maintaining an updated data base” for preventing terrorist actions.¹⁵⁵

This said, in the period after 11 September, Russian officials have insisted that the US Operation Enduring Freedom and the CST processes are not competing ones. Echoing the formation of a coalition against terrorism after 11 September, Secretary of the CST, Valeriy Nikolayenko, suggested that the presence of a US coalition in Central Asia was logical, since the CST and NATO were co-operating within the framework of the coalition, and since the CST was to provide “rear support” to the Enduring Freedom operation. Similarly, arriving in Bishkek in June 2002, Sergey Ivanov stated that the presence of foreign troops in Bishkek did not harm the strategic partnership between Kyrgyzstan and Russia, since “Russia does not seek to use Kyrgyzstan as an arena for some sort of competition”.¹⁵⁶ Moreover, according to Ivanov, “our allies in the CSTO of the CIS and the members of the anti-terror coalition are doing the same work here”.¹⁵⁷ Clearly, however, as states have pledged their support, Russian officials have become emboldened and maintained that the CSTO should become a “new military bloc” for Eurasia, and one that would co-operate with NATO.¹⁵⁸ Moreover, the CSTO would not only co-operate, but also *learn* from NATO. According to Andrey Kokoshin, the CSTO had a potential for becoming a regional security organization in Eurasia, but should not repeat mistakes made by former security organizations. “We should study the experience of the Warsaw Pact, NATO and some other security organizations”, Kokoshin maintained, and went on to say that the CSTO should respond to other threats than these organizations. Moreover, Kokoshin stated that NATO had been more successful than the

¹⁵² “Ministerstvo oborony protivitsya novomy geopoliticheskomu peredely SNG”, *Nezavisimaya gazeta*, 26 November 2004. At: http://www.ng.ru/cis/2004-11-26/6_sng.html.

¹⁵³ “Obshchiy mentalitet splotit ministrov oborony SNG”, *Izvestiya*, 30 November 2004. At: <http://www.izvestia.ru/armia2/article769598>.

¹⁵⁴ “Do korennoogo pereloma v bor'be s terrorizmom eshche daleko”, *Dipkur'er NG*, 10 June 2002. The self-evidence of this statement should be reflected in the discussion above. Russia had in fact held a first exercise of this kind in April 2000—the “Southern Shield-2000” exercise.

¹⁵⁵ *Ibid.*

¹⁵⁶ “Moskva i Vashington delayut odno delo v odnom meste”, *Nezavisimaya gazeta*, 14 June 2002.

¹⁵⁷ *Ibid.*

¹⁵⁸ “Mladenets rodilsya s zubami”, *Izvestia*, 23 May 2003. At: <http://www.izvestia.ru/politic/article34085>.

Warsaw Pact concerning the level of economic integration, a fact that, he said, should be taken into account and spur Russian economic initiatives in the CIS.¹⁵⁹

The most visible aspect of Russia's drive to revamp CIS security co-operation has been, however, that Russian statements about the possibilities for conducting pre-emptive strikes have loomed over the CIS as an *option* that has narrowed the possible choices for CIS states. Initially, the argument was directed not at strikes in the CIS territory but Afghanistan; more recently, there has been a shift in Kremlin rhetoric toward justifying such strikes also within the territory of the CIS.¹⁶⁰ A statement made by Sergey Ivanov in October 2003 fully illustrates this. Ivanov argued both for an increased Russian military presence in Central Asia and the withdrawal of allied troops from the region, while at the same time opening for the use of pre-emptive military force in the CIS. According to Ivanov: "The CIS is a crucial sphere for our security. Ten million of our compatriots live there, and we are supplying energy to them at prices below international levels. We are not going to renounce the right to use military power there in situations where all other means have been exhausted".¹⁶¹

Thus, Russia has since 2000 persistently followed a single aim – to shift attention from peacekeeping in the CIS to combating terrorism in the same region. In this process, as we shall see below, Russia has utilized opportunities opened up by the War on Terror to gain a foothold as a more credible security partner for the CIS space. Russia's interests in the CIS have been relatively permanent since 2000 to the degree that we find it possible to agree with the assertion that 11 September was not a *volte-face* in Russia's security policies. More correct would seem Bobo Lo's assertion that "Putin did not so much make a 'strategic choice' in favour of the West, but took advantage of an extraordinary set of circumstances to pursue objectives that were already in place but, for one reason and another, were difficult to realize. [...] The real shift was not in Moscow, but in the West and particularly in Washington".¹⁶² What 11 September did offer, was the opportunity to enlarge the Chechen threat, make it more imminent and make the CIS a theatre for combating terrorism. As observed by Matthew Evangelista, Putin's decision to allow U.S. bases in Central-Asia may in fact have tallied completely with long-term Russian security interests: "Though he [Putin] achieved only limited success in making Europe and the United States complacent about the Russian atrocities in Chechnya, he may well have convinced himself of the need to disrupt the connection between Chechnya and the Afghan terror network - and that the U.S. war represented the best option for doing so. The Chechnya-al Qaida link was objectively no different before 11 September than after, but Putin's effort to reframe the Chechen war led to a reframing of Afghanistan and the 'near abroad' as well".¹⁶³

¹⁵⁹ Ibid.

¹⁶⁰ For an assessment of the CSTO as a central prerequisite of the "Ivanov doctrine" on preventive strikes, see "Nachalo bol'shogo puti", *Nezavisimaya gazeta*, 13 November 2003. At: http://www.ng.ru/cis/2003-11-13/5_odkb.html.

¹⁶¹ *RFE/RL Newslines*, 10 October 2003.

¹⁶² Bobo Lo, *Vladimir Putin and the Evolution of Russian Foreign Policy*, Chatham House Papers, Blackwells, 2003, p. 129.

¹⁶³ Evangelista, *The Chechen Wars*, p. 182.

The next section of this report will deal more explicitly with how Russia has implemented this strategy in the CIS space, more specifically in the Caucasus (Georgia) and Central Asia (Tajikistan, Uzbekistan and Kyrgyzstan). As mentioned above, we assume that the two cases differ in one important aspect: Russia has not claimed that Central Asian states are “failed states” harbouring terrorists, but CIS allies in need of military assistance to rebuke Islamist incursions. It is in the case of Georgia that the “failed state” paradigm has been salient in the Russian debate. One main reason for this might be the fact that unlike Central Asia, Russia has not been able to rely on the collective CIS argument. Putin tried at an early stage to promote an ATC under a CIS umbrella for Caucasus, but this stranded on Georgia’s reluctance to join in such a structure.¹⁶⁴ Moreover, the closeness of Georgia to Russia’s anti-terror operations in Chechnya may also have been a decisive factor, as well as the consequent pro-Western orientation of Georgia’s politicians.

3.1. Constructing a Failed State: Russia and Georgia

While some claim that Central Asia can be seen as a security complex in the sense that it is an entity where essential security features are determined through the interactions between regional actors, it is doubtful whether the South Caucasus can be defined as such. This area has been and in many ways still is a playground for major powers, with Russian power being the main determinant of interactions since the 18th century. In this section we will focus on Russia’s relations with Georgia, since this is where the Bush doctrine seems to have made the strongest imprint on Russian rhetoric and action.

For Russia, Georgia still carries an especially significant historical and geostrategic weight. Many Russians view the whole of Caucasus as a single integral organism, and have viewed integration on the basis of common political, economic, cultural and historical experience as natural.¹⁶⁵ Moreover, Georgia constitutes Russia’s soft underbelly through which foreign powers or forces – be they the USA or radical Islamic groups – could challenge Russia. Control over Georgia would crucially allow Moscow to isolate the North Caucasus from the influence of the Islamic world.

However, Moscow has long since accepted Georgia’s status as an independent state. Moreover, the many problems and complexities that Russia faced because of its own troubled transition effectively blocked the more assertive policy pursued in the first years after the collapse of the Soviet Union aimed at preserving Russian hegemony by the use

¹⁶⁴ Apparently, Moscow tried already at the peak of the military operations in Chechnya and Dagestan in 1999 to address the issue of intelligence co-operation in the Caucasus at a meeting between the Ministers of the interior from Azerbaijan, Georgia and Armenia within the “Borzhomii-four” configuration in September 1999. The rationale was to join hands in combating international terrorism. According to Putin: “international terrorism has declared a terrorist war against the civilian population many places in the post-Soviet space—not only in the Caucasus. We have a common enemy, and if we unite our efforts, international terrorism will not be able to stand against well-organised states”. Putin wrapped up by calling on the Caucasus states to form an ATC on the basis of existing structures in the CIS, a call that Georgia failed to return due to allegations that Georgian authorities were not addressing the problem of Chechen terrorists on Georgian territory. “Siloviki ob”edninyayut usiliya”, *Nezavisimaya gazeta*, 30 September 1999.

¹⁶⁵ Stanislav Cherniyavskiy, “The Caucasus Vector of Russian Diplomacy”, *Central Asia and the Caucasus*, no. 5, 2000, pp. 90–97.

of force.¹⁶⁶ Other foreign-policy objectives, such as achieving a strategic partnership with the Western countries, overshadowed the goal of restoring influence over Georgia. Georgian President Eduard Shevardnadze for his part increasingly showed aspirations to anchor Georgia in a democratic Europe; the creation of the GUAM in 1997 was clearly an attempt to strengthen the westward orientation of these states.

As noted previously, Russia's involvement with the CIS in general and with Georgia in particular was in the late 1990s framed primarily in the context of peacekeeping and economic integration. Moscow sought a role as peacekeeper in Abkhazia and South Ossetia within the CIS framework when those conflicts froze in the early 1990s.¹⁶⁷ However, the peacekeeping forces in Abkhazia and South Ossetia were not multinational but consisted of Russian servicemen. Moreover, the goal to create a system of collective security in the CIS, announced early in the 1990s, was not achieved, and the collective security treaty largely remained "a declaration of will".¹⁶⁸ Another mainstay of Russian influence had been the Soviet-era military bases in Gudauta, Vaziani, Batumi and Akhalkalaki. Russian border contingents were also stationed in Georgia.

In general, the role of military interests in Russia's activities in Georgia declined after 1996,¹⁶⁹ one reason clearly being that defeat in the First Chechen War had discredited the use of the Russian Army as a policy instrument in the Caucasus in general. In 1998 an agreement was signed on the withdrawal of Russian border guards from Georgia; these guards were withdrawn in 1999. During the OSCE summit in Istanbul in 1999 Russia agreed to close down the bases in Gudauta (Abkhazia) and Vaziani by July 2001, and it was agreed that the date for leaving the two remaining bases would be determined in talks in year 2000.¹⁷⁰ The withdrawal from Vaziani was completed in December 2000. However, withdrawal from Gudauta was never completed and the question of the bases in Batumi (Abkhazia) and Akhalkalaki was not resolved. At this time Russia also seemed to

¹⁶⁶ We refer here to the fact that Russia sent troops to fight against the ousted Georgian president Gamsakurdia in 1993 and in return convinced/pressured Georgia to join the CIS, to the signing of an agreement in 1994 that provided for Russian military assistance in creating Georgia's armed forces and for temporary presence of Russian troops in Georgia, to the 1995 agreement (never ratified in Georgia) that provided for four Russian military bases to be deployed in Georgia for 25 years, and lastly to Russian engagement in the Abkhaz and South Ossetian conflicts in the early 1990s. Although Russia was accused of meddling in internal Georgian affairs during these years, the official rhetoric visible in statements and bilateral documents was always that Russia was supporting Georgia's territorial integrity. See Per Normark, "Russia's policy vis-à-vis Georgia: Continuity and Change", *Swedish Defence Research Agency Report*, FOI -r-0168-SE, Stockholm, 2001.

¹⁶⁷ The Agreement on Peaceful Conflict Settlement was signed by Russia and Georgia in June 1992 and introduced peacekeeping contingents into South Ossetia. In April 1994, CIS peacekeeping forces were sent in to control the Georgian-Abkhazian conflict.

¹⁶⁸ Dina Malysheva, "Security problems in the Caucasus", *Central Asia and the Caucasus*, no.1 (7) 2001, pp. 37-49.

¹⁶⁹ There were some 13,300 Russian servicemen in Georgia and Armenia in 1998/1999, as compared to 31,000 in 1994/1995. *The Military Balance 1998/1999*. Negotiations on the withdrawal of Russian military bases from Georgia started in 1997. An agreement was made in 1998 that Georgia would begin patrolling its own borders. *RFE/RL Newslines*, 1 July 1998.

¹⁷⁰ *RFE/RL Caucasus Report*, 25 November 1999.

be opening up for closer co-operation with international organizations in the resolution of conflicts, with the UN in Abkhazia and the OSCE in South Ossetia.¹⁷¹

Simultaneously, economic interests started to dominate the formulation of Russian policy towards the Southern Caucasus.¹⁷² After coming to power, President Putin increasingly used economic levers to maintain influence in Georgia, for example by being much stricter in demanding payments for gas and electricity. In general, economic interests are centred on energy sources in the Caspian area and, in Russian/Georgian relations, the question of where the major export route should go. The focus on economic interests was of course spurred by the entry of Western oil companies into the region and the plans to build an oil pipeline from Baku to Ceyhan through Georgia, bypassing Russia. Pavel Baev has noted, however, that Moscow preferred to present the new rivalry between the West and Russia in this area in geoeconomic rather than geopolitical terms, and that there was a predominant line toward downplaying the “Great Game” and avoiding confrontational paradigms.¹⁷³ Still, the second war in Chechnya, starting in 1999, forced Russia to review the role of military interests in its relations with Georgia and changed the way Russia framed the rationale for engagement with Georgia. On the one hand, it became clear that Russia could not afford to keep troops in Georgia when they were needed to fight an enemy closer to home. On the other, the language of security and the centrality of military means in relations with Georgia were gradually re-emphasized.

During the First Chechen War (1994–96) Georgia had actually supported Moscow, largely because Chechen armed units had fought on the Abkhazian side during the war in 1992/1993 and because Grozny had supported the former Georgian president Zviad Ghamasakurdia during his exile. In 1999, however, Georgia, which had established quite good ties with the Chechen Maskhadov regime in the interwar period, refused Russian requests to use their bases in Georgia to attack Chechnya. Already in August 1999, before Russian troops entered Chechnya, Russian aircrafts dropped bombs allegedly aimed for Dagestan on the Georgian side of the territory. Russia, however, denied the incident, but stepped up the rhetorical overtures against Georgia.¹⁷⁴ From the very beginning of the Second Chechen War, Russia complained that Georgia was hosting armed Chechens on its territory, more precisely in the Pankisi Gorge. For example, Foreign Minister Igor Ivanov warned that “terrorist groups used Georgia and Azerbaijan for their own purposes” and that lack of co-operation with Russia would turn Chechnya into a hotbed of “international terrorism”.¹⁷⁵ Accompanying these accusations were repeated demands

¹⁷¹ Olga Vorkunova, “Politika Rossii v konfliktakh na Kavkaze” (Russian Conflict Policy in the Caucasus) in Alexander Iskanderian & Olga Vorkunova (eds.) *Severniy Kavkaz: probleby stabil’nosti i perspektivy razvitiya* (North Caucasus–Transcaucasus; Stability Problems and Development Perspectives), Moscow, 1997.

¹⁷² Pavel Baev, *Challenges and Options in the Caucasus and Central Asia*, Strategic Studies Institute, Carlisle Barracks: US Army War College, 1997. See also Igor Khripunov and Mary M. Matthews “Russia’s Oil and Gas Interest Group and its Foreign Policy Agenda”, *Problems of Post-Communism*, vol.43, no.3, May/June 1996.

¹⁷³ Pavel Baev, “Russia Refocuses its Policies in the Southern Caucasus”, *Harvard University Caspian Studies Programme Working Paper Series*, No.1, July 2001, pp. 6–7.

¹⁷⁴ *RFE/RL Newslines*, 10 August 1999.

¹⁷⁵ These were Igor Ivanov’s words in a live interview on Russian television on 3 October 1999. See also “Otvstavka prezidenta destabiliziruet situatsiyu v mire”, *Nezavisimaya gazeta*, 12 October 1999.

that Georgia permit Russian troops to enter its territory in order to launch military activities against those Chechen fighters. In 1999, then Russian Prime Minister Vladimir Putin suggested introducing visa requirements for Georgian citizens wishing to enter Russia, arguing that this was a necessary step to prevent Chechen gunmen from freely entering Russia from Georgia.¹⁷⁶ The proposal was a direct response to Tbilisi's refusal to conduct joint patrolling of the Chechen part of the Georgian–Russian border.¹⁷⁷ However, Russia laid down conditions to waive the visa requirement, which proved that it was trying to use the issue as leverage to further interests on a whole range of issues.¹⁷⁸ Georgia could not possibly meet the conditions. The visa regime, which to Georgia's fury excluded Abkhazia and South Ossetia, was introduced in December 2000.

Even if the Georgian position on the conflict in Chechnya had irritated Russia since 1999, it was after the 11 September events in the USA that Russia started to invoke the international consensus on the need to combat terrorism to justify a more assertive approach toward Georgia. Georgia became the first front where Russia launched its efforts in the international war on terror. This was clearly demonstrated in the rhetoric accompanying Tbilisi's failure to extradite to Russia 13 gunmen detained in June 2001 after crossing the Russian–Georgian border. On 18 September the Russian Foreign Ministry issued an unusually harsh statement, more like an ultimatum, in which it accused Georgia of being an accomplice of terrorism and demanded immediate extradition of the “terrorists” staying on Georgian territory. The Pankisi Gorge was referred to as a “base of international terrorists”. “It is time”, the note concluded, “for Georgia not in words, but in deeds to join itself to the united front of civilized states in removing the threat of international terrorism”.¹⁷⁹ State Duma deputy Boris Nemtsov went even further and stated on television that Moscow had a right to conduct anti-terrorist operations on Georgian territory without the latter's compliance. He said that Shevardnadze's weak state, weak army and weak police were incapable of dealing with the fact that Chechens had “occupied part of Georgia's territory”.¹⁸⁰ Russian television (ORT) commentator Mikhail Leontev captured the significance of the 11 September events and the US response for Russian policy toward Georgia when he said that Russia should make use of the current “beneficial situation and try to resolve at least some of Russia's problems in Chechnya and Georgia [...] if Russia now wipes out the Chechen militants in the Pankisi Gorge, not a single soul in the world will be able to reproach us”.¹⁸¹

¹⁷⁶ *RFE/RL Newslines*, 4 November 1999.

¹⁷⁷ *Moscow News*, no.43, 10–16 November 1999.

¹⁷⁸ The conditions were that Georgia adopt a “neutral position” on the Chechen conflict, that Tbilisi accede to the Eurasian Economic Community created on the basis of the CIS Customs Union, that the Georgian government moderate its negotiating position on the closure of the Russian military bases in Georgia and that Georgia would “take into consideration Russia's interests in the export of Caspian oil and gas”. *RFE/RL Caucasus Report*, 30 November 2000.

¹⁷⁹ “Kavkazskaya Plennitsa”, *Vremya Novostey*, 19 September 2001. For a detailed summary of the note see the website Rosinformsentr, 18 September 2001.

¹⁸⁰ Quoted in *Chechnya Weekly*, 26 September 2001.

¹⁸¹ Quoted on *Eurasianet*, 20 September 2001.

A similar situation emerged with reports, first heard in August 2001, that Chechen fighters together with Georgian “partisans” were concentrating in the Tsalendzhikhi region bordering Abkhazia, poised to launch attacks against Abkhazia.¹⁸² Attacks in the Kodori Gorge were launched in early October 2001 and cost the lives of up to 40 people.¹⁸³ It is unclear to this day who actually participated in these attacks and whose interests they served. However, on 9 October planes and helicopters without identification markings entered Georgian airspace from Russia and left in the same direction after having bombed several Georgian villages in the Kodori Gorge.¹⁸⁴ Although Russian officials categorically denied responsibility for the bombing, they nevertheless made rhetorical moves that seemed to indicate that it would be legitimate for Russia to deal with the terrorist problem Georgia could not handle itself. The Russian foreign minister thus argued that it was “absolutely clear that the Georgian leadership is not in control of the situation on its territory, or it is being manipulated by terrorists for their aims”. Ivanov also said that Moscow did not see any real preparedness on the part of the Georgian leadership to co-operate in the fight against terrorism.¹⁸⁵ Abkhazian officials also jumped on the bandwagon and accused Georgia of “co-opting terrorists”, and claimed the right to launch pre-emptive strikes at “terrorists” before they entered Abkhazia.¹⁸⁶

Russia’s role in the Abkhaz conflict was therefore also reframed and influenced by the 11 September events. Since Putin came to power, Russian–Georgian interaction over the Abkhaz conflict had already deteriorated. The short period of Russian acceptance of a greater role for international institutions was replaced by efforts to block the role of these institutions. When the OSCE in 1999 or 2000 suggested that the UN should get involved in solving the conflict, Russia stalled a UN Security Council treatment and also refused to accept that UN forces should replace the Russian CIS peacekeeping forces. After 11 September the fact that Russia’s own terrorist foe was becoming intertwined in the Abkhaz conflict opened up the possibility of adopting the anti-terrorist rhetoric in justification for Russian presence and involvement in Abkhazia. This did not lead to a stronger emphasis on a multilateral solution to the conflict, as might have been expected from Russia’s official approach to countering the new threats. Rather, it led to an increased emphasis on a unilateral Russian role. The UN Secretary General failed to mediate in the conflict and another UN Security Council session failed to endorse draft proposals on future relations between Georgia and Abkhazia because of a Russian veto.¹⁸⁷ In a major concession to Russian interests Shevardnadze later accepted that Russian CIS peacekeeping forces should remain in Abkhazia “as long as necessary”.¹⁸⁸ It should be noted that also Georgian authorities tried to label the fight with Abkhazia in the

¹⁸² *Interfax*, 24 August 2001.

¹⁸³ *RFE/RL Caucasus Report*, 12 October 2001.

¹⁸⁴ *RFE/RL Newswire*, 10 October 2001.

¹⁸⁵ “Russian Defense Minister Speaks His Mind about Georgian Situation”, *Pravda.ru*, 10 September 2001.

¹⁸⁶ *Caucasus Press*, 18 October 2001.

¹⁸⁷ *Caucasus Press*, 31 October 2001.

¹⁸⁸ *Caucasus Press*, 1 December 2001 and Bertil Nygren, “Russia’s Immediate Security Environment under Putin, before and after September 11th”, p.189.

new rhetoric, by arguing that the Abkhaz were engaging in “terrorism” against Georgia.¹⁸⁹

Bombing by Russian aircrafts took place again in November 2001, in the Kodori Gorge and also in Pankisi, involving a dozen assault bombers and assault helicopters. Again the Russian Defence Ministry again denied any responsibility, while at the same time warning that fighting was underway in Georgia’s Pankisi Gorge between “Chechen militants and Arab mercenaries”.¹⁹⁰ The influential political strategist and Kremlin associate Sergey Markov, however, rapped the Russian generals for having tainted Russian prestige by undertaking such attacks in secrecy and without political sanction. At the same time he said that Georgia’s relation to terrorists could be compared to the Taliban’s relation to Osama bin Laden and that military action against the terrorist bases in Pankisi should be undertaken – but that this should be done openly and with support from the Russian government.¹⁹¹ Also other influential Russian experts such as Andranik Migranyan argued that Russia, following the US pattern, had the moral and judicial right to hit terrorists wherever they might be, and that this applied to Georgian territory. Pointing to the US attacks in Afghanistan and possibly in Iraq and Sudan, Migranyan argued there was no way the Georgian government in the present setting could dispute any attack directed against terrorists on its territory.¹⁹²

The CIS ten-year anniversary summit in Moscow in November 2001, in which Shevardnadze reluctantly took part, proved that Russia was pushing the anti-terrorist agenda as the main rationale for further integration and co-operation among the CIS states. Three important documents were signed, all focusing on the threat of international terrorism in the CIS space and the member-countries’ obligation to contribute to the anti-terrorist fight within the CIS framework.¹⁹³ Moreover, Putin, by accusing Georgia of condoning “international terrorists” during the summit, seemed to be building a case for a Russian “anti-terrorist” operation in Georgia.¹⁹⁴ This was followed up in international fora such as the international military political forum “Wehrkunde” in Munich 2 February 2002, where Sergey Ivanov, while refusing Russian participation in the campaign against the “Axis of Evil” that Bush had proposed only days earlier, raised the issue of Pankisi, saying that “the government of Georgia recognizes the existence of a problem there, but hardly can cope with it”. He added that Russia, while it respects Georgia's sovereignty, “cannot tolerate pockets of terrorism and criminality near her borders”.¹⁹⁵

Pressure on Georgia increased further when the USA, which had long shrugged off charges by Russia against Georgia, started to make comments that appeared to sustain Moscow’s claims that the Pankisi was a terrorist haven. In an interview on 11 February, the US Chargé d’Affaires in Tbilisi, Philip Remler, said that several “mujahedin” who had escaped from Afghanistan had recently settled in the Pankisi Gorge. Russian officials

¹⁸⁹ *RFE/RL Newslines*, 30 January 2002.

¹⁹⁰ *Strana.ru*, 28 November 2001 and *RFE/RL Newslines*, 27 and 29 November 2001.

¹⁹¹ Sergey Markov comments on *Strana.ru*, 28 November 2001.

¹⁹² Andranik Migranyan in *Strana.ru*, 29 November 2001.

¹⁹³ *Strana.ru*, 30 November 2001

¹⁹⁴ “Russia agrees to probe Georgia raid”, *BBC News*, 30 November 2001.

¹⁹⁵ *ITAR TASS*, 2 February 2002.

immediately picked up on this statement, and Foreign Minister Igor Ivanov claimed in Paris on 15 February that the Pankisi had not only become a stronghold of international terrorists, but that Osama bin Laden himself could be hiding there. Defence Minister Sergey Ivanov reiterated the latter claim a few days later in the Russian state Duma and, portraying Pankisi as a mini-Afghanistan, said it was essential to carry out an anti-terrorist operation in the gorge.¹⁹⁶ Russia clearly reacted to suspicion, however. It is an open question whether there was any trace of Al-Qaida in the Pankisi Gorge at all at that time. UN special envoy Dieter Boden, for example, said that there could not be found any trace of Al-Qaida in the Pankisi Gorge as of 5 April 2002.¹⁹⁷ Unnamed Western intelligence service staffers quoted in *Frankfurter Allgemeine Zeitung* on 19 April denounced claims that Al-Qaida fighters were present in the Pankisi Gorge as “absolute rubbish”.

In the end, Georgia refused Russian proposals of joint anti-terrorist operations in Pankisi and turned to the USA instead. The USA in February 2002 agreed with Georgia on a program to equip and train Georgian military for anti-terrorism activities, and American Special Forces arrived in May 2002.¹⁹⁸ Although the main impetus behind the program was increasing US concern about the terrorist threat, it was also introduced to forestall unilateral Russian action against Georgia. This was evident from remarks made by US State Department spokesman Richard Boucher who said that: “this situation is best dealt with through co-operation among the United States and Georgia, so that Georgia would have better control over the area”.¹⁹⁹ Although unwilling to outright oppose the US deployment, after all that was impossible after having claimed that Osama bin Laden himself could be hiding there, Russia increasingly viewed the US engagement with suspicion, with Chief of the Russian General Staff, Anatoliy Kvashnin, insisting that Russia and Georgia could “destroy the terrorist center together” and that there was no need for any US involvement in the operation.²⁰⁰ Igor Ivanov went on television to criticize the US move and argued that US military deployment to Georgia would only aggravate an already difficult situation. Duma International Affairs Committee chairman Dmitriy Rogozin went further and threatened to retaliate against Georgia by having the Duma recognize Abkhazia’s sovereignty. In response the Abkhaz President, Vladislav Ardzinba, asked for associate status with Russia.²⁰¹

Thus, the common fight against terrorism, which initially brought Russia and the USA closer together and served as a convenient frame for increasing Russian engagement in Georgia, eventually triggered a new contest between the great powers in the Caucasus. In a twist, the issue of separatism, which actually is the core of Russia’s terrorist problem, was used by Russia in Georgia as leverage. Georgia on its side was hoping to use the US anti-terror help to fight its own separatists. For example, State Security Minister Valeri Khburdzania attempted to link suspected terrorists in Georgia to Abkhazia, in order to

¹⁹⁶ *Gazeta.ru*, 19 February 2002.

¹⁹⁷ *Eurasia Insight*, 23 April 2002.

¹⁹⁸ It is worth noting, however, that the USA had been involved in reforming and restoring Georgia’s military capabilities well before 11 September, by providing military equipment, training and financial aid.

¹⁹⁹ Quoted in *Jamestown Monitor*, 28 February 2002.

²⁰⁰ *RFE/RL Newslines*, 22 February 2002.

²⁰¹ *Jamestown Monitor*, 28 February 2002.

pinpoint this separatist province as a target for the future anti-terror operation.²⁰² The Abkhaz government-in-exile chairman claimed to have lists of names of 120 Al-Qaida guerrillas that underwent terrorism training in Abkhazia, as did Osama bin Laden.²⁰³

Although Putin eventually calmed the tensions by saying that the US deployment was “no tragedy” and that it was Georgia’s right as a sovereign country to act to protect its security, Russia continued to mark its interests in Georgia. On the very same day that Putin made these remarks, five Russian warplanes violated Georgia’s air space in two incidents, one over the Kodori Gorge and one over Pankisi.²⁰⁴ Moscow also continued in its dialogue with Washington to use the terrorist threat as an argument for engaging in Georgia. During his visit to Washington on 13 March 2002, Defence Minister Ivanov claimed that Chechen fighters and fighters from Afghanistan were planning new terrorist acts and that Russia could not remain indifferent to a threat located so close to its borders. He argued that close co-operation between Russia and the USA was necessary to enable Georgia to mount a successful operation against those fighters.²⁰⁵ Speaking to his home base in connection with the first anniversary of his appointment as Russian Minister of Defence, Ivanov later made multiple threats against Georgia and suggested that Moscow could use the arrival of the US Green Berets as a pretext for keeping Russian bases in Georgia permanently. Underlining that the “border between the North Caucasus and South Caucasus was practically lacking”, Ivanov stated: “certain preventive measures are being taken, not only by Russia’s armed forces, but by all the power agencies”.²⁰⁶ Thus, Russia was playing a double game: On the one hand, it was continuing to propagate co-operation with the USA and within the multilateral organizations in the fight against terrorism and in pursuit of settlements on the Abkhaz and Ossetian conflicts on the international arena.²⁰⁷ On the other, when facing the domestic audience, the argument was that Russia had a right to unilateral action and increasing engagement in Georgia, in order to withstand the terrorist threat and to counter growing US influence.

Although the Abkhaz conflict actually has very little to do with the problem of international terrorism, the parties in the conflict continued to shape their rhetoric in “terrorist talk”. The capture of two Georgian guerrillas who had attacked a Russian patrol, and the subsequent seizure of four Russian peacekeepers in Abkhazia by unidentified men in March 2002, triggered a new crisis in Georgian–Russian relations. It was noteworthy that although no “international terrorists” were involved in the incidents

²⁰² *Eurasianet*, 5 March 2002.

²⁰³ *RFE/RL Newslines*, 12 March 2002.

²⁰⁴ *Jamestown Monitor*, 5 March 2002.

²⁰⁵ *RFE/RL Newslines*, 14 March 2002.

²⁰⁶ *RIA Novosti*, 26–27 March 2002.

²⁰⁷ For example on 26 April 2002 in Moscow, US Deputy Secretary of State Richard Armitage and Russia’s First Deputy Foreign Affairs Minister Vyacheslav Trubnikov co-chaired a meeting of the US–Russia Working Group on Afghanistan. According to one passage in the joint communiqué, “the co-chairs affirmed that U.S.–Russia cooperation in Central Asia and the Caucasus has developed productively since September 11. The sides reaffirmed their conviction that a settlement of the Georgian–Abkhaz and Georgian–South Ossetian conflicts can only be achieved by political methods, through existing negotiation mechanisms based on UN Security Council and OSCE decisions. The sides underscored the need to assist the Georgian government in developing its capabilities to counter terrorism”. Quoted in *Jamestown Monitor*, 3 May 2002.

on either side, the Georgian parliament voted unanimously for a toughly worded resolution criticizing Russian peacekeepers and the Abkhaz authorities, and claiming that Abkhazia had become “a haven for international terrorists”.²⁰⁸ The Russian Foreign Ministry on its side issued a statement accusing Georgia of “duplicity” in affirming its support for the war against international terrorism while at the same time abetting the Chechen militants led by Ruslan Gelaev, who shot down a UN helicopter over Abkhazia’s Kodori Gorge in October and had been arming and financing the Georgian guerrilla formations behind the 18 March abductions of Russian peacekeepers.²⁰⁹ The problem with framing the discourse between the parties to a conflict like this in “terrorist talk” is that it widens the distance between them even further and makes compromise a difficult option. The changing character of the discourse on Abkhazia was remarked by Dieter Boden, UN Secretary General Kofi Annan’s special envoy for the Abkhaz conflict, when he expressed concern about the “increasingly belligerent rhetoric emanating from Moscow and Tbilisi”.²¹⁰

It is difficult to tie an increasingly assertive Russian policy in Abkhazia directly to the type of rhetoric employed, but it is a fact that on 12 April 2002, only one day after Georgia had completed a military withdrawal from the area, some 200 Russian troops and heavy armament were deployed by helicopter to the Kodori Gorge without informing Georgia or the UN.²¹¹ The incident could have resulted in a military standoff between Georgian and Russian forces, but the crisis was avoided by a phone call between Shevardnadze and Putin, and eventually the Russian troops were pulled out.²¹² Russian helicopters continued to violate Georgian airspace (11 May and 10 June), however; and in July and August Russian bomber jets several times violated Georgian airspace. Moscow repeatedly denied these incidents. At the same time a rhetorical offensive emanating from Moscow in late summer 2002 seemed geared toward justifying actions that Russia had officially never taken. Foreign Minister Igor Ivanov kept reiterating accusations, describing Georgia as a haven for alleged terrorists, criticizing Georgia for “failing to live up to its earlier pledge to fight terrorism” and also offering to assist Tbilisi in tackling the fighters operating in the Pankisi.²¹³ President Vladimir Putin also continued to criticize Georgia’s tolerance of “international terrorists” on its territory and pressured for the extradition of Chechen fighters to Russia by presenting Georgia’s moves on the issue as a test of the “intentions of the Georgian leadership to fight terrorism”.²¹⁴ Federation Council Chairman Sergey Mironov said that Russia did not rule out “preventive strikes” against bases in Georgia, and added that Russia might turn to the UNSC and raise the possibility of launching an international “anti-terrorism” operation in Pankisi analogous to that in Afghanistan.²¹⁵ The commander of the Russian Airborne Troops, Colonel General Georgiy Shpak, told ORT on 2 August that his units were ready for such an operation.

²⁰⁸ *RFE/RL Caucasus Report*, 21 March 2002.

²⁰⁹ *RFE/RL Newslines*, 22 March 2002.

²¹⁰ *RFE/RL Caucasus Report*, 21 March 2002.

²¹¹ *RFE/RL Newslines*, 12 April 2002.

²¹² *Jamestown Monitor*, 16 April 2002.

²¹³ *Reuters*, 3 August 2002.

²¹⁴ *RFE/RL Caucasus Report*, 8 August 2002.

²¹⁵ *Interfax*, 3 August 2002.

On the first anniversary of the 11 September strikes, President Putin himself sanctioned Mironov's threats and said pre-emptive action in Pankisi would be required if Georgia could not deal with the situation. Putin claimed that the Pankisi could be sheltering not only Chechen "terrorists", but also those who had carried out the 2001 attacks on the USA and that Russia had a right as a member of the UN for "individual and collective self-defence". "None of this will be necessary [...] if the Georgian leadership is able to control its own territory, and follow through on its international obligations to fight against international terrorism", he continued, and concluded that he "would like the General Staff to present a report on the feasibility of delivering strikes on established terrorist bases in the course of a pursuit operation".²¹⁶

Thus, Russia claimed that the terrorist threat it was facing in Pankisi was identical to that of the USA. The terrorists were the same, hiding in the same kind of failed state. All in all, that gave Russia the right to employ the same type of pre-emptive strike to defend itself. At the same time, Russia was clearly saying that it would not allow anybody else to take over its sphere of influence. Although it is unlikely that the threat, which was interpreted as a declaration of war by Georgia, would be followed up by massive military strikes, it was clearly a way of pressuring Georgia to accept Russia's position – and maybe also to try to get rid of Shevardnadze. Considering the limited evidence of a substantial international terrorist threat in the Pankisi,²¹⁷ it is fair to agree with Pavel Baev that "Russia was not so much confronting a terrorist challenge as exploiting it to put pressure on Georgia and to influence the outcome of the predictably chaotic post-Shevardnadze political transition".²¹⁸

US reactions to the mounting Russian pressure were fairly mild – after all, Washington had launched the worldwide fight against terrorism and Russia was a major ally in this fight.²¹⁹ However, after Putin's statement, the USA stepped in and urged Russia to respect Georgian borders and to have "patience" regarding the Chechen fighters in Georgia.²²⁰ Sergey Ivanov commented on the US position by saying that there would be no talk of patience. "I officially confirmed to the Americans, that in such situations we will carry through strikes, also preventive strikes..." said Ivanov, clearly signalling that Russia would not seek US or UN sanction for such action.²²¹ The fact that US Deputy Secretary of Defence Paul Wolfowitz stated, in the aftermath of Ivanov's statements, that also the Pentagon did not exclude the possibility of striking the part of Georgian territory where terrorists were hiding, shows how the adoption of the Bush concepts set the interaction over Georgia on a dangerous track, where the use of force without international sanction was becoming more likely.

²¹⁶ *AFP*, 12 September 2002.

²¹⁷ See for example a list of reports and articles on Pankisi posted at www.ecoi.net/doc/en/GE/content.

²¹⁸ Pavel Baev, "Russia's policies in the North and South Caucasus", in "The South Caucasus: a challenge for the EU", *Challiot Paper* no. 6, 5 December 2003.

²¹⁹ Jean-Christophe Peuch, "Caucasus: Russia, Georgia Cross Swords over Chechnya", *RFE/RL Newswire*, 5 August 2002.

²²⁰ "U.S. Warns Russia over Georgia Strike" *BBC News*, 13 September 2002.

²²¹ "Pochemu Rossiya gotova bombit' Pankisi bez soglasiya SShA", *Nezavisimaya gazeta*, 24 September 2002.

Ironically, the consequence of the mounting war of words for Georgian orientation was that Georgia accelerated its moves toward the West. A special government commission was instructed to prepare a program by 1 November 2002 on integration into NATO in the political, economic and military spheres.²²² Thus, the adoption of the new common rhetoric and concepts that initially seemed to bind Russia and the West closer together actually triggered a new competition when applied in relation to Georgia, an area where both Russia and the USA have their particular interests.

Tension between Georgia and Russia eased in October 2002 when Georgian armed forces declared that they had completed their mission to clear the Pankisi of fighters, and after Putin and Shevardnadze, meeting in Chisinau, expressed regret over the harsh rhetoric employed over the preceding months. However, Putin made it clear that he expected Georgia to deliver on its promise to detain militants in the Pankisi Gorge. If it did, he did not see any reason to act on his 11 September threat of a pre-emptive strike.²²³ Even if the Russian press again raised the Pankisi issue after the October 2002 hostage crisis in Moscow (and former Prime Minister Sergey Stepashin said that a psychological and military turning point had been created that demanded harsher action in Chechnya and Pankisi),²²⁴ the Russia leadership did not choose to implicate Georgia by claiming that the hostage act had been planned in Pankisi.²²⁵

Despite these positive moves, on the international arena Russian officials continued to build the case against Georgia as a haven for international terrorism. In his speech at the yearly Munich conference on security policy in February 2003, Defence Minister Ivanov claimed that while Chechnya was now “normalizing”, Chechen “rings” were legalized in Georgia and were increasingly taking control over transportation companies and petroleum businesses. The Pankisi Gorge was developing into an Islamic (Wahhabi) religious centre and functioned as the centre of command for the network linking Chechen terrorists to the global terror network. Ivanov also said that “international terrorism is bracing itself up for a brand new terrorist warfare – by making use of weapons of mass destruction” and Pankisi was allegedly the main base of this activity.²²⁶ Ivanov was presumably referring to the announcement by Georgian officials in January 2003, following the discovery of the deadly gas ricin in London, that Chechen warriors and Arab mercenaries financed by Al-Qaida had been operating in the Gorge until they were cleared out in February 2002. The fighters in Pankisi had received training in the use of explosives and also of poison gas such as ricin. However, Georgian officials dismissed Russia’s version of the story. The fighters had been thrown out of the Pankisi long before the ricin was found in London, and the link to Pankisi was never proved.²²⁷

²²² Tracy German, “Faultline or Foothold? Georgia’s Relations with Russia & the USA”, *Conflict Studies Research Centre*, 2004.

²²³ *RFE/RL Newslines*, 8 October 2002.

²²⁴ “Putin’s wrath may hit Georgia”, *Johnson’s Russia List*, 31 October 2002.

²²⁵ *Caucasus Report*, 7 November 2002.

²²⁶ “Münchener Konferenz für Sicherheitspolitik am 7.–9. Februar 2003” published by *Presse- und Informationsamt der Bundesregierung*.

²²⁷ *Rossiyskaya gazeta*, 16 January 2003.

Accusations against Georgia for the continuing reluctance to extradite the Chechen fighters detained by Georgian border guards in August 2002 were reiterated in 2003.²²⁸ In May 2003 Russian Deputy Prosecutor-General Sergei Fridinsky claimed, in stark contrast to Georgian officials' statements that there were no organized military structures in Pankisi, that up to 700 Chechen militants were in the Pankisi Gorge. Georgian National Security Council Secretary Tedo Japaridze dismissed the allegations by suggesting that Russia was purposely serving out disinformation.²²⁹

Also on other issues problems remained. Negotiations over the Russian bases in Georgia again stranded, with Georgia demanding hefty payments in return for Russian basing rights. In this period, the centre of tension shifted to the Abkhaz conflict. The bone of contention was that Russia had resumed passenger rail services between Sochi and Sukhumi in December 2002 and was issuing Russian passports to Abkhazian citizens. Georgia on its side sought to pressure Moscow by threatening to end the mandate of the Russian peacekeeping force deployed to Abkhazia under the CIS aegis. However, also on the Abkhaz issue, bilateral relations between Russia and Georgia improved considerably in early 2003. At the summit in Sochi on 6–7 March, Putin and Shevardnadze agreed that Georgian IDPs who had fled Abkhazia in 1992/93 could return to their abandoned homes and that rail communications would be resumed between Sochi and Tbilisi. In return, Russian peacekeepers would remain until either the Georgian or the Abkhaz government requested their withdrawal.²³⁰ After the summit Putin stated: “the Abkhazian problem should be resolved in the context of preserving Georgia’s territorial integrity and guaranteeing the legal rights and interests of multiethnic Abkhazia”.²³¹

Despite the constructive language wrapping the agreements, it should be noted that the Sochi process obviously signified a regress from the multinational UN-initiated (1994) “Geneva process” of negotiations, to a bilateral format where Georgia stood on one side facing Russia and Abkhazia on the other. It is also unclear what Georgia actually might gain from the agreements, since the Russian peacekeeping mandate was prolonged without anything being achieved on the matter of Russian passports being issued to Georgian citizens or passenger rail services between Sochi and Sukhumi. Moreover, a stalemate in talks set in again in June when rebels in the Kodori Gorge held three UN observers hostage for five days. Abkhaz officials accused Georgia of staging the incident in order to portray the area as in chaos and thus legitimise a Georgian attack, and then called for permanent deployment of Russian peacekeepers in Kodori. Georgian officials of course dismissed the idea of such a presence and instead accused Russian patrols of failing to protect the area.²³² As the November elections in Georgia drew closer, Shevardnadze was increasingly indicating that he wanted to move away from relying on the Russian-led CIS force in Abkhazia and rather wanted greater UN involvement and US participation in a new force and also in peace talks. This new focus was probably

²²⁸ *Eurasia Insight*, 6 January 2003.

²²⁹ “Rumours of terrorists prevail in Georgia’s Pankisi Gorge”, *Eurasia Insight*, 29 May 2003.

²³⁰ *RFE/RL Caucasus Report*, 13 March 2003.

²³¹ Quoted in “Abkhazia: Putin, Shevardnadze optimistic after Summit”, *United Nations Association of Georgia*, 10 March 2003.

²³² “Russian–Georgian talks on Abkhazia hampered by mistrust”, *Eurasia Insight*, 19 June 2003.

prompted by the July 2003 visit of US Secretary of State James Baker, when he delivered a letter that indicated the Bush administration's unequivocal support of Georgia's territorial integrity, which was interpreted by Georgia as a signal that the USA was ready to assume a greater role in the Abkhaz conflict. However, the lack of political will in the USA and the international community to take responsibility for pushing a solution to the Abkhaz conflict was evident from the proceeding meetings of the "Group of Friends" of the UN Secretary General (France, Germany, Russia, the UK and the USA), where almost nothing was achieved.²³³

Nevertheless, Georgia's increasing westward orientation on these issues was of concern to Russia. Moreover, US surveillance flights in Georgia and the new bilateral security pact agreed between the USA and Georgia in late March 2003, which gave US military personnel broad privileges in Georgia and granted the USA the right to deploy hardware on Georgian territory, strongly provoked Russia and strained relations further. The Russian Foreign Ministry expressed suspicion about US motives for the co-operation, saying that if the reason was counter-terrorism it was of concern that Russia was not included. The Russian parliament had previously drafted a resolution that characterized the US-Georgian co-operation agreement as detrimental to Moscow's relations with Tbilisi.²³⁴

The increasing geopolitical rivalry over the Caucasus as an area of relevance to the fight against terrorism was evident in the Russian media campaign that followed in May. In a series of articles *Nezavisimaya gazeta*, a paper deemed to have close connections to Russian policy makers, sought to build the case that Washington was planning to deploy military forces to Georgia and Azerbaijan in order to attack Iran. Claims were also made that this would lead Iran to launch pre-emptive strikes against Georgia and Azerbaijan.²³⁵ The USA, Georgia, Azerbaijan and even Iran vehemently denied these claims. The false allegations were interpreted by some as an attempt by Russia to scare Georgia and Azerbaijan from closer co-operation with the USA and a sign that Russia was afraid of "losing Georgia".²³⁶ Shevardnadze on his side viewed Russia's intentions with increasing suspicion and endorsed the idea put forward by Georgian parliamentarian Irina Sarishvili-Chanturia that Russia might stage a large-scale provocation at the Georgian border.²³⁷

Repeated Russian bombing in the Pankisi Gorge during summer 2003 had seemed to confirm this suspicion, as had Russia's continued rhetorical moves on the international stage. Speaking in Edinburgh on 25 June, Putin again accused Georgia of harbouring international terrorists with links to Al-Qaida.²³⁸ On 30 June, President Shevardnadze dismissed the allegations by saying that there was no threat to Russia from terrorists

²³³ "Georgia looks West for help in resolving Abkhazia issue", *Eurasia Insight*, 21 August 2003.

²³⁴ "U.S.-Georgian security cooperation agreement provokes outcry in Russia", *Eurasia Insight*, 16 April 2003.

²³⁵ "Bush skolotil antiiranskuyu koalitsiyu", *Nezavisimaya gazeta*, 29 May 2003, the campaign was followed up in other Russian newspapers as well.

²³⁶ "Policy makers in Russia concerned about possibility of 'losing' Azerbaijan and Georgia", *Eurasia Insight*, 10 June 2003.

²³⁷ "Russian-Georgian talks on Abkhazia hampered by mistrust", *Eurasia Insight*, 19 June 2003.

²³⁸ *RFE/RL Newslines*, 26 June 2003.

encamped in Georgia and suggested that some Russian ministers might have misinformed Putin about the alleged presence of international terrorists in Georgia. Shevardnadze simultaneously announced that a Georgian commando battalion trained by US military personnel within the parameters of the “train and equip programme” launched in spring 2002 would be deployed on Georgia’s border with Chechnya.²³⁹ Although Shevardnadze added that the deployment was not intended “to frighten Russia”, the move demonstrated clearly how Georgia could play on the rivalry engendered by the Russian and the US new “anti-terror” engagement in Georgia.

In many ways the Georgian Rose Revolution, which resulted in Shevardnadze’s resignation and the coming to power of a new pro-Western Georgian leadership, was interpreted by Russia in the context of a new competition with the West, and particularly the USA. When first commenting on the mass protests in Tbilisi, Putin suggested that Shevardnadze had lost favour by seeming to drift toward the USA for military and strategic support. Later Russian officials, among them Igor Ivanov, opined that the takeover had not been “fully democratic” and indicated that it had been influenced by the Western powers.²⁴⁰

Indeed Washington circles also interpreted the Rose Revolution as a victory for “their man” and immediately took steps to bolster and expand their anti-terror presence in Georgia. Bush expressed to Mikhail Saakashvili that he wanted regular contact concerning international and security issues. Following US Defence Secretary Donald Rumsfeld’s visit to Georgia in December 2003, twenty or thirty military advisers were dispatched to Tbilisi. The Pentagon wasted no time, but announced shortly after Saakashvili’s election in January that it would privatise its military presence in Georgia by contracting a team of retired US military officers to equip and advise Georgia’s military and that the “train and equip programme” launched in spring 2002 would become permanent. A senior Western diplomat said that the USA also wanted to create in Georgia a “forward operational area” where equipment and fuel could be stored. The stored equipment together with the continuation of the “train and equip programme” would give the USA a “virtual base” in Georgia.²⁴¹ While increasing its military presence in Georgia in this way, the USA simultaneously offered to help fund the withdrawal of Russia’s two remaining military bases from Georgia.²⁴²

Russia, having previously indicated that the withdrawal from Russian bases could not be completed in 11 years, was not particularly interested in such a deal. Although views differed within the Russian political elite on how important it was for Russia not to lose Georgia, Andrey Kokoshin, the chairman of the Russian Duma Committee on CIS affairs, spoke for many when he in a radio interview stated: “To win a place under the sun, Russia must not only speed up its economic development, but also show military muscle [...] we need either permanent bases, or agreements enabling us to deploy our

²³⁹ *RFE/RL Newslines*, 1 July 2003.

²⁴⁰ “Russia wary of Georgia’s regime change”, *Eurasianet.org*, 26 November 2003.

²⁴¹ “U.S. privatises its military aid to Georgia”, *Guardian*, 6 January 2004.

²⁴² “U.S. offer for Russian base exit”, *Guardian*, 14 January 2004.

military contingents rapidly”.²⁴³ Moscow sought various ways of postponing the withdrawal of bases from Georgia. During the 9th round of negotiation in summer 2004 Russia said that withdrawal within a short timespan was impossible because the infrastructure for the new bases on Russian territory had to be created. Russia also tried to tie the withdrawal to the signing of an agreement, which would ban Georgia from accepting the military bases of any foreign countries on Georgian soil.²⁴⁴ Finally, it was argued that Georgia, through the use of the infrastructure of the Russian military bases, could increase its “capabilities to fight terrorism”. However, the fact that Moscow dismissed the Georgian idea of setting up an anti-terrorist centre in exchange for the withdrawal of the Russian bases shows that the true motivation for keeping the bases was not the fear of terrorism.²⁴⁵

The main area where Russia had taken to using the anti-terrorist rhetoric in relation to Georgia was of course Pankisi. This was also the issue that had triggered the most acute situations and where military confrontation had been imminent. The new Georgian president, understanding how important it was not to sever ties with Moscow abruptly, sought to alleviate Russian apprehensions about his “anti-Russian position”. He promised full assistance against armed Chechen separatists and called for enhanced co-operation among Russian and Georgian security services in the fight against terrorism. An agreement was signed on the exchange of information, and both parties expressed the will to establish joint border patrols. Saakashvili reportedly even offered Russia the opportunity to send additional army officers to Georgia to prevent Chechen fighters from moving across the border. Saakashvili thus went much further than Shevardnadze had done, not only in concrete steps to meet Russian demands but also in accepting the Russian version of a “terrorist” problem in the Pankisi.²⁴⁶ This was a clever move. Although it could be interpreted as giving in to Russian pressure, it defused the potency of the terror rhetoric as a Russian lever against Georgia and the potential for armed confrontation.

However, the tragic terrorist act at the school in Beslan, North Ossetia, in August/September that year prompted Russia again to adopt a foreign policy agenda similar to that of the USA, post-11 September. This increased the tension in Georgian–Russian relations yet again and also, it seemed, the possibility of war. When Russian General Chief of Staff Yuriy Baluyevskiy on 8 September came with the statement that “As for carrying out preventive strikes against terrorist bases... we will take all measures to liquidate the terrorist bases in any region of the world”, a statement confirmed by Sergey Ivanov the following day, it was obvious that Georgia was the most likely target for this threat.²⁴⁷ There were attempts to tie the events in Beslan to South Ossetia. For example, the Russian website utro.ru reported that Basayev, who took responsibility for

²⁴³ Quoted in “US officials warily monitor Russian policy debate on Caucasus”, *Eurasianet.org*, 9 January 2004.

²⁴⁴ “Russia, Georgia resume talks over military bases, but no breakthrough anticipated”, *Civil Georgia* 23 June 2004 posted at: www.civil.ge/eng/.

²⁴⁵ “Russia, Georgia discussed joint anti-terror center”, *Civil Georgia*, 24 June 2004 posted at www.civil.ge/eng/.

²⁴⁶ *RFE/RL Newslines*, 13 February 2004.

²⁴⁷ “Baluyevskiy nastorozhil mir”, *Nezavisimaya gazeta*, 10 September 2004.

the hostage act, had left for Pankisi. The same website also quoted an unidentified source as saying that, in August, Basaev had met with Georgian Interior Minister Irakli Okurashvili and that both men saw Russia as the enemy.²⁴⁸ Moreover, Russian Foreign Ministry spokesman Alexander Yakovenko said, in commenting on Russian–Georgian relations: “We would like to see the reciprocal taking into consideration of our lawful interests, specifically upholding Russia’s security, including the war on terrorism”.²⁴⁹

Under mounting pressure, the official Georgian version was again that there were no terrorists left in the Pankisi Gorge and that there was no link between Georgia and the Beslan tragedy. To Georgia’s surprise, however, the US Ambassador to Georgia Richard Miles came out in favour of the Russian version and stated that there still were international terrorists in the Pankisi Gorge. He even indirectly indicated that pre-emptive strikes could be necessary to get rid of them.²⁵⁰ Although Washington back-pedalled on this statement, the situation illustrated the dilemma created by the Russian and US engagement in Georgia under the anti-terror doctrine. Washington obviously wanted to curb Russian influence in Georgia and was nervous of the growing Russia–Georgian tensions, but it could not contradict the very anti-terrorist rationale and concepts that the USA itself had coined and which had created the basis for its own engagement in Georgia.

Russian employment of the Bush doctrine did not only restrict US possibilities to calm Russian aggression. It also opened up for other, and in this case dangerous, players to act in a way that would increase the possibility of military confrontation. Chechen Vice-Premier Ramzan Kadyrov, an individual accused of gross human rights violations and in charge of the notorious pro-Russian Chechen security forces, stated in November: “We here in Chechnya are sick and tired of silently watching terrorists being trained and armed in Pankisi and sent to Chechnya. If need be, the units under my command are prepared for redeployment in a brief time to deliver a crushing blow to their bases [...] and the Georgian leaders should not appeal to the international community under the circumstances. They should bring order unless they want someone else to do it”.²⁵¹

Some interpreted the official Russian statements concerning preventive strikes in September as trial balloons, preparing the ground for a real strike.²⁵² This interpretation was strengthened in December 2004, when Russian Air Force commander-in chief General Vladimir Mikhailov announced that the Russian Air Force was prepared to strike foreign bases it suspected of serving terrorists.²⁵³ General Ilya Shabalkin contributed to building the case for preventive air strikes against Pankisi by stating that there were probably several hundred fighters there, amongst them foreign terrorists with close

²⁴⁸ *RFE/RL Newslines*, 24 September 2004.

²⁴⁹ *Itar-Tass*, 22 September 2004.

²⁵⁰ “Pankisskaya arifmetika Richarda Maylsa”, *Nezavisimaya gazeta*, 15 September 2004.

²⁵¹ Quoted in “Chechen official threatens New Georgia Ops”, *Associated Press*, Moscow, 4 November 2004.

²⁵² Pavel Baev, “Russian preventive strikes – options and capabilities”, *Eurasia Daily Monitor*, 14 September 2004.

²⁵³ “Russian Air Force Prepared to Strike Foreign Bases Pre-emptively” posted at www.mosnews.com, 3 December 2004.

connections to international terrorist organisations and associates of Osama bin Laden. Despite Shabalkin's categorical denials that that the regional operational staff in Chechnya was planning such strikes, a head of the Russian Defence Ministry Press Service confirmed to a *Nezavisimaya Gazeta* journalist that the Defence Ministry was preparing for strikes on foreign bases,²⁵⁴ an allegation substantiated by Ivanov's very clear statement 10 December on Russia's *right* to conduct pre-emptive strikes without informing anyone in advance.²⁵⁵

The Georgian side probably knew about the Russian plans and was prepared for their realization, but vehemently denied the allegations of a terrorist presence in Pankisi. The Georgian Minister for the regulation of conflicts, Georgi Khaindrava, even hinted that the Pankisi problem was merely an invention to distract attention from Russia's own miseries.²⁵⁶ Although the outcome of this story is not yet known, the reply of Georgian Defence Minister Georgi Baramidze, when told that Ivanov had threatened strikes in Pankisi, shows how Russia's adoption of the Bush doctrine in its relations with Georgia has created a highly dangerous situation where war is becoming an increasingly likely outcome: "If there is a strike, Georgia will not fail to pay back".²⁵⁷

In sum, bilateral relations between Russia and Georgia deteriorated after Putin came to power from 1999 onwards, largely because Putin's accession coincided with the second war in Chechnya and set relations on a track where security issues dominated. However, they deteriorated even further after the 11 September events, because the international anti-terrorist struggle provided fresh concepts to frame a more assertive policy as legitimate. Although Russia has sought to increase its influence over Georgia by using various levers – such as control over energy supplies, manipulation of separatist conflicts and military bases – the adoption of the anti-terrorist rhetoric and concepts in relation to Georgia has definitely become a major lever. Moreover, this lever has more than any other escalated the tension in relations to a height where the use of force has become probable. Despite the indisputable presence of Chechen and foreign fighters in Georgia, the high degree of tension does not correspond to the presence of actual threat.

By framing, bilaterally and internationally, the Pankisi issue and to some degree the Abkhaz conflict in anti-terrorist rhetoric, Russia has prepared the ground for unilateral involvement and military action. Starting out by having to undertake military action in these areas covertly, it has increasingly been possible to claim that such action is justified and can be undertaken openly. Whereas Russian officials again and again have underlined that no such action must be taken outside the limits of international law, the Georgian case has proved that unilateral Russian action without UN or any other sanction has become a real possibility. That Russia's policy toward Georgia no longer seems restrained by international law is particularly worrying because many Russian politicians

²⁵⁴ "Pankisi opyat' pod pritselom", *Nezavisimaya gazeta*, 10 December 2004.

²⁵⁵ See comment on the statement page 23.

²⁵⁶ "Pankisi opyat' pod pritselom", *Nezavisimaya gazeta*, 10 December 2004.

²⁵⁷ Quoted in Steve Gutterman, "Russian defence chief reserves right to conduct pre-emptive strike", *Associated Press*, 10 December 2004.

today are prone to Soviet imperial nostalgia and seem to be forgetting there actually is an international border between the two countries.

A brewing rivalry between Russia and the USA in Georgia was already evident in the “pipeline wars” from the early 1990s. As the Bush doctrine has made its imprint on US and Russian action, this rivalry has been reinforced and redirected towards the security sphere. Washington’s rationale for increasing its military engagement in Georgia has been to pre-empt the dangers posed by the sanctuary that weak or “failed” states offer to terrorist groups. However, it seems plausible to assume that this engagement has been stepped up in response to growing Russian assertiveness under the same rationale. A similar mechanism is visible on the Russian side. Thus, although there on the rhetorical level is agreement between Washington and Moscow on the security challenge and its legitimate response, there is competition instead of co-operation when these concepts are put into action on the ground. This is an unwelcome development, since that the competition is defined in security terms and materializes in ambitions of growing military presence on both sides. Although there are today clear limits to Russian capabilities, this does not set future Russian–US relations in Georgia on a constructive track.

3.2. Assisting “Allies”: Russia and Central Asia

As in the Caucasus, during the 1990s Russia lost much of its foothold in Central Asia and was not able to reverse the trend of Central Asian states attempting to align with each other, or with Western security institutions.²⁵⁸ Russian military co-operation with the Central Asian states declined. Instead, Russian attention has been dedicated to internal military reforms, limited sales of military supplies to Central Asian states, continued focus on the Russian military presence in Tajikistan and, since 1999, efforts to address the challenge of international terrorism in the region.²⁵⁹ Moreover, Moscow’s attempts to draw other regional great powers into viable security co-operation structures around Central Asia were not successful. In 1999, its attempts to create a security co-operation framework based on Central Asian states, Russia and China were thwarted, as a meeting between the Ministers of Defence of Russia, China, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan and Tajikistan planned to be held in Moscow on 14–15 April 1999 was cancelled because neither China nor Kazakhstan would participate.²⁶⁰

Throughout 1999 and 2000, this situation changed as Russia started to consider direct military assistance to Central Asian states within the Collective Security Treaty (CST) as an option. In October 1999, Minister of Foreign Affairs, Igor Ivanov, stated: “the states in Central Asia have today experienced the threat from extremist forces – religious, political and others. This is a threat to their statehood. How can we counter this? Only by initiating collective efforts. Hence, today the Collective Security Treaty is no more a theoretical

²⁵⁸ For a detailed, yet inconclusive discussion of Central Asia as a weak security complex, see Lena Jonson and Roy Allison, “Central Asian Security: Internal and External Dynamics”, in Roy Allison and Lena Jonson (eds), *Central Asian Security*, RIIA, London and Brookings Institution Press, Washington, 2001. The authors see the main obstacle for a security complex in the region to be rooted in rivalries between the states, a factor that opens up for long-term security “overlays” in the region initiated by major actors such as the U.S., Russia and China.

²⁵⁹ *Ibid.*, p. 19.

²⁶⁰ *RFE/RL Newslines*, 13 April, 1999.

exercise for these states, but one of practical importance”.²⁶¹ The reference to “statehood” is important here, since it reveals that Russia – unlike the Georgian case – from 1999 was less prepared to consider Central Asian states as “failed states”, and more prone to support Central Asian regimes in the context of their being “allies”.

In this section, we will argue that, whereas Russia during the 1990s was highly unsuccessful in sealing off separate regions from outside influence due to the differentiated nature of CIS states’ security alignment and the erosion of political authority in Russia,²⁶² international terrorism – as framed by Russia – might have proven an efficient tool for achieving a more permanent security foothold in the Central Asian states.²⁶³ While there might be some qualifications with regard to the effectiveness of the Collective Security Treaty (CST) of the CIS,²⁶⁴ we argue that, under Putin, Russia has shifted perspective from the ominous CIS peacekeeping argument to form a joint CRRF force for the CIS in Central Asia, and set a clearer focus on CIS security integration. This was initially backed by possible use of military force in Afghanistan, which prompted the Central Asian states to reconsider a Russian military presence.²⁶⁵ Moreover, given the lack of co-ordination between Central Asian states, the weakness of their own military capacity and Russia’s insistence that Central Asian states need to align with the CSTO to fight off terrorist incursions have definitely made them more ready to consider realignment with Russia. As Sergey Ivanov stated in November 2000, “there is no single state in the post-Soviet space that does not take the military power of Russia into account. Quite often, they also turn to Russia in order to receive military assistance in combating international terrorism”.²⁶⁶ In following this lead, we focus on how Russia’s terrorist focus has affected three cases that are all objects for incursions of Islamist insurgents – Tajikistan, Kyrgyzstan and Uzbekistan.²⁶⁷

²⁶¹ “Otvstavka prezidenta destabiliziruet situatsiyu v mire”, *Nezavisimaya gazeta*, 12 October 1999.

²⁶² This is a central argument in Roy Allison, “The Network of New Security Policy Relations in Eurasia”, in Roy Allison and Christoph Bluth (eds), *Security Dilemmas in Russia and Eurasia*, RIIA, 1998, p. 21ff.

²⁶³ For an assessment of the effect on the 1999 and 2000 incursions of Islamist groups on Central Asian states’ territory and the orientation toward Russia, see Aleksey Malashenko, “Islam in Central Asia”, in Roy Allison and Lena Jonson (eds), *Central Asian Security*, RIIA, London and Brookings Institution Press, Washington, 2001, pp. 57–58.

²⁶⁴ Jonson and Allison have formulated the question explicitly: “If it continues to exist, will the CIS be a façade for Russian policy, or can it still oversee multilateral coordination of policy among its member states on some security concerns, for instance, in countering terrorism?”. Lena Jonson and Roy Allison, “Central Asian Security: Internal and External Dynamics”, in Roy Allison and Lena Jonson (eds), *Central Asian Security*, RIIA, London and Brookings Institution Press, Washington, 2001, p. 20

²⁶⁵ We do not exclude that there might be other regional constellations in Central Asia that may have weight, such as the Shanghai Cooperation Organisation (SCO) established in June 2001, when the former “Shanghai-five” group of Russia, China, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan and Tajikistan was transformed into the SCO, and joined by Uzbekistan, which also quit the GUUAM structure in 2003. We will not treat these in detail here, however. For a sceptical view on Russia’s ability to dominate the SCO at the cost of the by far more potent China, see for instance Boris Rumer, “The Powers in Central Asia”, *Survival*, vol. 44, no. 3, 2002.

²⁶⁶ “Strategiya bezopasnosti Rossii”, *Nezavisimaya gazeta*, 29 November 2000.

²⁶⁷ These states are currently also those that have US and allied bases on their territories. US and allied presence is located to the Khanabad and Kokaydy bases (Uzbekistan), Dushanbe and Kulyab (Tajikistan) and Manas (Kyrgyzstan). See Mark A. Smith, “Russia, the USA and Central Asia”, *Conflict Studies Research Centre*, May 2002.

3.2.1. The Russian Stronghold: Tajikistan

In terms of dependency, *Tajikistan* has long been considered somewhat of a Russian protectorate in Central Asia, due to the stationing of Russia's 201st motorized rifle division close to Dushanbe.²⁶⁸ Close co-operation with Russia on guarding the Tajik–Afghan border has made Tajik authorities highly aware of the Afghan problem, as well as Russia's strategic importance for the country. In July 2000, President Rakhmonov stated that a solution to the Afghan problem was an absolute necessity for stability in Central Asia, and termed Russia a “strategic partner” for Tajikistan.²⁶⁹ Moreover, while Putin made his first official trip to Central Asia (Uzbekistan and Turkmenistan), CIS secretary Yuriy Yarov travelled to Dushanbe and received support for the ATC project – to such a degree that Rakhmonov claimed to have co-authored the proposal.²⁷⁰ During the summer of 2000, Rakhmonov emerged as a wholehearted supporter of stronger intelligence co-operation within the CIS and fully endorsed the ATC project.

The background for Russian involvement has in part been that Russian presence in Tajikistan was of invaluable help during the civil war in the republic from 1992 and onward. When Yevgeniy Primakov became minister of foreign affairs in 1996, Russia was active in brokering a peace agreement between the Moscow-backed Rakhmonov regime and the United Tajik Opposition (UTO), and this firmly established Russia as a *sine qua non* for Tajik stability.²⁷¹ The 1997 agreement enabled Russia to serve as a guarantor of the internal political process in Tajikistan, a stabilizer of the military and security situation, and a contributor to post-Soviet reconstruction.²⁷² Although Russia reduced its border troops in Tajikistan from 16,000 in 1997 to 11,000 in 1999 and started preparations for further withdrawals, the combined Tajik–Russian border guard has remained an important asset in the collective struggle against security threats from Afghanistan. Russia has seen the joint border guard as a prerequisite for stalling inflows of drugs from Afghanistan, but also as a preventive measure for halting cross-border incursions.

As Russian perceptions of the terrorist threat matured during 1999, so did visions for providing a renewed bilateral framework for combating this challenge, however. In the

²⁶⁸ Hannes Adomeit and Heidi Reisinger, “Russia’s Role in Post-Soviet Territory. Decline of Military Power and Political Influence”, *Norwegian Institute for Defence Studies Policy Paper*, no. 4, 2002.

²⁶⁹ *RFE/RL Newslines*, 31 July 2000. Tajik authorities have termed the relationship as “strategic” since the signing of the friendship agreement in 1999. The cornerstone of this relationship has been the joint borderguard between Tajikistan and Russia on the Afghan–Tajik border, termed by some as the “Russian–Tajik border with Afghanistan”. See “Rossiya dlya nas ne tol’ko partner, no i blizkiy drug”, *Nezavisimaya gazeta*, 30 August 2001.

²⁷⁰ “Prizrak ‘vtorogo Afganistana’”, *Dipkur’er NG*, May 2000. Preparations for more coordinated anti-terror cooperation within the CIS were made at the CIS summit in January 2000. Russia had to lobby for the idea, however, in the period before the project was officially adopted in June 2000. See Lena Jonson, *Vladimir Putin and Central Asia. The Shaping of Russian Foreign Policy*, London: I.B. Tauris, 2004, p. 67.

²⁷¹ Russian researchers argue that the recognition of the UTO as a legitimate political force was instrumental in settling the Tajik civil war. See Dmitri Trenin and Aleksei V. Malashenko, *Russia’s restless Frontier. The Chechnya Factor in Post-Soviet Russia*, Carnegie Endowment for International Peace, 2004, p. 88.

²⁷² Jonson, *Vladimir Putin and Central Asia*, p. 53.

summer of 2001, Konstantin Totskiy, Head of the Federal Russian border troops, stated that Taliban forces were deliberately trying to “blow up” Central Asia.²⁷³ Taliban activity in the border region toward Central Asia was high, according to Totskiy, and “it is no secret that the actions of Osama bin Laden and Taliban are directed toward escalating instability in separate states (Kyrgyzstan, Tajikistan and Uzbekistan) as well as in the Central Asian region as such”.²⁷⁴ In July, part of the 201st division was converted to an anti-guerrilla force and dispatched to the Afghan–Tajik border, while 500 border guards reinforced the most likely transit zone.²⁷⁵ Moreover, Tajik authorities reportedly contributed with 20% of the funding of the ATC, with Kyrgyzstan bearing an additional 20% and Kazakhstan and Russia the rest. Tajik authorities were also active in initiating an extraordinary meeting of Secretaries of the National Security Councils of the CST countries in October 2001 in Dushanbe, aiming at strengthening the collective CIS footing in the struggle against international terrorism.²⁷⁶ The message from the meeting was directed at co-ordinating CST positions on terrorism and military co-operation as the USA entered on its Operation Enduring Freedom in Afghanistan.

While Tajik authorities welcomed US military presence in the region after 11 September, Tajik military officials have considered Russian military presence to be more in line with long-term priorities. Commander of the Tajik MVD reaction brigade, Sukhrob Kasymov, stated in 2001: “the presence of US military units participating in the anti-terrorist operation in Afghanistan is a temporary measure. I believe that only a Russian presence can be long-term”.²⁷⁷ Such statements have tallied with Russian priorities. Russian authorities dismissed reports that the 201st division had been put on high alert after 11 September, and the Russian commander of the 201st division stated simultaneously that the Russian military contingency had no plans for assisting US forces in Operation Enduring Freedom.²⁷⁸ Instead, in December 2001, Minister of Defence, Sergey Ivanov, held talks with Rakhmonov and Tajik Minister of Defence, Sherali Khayrulloev, about upgrading the military equipment of the 201st division, increasing combat readiness, and transforming the 201st division into a permanent Russian base in Tajikistan.²⁷⁹

At the same time, criticisms of Putin’s concessions to the USA and the alliance were emerging in Russia. Duma speaker Gennadiy Seleznev stated, on a tour of the Central Asian states in January 2002, that Russia should opt for a stronger military presence in Central Asia since “we are beginning to lose Central Asia”.²⁸⁰ Speaking in the Kazakh

²⁷³ “Taliby pytayutsya vzorvat’ Tsentral’nyuyu Aziyu”, *Nezavisimaya gazeta*, 29 June 2001.

²⁷⁴ *Ibid.*

²⁷⁵ *RFE/RL Central Asia Report*, 3 August 2001.

²⁷⁶ Jonson, *Vladimir Putin and Central Asia*, p. 93.

²⁷⁷ *Eurasianet*, 22 January 2002. At: <http://www.eurasianet.org/resource/tajikistan/articles/index.shtml>. In a joint declaration adopted after the February 2002 U.S.–Russia Working Group on Afghanistan, the US State Department underscored that the USA does not seek to have long-term military bases in Central Asia. “Joint Statement by U.S.–Russian Working Group on Afghanistan”, US Department of State Press Statement, 8 February 2002. At: <http://www.state.gov/r/pa/prs/ps/2002/7917.htm>. This was altered in 2004, however, when the Bush administration sent a signal that US bases in Central Asia might be preserved for training and exercise purposes.

²⁷⁸ “201-ya diviziya amerikantsam ne pomoshchnik”, *Nezavisimaya gazeta*, 25 October 2001.

²⁷⁹ *RFE/RL Central Asian Report*, 13 December 2001.

²⁸⁰ Jonson, *Vladimir Putin and Central Asia*, p. 139.

capital, Astana, Seleznev insisted that any long-term military US presence in Central Asia should be clarified at the CIS level in talks between the Central Asian states and Russia, not bilaterally.²⁸¹ The latter statement seemed to have an effect on the Kremlin administration. Initially, the presidential administration had been certain that US presence in Central Asia would not harm long-term Russian interests, and that, by improving relations to NATO and the USA, Russia had strengthened its positions within the CIS.²⁸² Still, as the Duma put Minister of Foreign Affairs, Igor Ivanov, under heavy fire in March 2002, asking among other things if Ivanov could “sleep at night” after having surrendered Central Asia to US influence, the Kremlin apparently back-pedalled on former statements.²⁸³ Putin stated, for one, in his annual address to the Russian parliament in April 2002 that the CIS structures had played a central role in rebuffing international terrorism in Central Asia, and did not mention US efforts. “It was Russia’s principled position that made it possible to form a durable anti-terrorist coalition”, Putin stated.

In the context of allied relationships, we – together with the leaderships of a number of CIS countries – took corresponding decisions. Through joint effort, we managed to resolve a most important strategic task – to eliminate the highly dangerous center of international terrorism in Afghanistan, to put a stop to its adverse impact on the situation in other regions of the world.²⁸⁴

Though Tajik authorities were quick to underline US military presence as a decisive factor in eliminating the threat from international terrorism, Russia’s persistence in flagging international terrorism as a threat to regional stability, the gradual process of restructuring the CST to a more Russian-dominated CSTO, repeated military exercises and promises of economic support have all narrowed the space for Tajik authorities to balance great-power interests. Moreover, factors boosting a Russian military presence were already in place. Tajikistan pledged support for the CRRF project in Yerevan in May 2001, and took part in joint CST exercises in 2001–2002. In April 2002, the military exercise “South – Anti-Terror 2002” ended on the Tajik–Afghan border with 5,000 Tajik and Russian personnel fighting off simulated incursions from Afghanistan by using assault planes and helicopters, artillery and missile systems.²⁸⁵ Moreover, in most talks with Tajik authorities, Russia has been adamant that it is in for a long-term engagement in the region. Although Russian news reports confirmed allegations that IMU leader Dzhuma Namangami was killed during a raid against Afghanistan in 2002, they still asserted that Tajikistan may emerge as a permanent base for IMU in the future and that: “the hopes that the victorious operations of the USA in Afghanistan would deliver Russia and the Southern states of the CIS from the threat of religious extremism have so far not been met”.²⁸⁶ On the contrary, Russia claimed that the terrorist threat had not abated, but

²⁸¹ *RFE/RL Newslines*, 9 January 2002.

²⁸² *RFE/RL Newslines*, 3 January 2002.

²⁸³ Jonson, *Vladimir Putin and Central Asia*, p. 139.

²⁸⁴ *RFE/RL Central Asia Report*, 9 May 2002.

²⁸⁵ *RFE/RL Newslines*, 19 April 2002.

²⁸⁶ “Pered geostrategicheskoy razvilkoy”, *Nezavisimaya gazeta*, 15 April 2002. The article created a stir in Tajik–Russian relations, as Tajikistan delivered a protest not against it to Russian authorities. *RFE/RL Newslines*, 23 April 2002. The article claimed that some 1,500 IMU members were active in Tajikistan, and

had been increased. Meeting with Tajik President Rakhmonov in April 2003, Putin stated: “we’re still far away from a settlement of the conflict in Afghanistan. Moreover, nowadays we see considerable activity from Taliban and Al Qaida [in Afghanistan]”.²⁸⁷

In 2002, Tajik–Russian talks stalled on several issues concerning the framework document from December 2001 on the 201st division. Russia insisted on a broad agenda, combining the ratification of the framework agreement with several inter-governmental agreements on property rights, buildings and plots of land plus a bilateral agreement for maintenance of Russian planes at Tajik airports.²⁸⁸ Tajik authorities had allegedly, to Russia’s concern, charged Russia with an annual rent of 250 million USD for utilizing the base, although Tajik authorities denied this.²⁸⁹ Moreover, Tajik–Russia relations were also cooling due to a statement from a Russian Duma deputy that Russia was being flooded by “Tajiks and beggars” seeking employment in Russia. Deputy chairman, Vladimir Lukin, went as far as to indicate that “Tajiks are people who travel freely to Russia, something that could help create conditions for an uprising or revolution”.²⁹⁰ Parallel to this, Moscow kept a steady focus on bilateral negotiations with Tajikistan. CSTO Secretary General Nikolay Bordyuzha, stated for instance in December 2003 that the issue of Russia’s 201st division base in Tajikistan was not “on the multilateral agenda for the CIS, but on the Russian–Tajik bilateral agenda”.²⁹¹ Clearly, Russia wanted to sort out its bilateral relationship with the Tajiks first, before claiming a victory in collective CIS efforts.

Tajik–Russian relations remained highly contradictory throughout 2003, with Tajik officials lamenting that Russia offered many promises, but was slow in implementing them.²⁹² In the spring of 2004, the protracted bilateral process on converting the 201st division to a permanent Russian base reached a peak. Russian news agencies reported that Tajik authorities were deliberately delaying talks with Russia on converting the 201st infantry division to a permanent Russian base in order to gain concessions from the USA,²⁹³ and in March 2004, reported that negotiations on converting the 201st military base were “deadlocked”.²⁹⁴ Tajik demands were geared toward allowing that Tajik President Rakhmonov to be able to take control over the 201st division in emergency situations, and that a Tajik takeover of the border control with Afghanistan should be scheduled already for 2005. In conducting these negotiations, Russia was capable of offering more than simply “eternal friendship” to Tajikistan, however. By summer 2004, Moscow was gradually fortifying its positions by linking together economic support

that Tajik authorities were seeking to link closer up to the U.S. and France to to the detriment of Russian interests in the region.

²⁸⁷ “Putin priglasil tadjikov v Rossiyu”, *Nezavisimaya gazeta*, 28 April 2003.

²⁸⁸ Ibid.

²⁸⁹ *RFE/RL Newslines*, 3 January 2002.

²⁹⁰ “Tajikistan: Cracks Appear In Tight Relationship With Russia”, *RFE/RL Feature Report*, 12 April 2002.

²⁹¹ “ODKB demonstriruet bespomoshchnost”, *Nezavisimaya gazeta*, 9 December 2003. At: http://www.ng.ru/cis/2003-12-09/5_odkb.html.

²⁹² See Jonson, *Vladimir Putin and Central Asia*, p. 108.

²⁹³ “Nespokoynoe sosledstva”, *Nezavisimaya gazeta*, 30 March 2004. At: http://www.ng.ru/cis/2004-03-30/5_odkb.html.

²⁹⁴ *RFE/RL Newslines*, 5 March 2004.

packages and security issues. The Rakhmonov–Putin meeting in June 2004 seemed to remove central barriers to the conversion of the 201st division to a permanent Russian military base in Tajikistan. Russia would reportedly write off 250 million USD of the 330 million USD Tajik debts to Russia in exchange for control over the Nurek space surveillance centre and would invest in the building of the Sangtuda hydroelectric station.²⁹⁵ Moreover, Russia succeeded in postponing the transfer of border control to Tajikistan from 2005 to 2006, and received the rights to base Russian soldiers close to Dushanbe for an unlimited time and free of charge.²⁹⁶ The final agreement for converting the 201st motorized rifle division to a permanent Russian base in Tajikistan was reached on 16 October 2004. At the inauguration ceremony, Putin called the opening of the base “a crucially important and necessary decision for two friendly, allied states that serves the basic interests of our peoples and acts to strengthen the peace and stability of Central Asia and the security of the entire CIS”.²⁹⁷ Sergey Ivanov estimated the total number of personnel stationed in Tajikistan at more than 5,000, and underlined that Russia had been granted several buildings from Tajik authorities free of charge.²⁹⁸ As a part of the bilateral agreement, Russia has pledged investments for about 2 billion USD in Tajikistan over a five-year period.²⁹⁹

It should be noted that Russia so far has insisted that the opening of the Tajik base should not be interpreted in the perspective of a strategic struggle for influence between the USA and Russia in Central Asia. In fact, Sergey Ivanov outlined the establishment of the base as a part of Russia’s overall ambition to improve regional security within the CIS at a NATO meeting in Romania in September. According to Ivanov: “We regard the opening of the Russian base as an important step in the strengthening of the regional collective security system and the designation of a new legal status for the military component of the Collective Security Treaty Organization”.³⁰⁰ Still, at the same meeting, Russia’s Minister of Defence announced that Russia was prepared to conduct pre-emptive strikes at terrorist bases, wherever they might be.³⁰¹ This statement, which – as we have argued – has been adopted in Russian rhetoric from 2002 and onward, has bogged the US coalition down in a highly problematic argument, while narrowing the options for Tajikistan. Russia’s military power is still a factor to be reckoned with – also for states that have tried to strengthen their positions internationally by opting for increased US military presence.

In sum, the statement on pre-emptive strikes, coupled with the fact that Russia has gradually but persistently applied a “stick and carrot” policy toward Tajikistan by

²⁹⁵ Russia had focused on modernizing Tajik hydroelectric power plants since 2002 and raised the issue in a bilateral inter-governmental commission led by Minister for Emergencies, Sergey Shoigu. See Jonson, *Vladimir Putin and Central Asia*, pp. 108–9.

²⁹⁶ “Carrots, Sticks and the Tajik–Afghan Border”, *RFE/RL Central Asia Report*, 8 June 2004.

²⁹⁷ *RFE/RL Newslines*, 18 October 2004.

²⁹⁸ “Tajikistan: First Permanent Russian Military Base Opened”, *RFE/RL Feature Articles*, 17 October 2004.

²⁹⁹ “Russia, Tajikistan Agree on Military Base, Debt”, *RFE/RL Feature Article*, 16 October 2004. See also “Central Asia: Russia Comes On Strong”, *RFE/RL Feature Article*, 17 November 2004.

³⁰⁰ *RFE/RL Newslines*, 15 October 2004.

³⁰¹ “Preventivnye udary budut bez’yadernymi”, *Izvestia*, 15 October 2004.

At: <http://www.izvestia.ru/armia2/article527423>.

broadening the bilateral agenda between Tajikistan and Russia to include economic issues, suggests that Russia has assertively pursued its interests in Tajikistan. This tallies with the Kremlin's over-all strategy in Central Asia. By refraining from raising issues of great-power rivalries in Central Asia, the Putin administration seems to have reinforced its position as an inevitable security partner for Tajikistan. As observed by Bobo Lo, a central policy priority for the Kremlin under Putin has been not to fight struggles that the administration knows for sure that it will lose.³⁰² This does not imply, however, that Russia has given up geopolitical priorities. In fact, the geopolitical mindset still holds sway over Russian priorities, although it is not so pronounced.³⁰³

3.2.2. Central Asia's "Winnie-the-Pooh": Kyrgyzstan

Kyrgyzstan has been particularly disposed for rethinking its security alignment under the new anti-terror paradigm, basically due to numerous incursions of radical Islamist groupings on Kyrgyz territory in 1999 and onwards. Whereas in the 1990s, Russian–Kyrgyz military co-operation was limited to maintaining joint border protection toward China,³⁰⁴ the 1999 incursions of IMU insurgents from Tajikistan prompted Kyrgyzstan to more readily accept the Russian presence in Central Asia.³⁰⁵ In Lena Jonson's words: "the events in Batken gave Putin the opportunity to make the issue of anti-terrorism the top priority in Russia's relations with the Central Asian states and to make it a platform for the development of military and security cooperation".³⁰⁶

A decisive factor has been the inability of Kyrgyzstan to handle spillovers by itself. Kyrgyz authorities were clearly unprepared when IMU forces in August 1999 entered the Batken and Chop-Alayskiy regions in the south of the country and took about thirteen hostages, among them four Japanese geologists and the Head of the Kyrgyz internal forces, Anarbek Shamkeyev.³⁰⁷ In responding to this, Kyrgyz authorities were quick to evoke a collective response to what they understood as an onslaught of international terrorism in Kyrgyzstan. Speaking at a meeting in the CST in September 1999, the Kyrgyz representative claimed that the actions of the armed insurgents should be considered as an act of international terrorism with links to Afghanistan.³⁰⁸ Although the CST pledged to assist Kyrgyzstan in similar incidents, what is striking is the limited level of Russian involvement. Bishkek reportedly sent an official request for Russian assistance in late August 1999, but Moscow's initial reply was reluctant. In early September in Tashkent, Igor Sergeev reportedly stated with caution that Russia *hypothetically* could support Kyrgyzstan within the framework of the CST, but that

³⁰² Lo terms Putin's concession policy vis-à-vis the West as one of strategic opportunism—to make the best out of an unstructured international situation and establish Russia as a central actor in Eurasia. Bobo Lo, *Vladimir Putin and the Evolution of Russian Foreign Policy*, p. 129

³⁰³ *Ibid.*, pp. 72–74.

³⁰⁴ Oumirserik Kasenov, "Central Asia: National, Regional and Global Aspects of Security", in Roy Allison and Christoph Bluth (eds), *Security Dilemmas in Russia and Eurasia*, RIIA, 1998.

³⁰⁵ According to some reports, Russian border troops have deliberately allowed Islamic insurgents to cross Central Asian borders repeatedly in 1999 and 2000. See "Russia Stages 'CIS-Collective' Antiterrorism Exercises in Central Asia", *Jamestown Monitor*, 23 April 2002.

³⁰⁶ Jonson, *Vladimir Putin and Central Asia*, p. 63.

³⁰⁷ "V Kirgizii ob'yavlena mobilizatsii", *Nezavisimaya gazeta*, 31 August 1999.

³⁰⁸ "Konsul'tatsii predstaviteley gosudarstv-uchastnikov dogovora o kollektivnoy bezopasnosti", *Diplomatičeskij vestnik*, no. 10, 1999.

statement was made on the territory of a non-CST member – Uzbekistan.³⁰⁹ Sergeev did not rule out assistance in preventing similar incursions, and that Russia could provide military specialists and ammunition. At a meeting between then Prime Minister Putin and his Kyrgyz counterpart, it was confirmed that Moscow was not intending to send ground forces to Kyrgyzstan, only military equipment.³¹⁰ Kyrgyz authorities confirmed the latter by stating that Kyrgyzstan had sufficient forces to repel the onslaught, but that night-vision military-technical support from Russia was an important contribution.³¹¹

In terms of political intensions and declarations, however, Russia went from initial reluctance to more outspoken promises of support in the autumn of 1999. In October 1999, then Prime Minister Putin pledged support to Kyrgyzstan in fighting terrorist incursions at a meeting with his Kyrgyz counterpart, Amal'geldy Muravlev. According to Putin, "Kyrgyzstan has been subject to an attack from international terrorism", and that "Russian border troops have rendered support, and will continue to do so".³¹² Kyrgyz authorities responded by stating that the country needed 36 million USD in order to upgrade border control on the Kyrgyz–Tajik border, thereby admitting that Kyrgyz border control was in need of overhaul.³¹³ Moscow's ambitions were wider than reinforcing border control, however. As noted, in October 1999, Minister of Foreign Affairs, Igor Ivanov, stated that for the Central Asian states CIS co-operation was more than just a theoretical exercise.³¹⁴ Already in April 2000, then Chechnya envoy, Sergey Yastrzhembskiy, who made explicit statements with regard to Russia's intention to conduct pre-emptive strikes against Taliban in that same month, met bilaterally with Kyrgyz President Akayev and argued that there was a link between the 1999 incursions of the IMU and developments in Chechnya and Caucasus. Russia would, as a strategic partner of Kyrgyzstan, immediately assist Kyrgyz authorities in the event of new Islamist incursions, Yastrzhembskiy argued.³¹⁵

Russian–Kyrgyz rapprochement was helped by a decision in May 2000 to make Russian a second official language in Kyrgyzstan; and in June, President Akayev stated that Russia would remain a "strategic ally" for Kyrgyzstan,³¹⁶ a statement illustrated by Kyrgyz support for the ATC in Bishkek on the CIS summit in June. The process was wrapped up by the signing of an "eternal friendship agreement" between Akayev and Putin in late July 2000, whereby Akayev confirmed that Kyrgyzstan would continue to see Russian as a foreign policy priority and an important strategic partner, while expressing gratitude for Russian assistance in expelling IMU forces in 1999.³¹⁷ Despite this political rapprochement, Kyrgyz authorities insisted in 2000 that their country had

³⁰⁹ "Okazhet li Moskva Bishkeku voennuyu podderzhku?", *Nezavisimaya gazeta*, 2 September 1999.

³¹⁰ "Moskva ozabotilas' situatsiey na yuge Kirgizii", *Nezavisimaya gazeta*, 1 September 1999.

³¹¹ "Grazhdane Yaponii zhivy", *Nezavisimaya gazeta*, 9 September 1999.

³¹² "Grazhdane Yaponii obreli svobodu", *Nezavisimaya gazeta*, 26 October 1999.

³¹³ "Terroristy pomogli obrazovat' novuyu oblast' Kirgizii", *Nezavisimaya gazeta*, 19 October 1999.

³¹⁴ "Igor Ivanov: 'Otstavka prezidenta detsabiliziruet situatsiyu v mire'", *Nezavisimaya gazeta*, 12 October 1999.

³¹⁵ *RFE/RL Newslines*, 13 April 2000.

³¹⁶ *RFE/RL Newslines*, 3 July, 2000.

³¹⁷ *RFE/RL Newslines*, 28 July 2000. Again, this assistance was probably limited to night-vision equipment and pledges that Russia would train Kyrgyz forces in mountain warfare. See above.

sufficient forces to repel by themselves any incursion from Tajik and Afghan territories.³¹⁸ Actually, this was a gross exaggeration, considering the poor performance of the Kyrgyz military. In reality, Kyrgyz authorities were growing increasingly aware of the country's weakness, to the degree that Akayev opted for joining new security constellations to fill the void.

As the CST processes and the Shanghai-five processes commenced, Kyrgyz authorities tried to satisfy security concerns by taking limited part in CST exercises and anchoring their security priorities in the SCO. The CRRF exercise "Friendship-2001" in August 2001 was held on Kyrgyz territory in Batken province, and in June 2001, President Akayev stated that the SCO process had provided invaluable help in the struggle against terrorism, and underscored the help from Russia and China in the establishment of an SCO Anti-terror centre in Bishkek.³¹⁹ The latter decision was of primary importance, Akayev stressed, since terrorists had "considerable material resources and finances behind them", a fact that led SCO states to adopt "preventive measures" against the emerging threat.³²⁰ Again, the discrepancy between stated aims and abilities was evident. The anti-air defence unit of Kyrgyzstan had not taken part in the larger "Friendship-2001" exercise for lack of funding,³²¹ whereas Akayev was still insisting that Kyrgyzstan had at its disposal sufficient forces to repel any Islamist insurgency onslaught on Kyrgyz territory.³²²

The 11 September events added a new security dimension to Kyrgyz priorities and prompted what has later been called the "Akayev doctrine" of allowing both Russian and allied bases on Kyrgyz territory. On the one hand, Kyrgyzstan continued a balancing policy toward Russia by allowing the coalition to establish a 3,000 personnel military base at a civilian airport close to Bishkek, the Manas airport. Initially, Kyrgyz authorities granted base rights for allied forces for one year, but this agreement has since been prolonged. On the other hand, Kyrgyz authorities were put under pressure from Moscow not to prolong the agreement in the period leading up to the CST meeting in April 2002. Former deputy minister of international affairs and chairman of the CIS committee in the State Duma, Boris Pastukhov, advised the Kyrgyz chairman in the lower chamber not to extend the agreement.³²³ Echoing this statement, Vladimir Rushailo stated on 12 April that although Russia supported the US coalition's war against terrorism, the mandate for a US presence in Central Asia should be "clearly determined".³²⁴ Moreover, the exercise "South Anti-terror 2002" in April 2002 operated on a scenario where IMU forces in Afghanistan penetrated the Tajik-Afghan border, alerted Kazak, Kyrgyz and Tajik forces

³¹⁸ *RFE/RL Newslines*, 5 June 2000. Contrary to official statements, the Kyrgyz 12,000 man large army has been in a dire condition and totally unprepared for tackling any direct security threat stemming from international terrorism. This fact has made Kyrgyzstan the only country in the world to be receiving military assistance from Russia, China, the USA and NATO. See "Kyrgyzstan: Ensuring Security Means Having Many Allies", *RFE/RL Special Report*, 17 April 2003.

³¹⁹ "Partnerstvo za shest' pechatyami", *Nezavisimaya gazeta*, 30 June 2001.

³²⁰ *Ibid.*

³²¹ "SNG gotovit'sya otrazit' agressiyu s trekh storon", *Nezavisimaya gazeta*, 28 August 2001.

³²² "Partnerstvo za shest' pechatyami", *Nezavisimaya gazeta*, 30 June 2001.

³²³ *RFE/RL Newslines*, 3 April 2002.

³²⁴ *RFE/RL Newslines*, 15 April 2002.

and placed them under CST – that is, Russian – command, before finally being stopped close to Bishkek.³²⁵ The second and third phase was moved to Kazakhstan and Tajikistan respectively, and included small-scale anti-terror exercises in seizing civilian transport facilities and freeing hostages (Kazakhstan) and repulsing a terrorist attack against political authorities in Dushanbe (Tajikistan). CRRF exercises were held also in June 2002, involving some 500 CRRF forces under the scenario of combating “bandit formations” that had penetrated the Kyrgyz–Tajik border.

The effect of collective CIS exercises has been to simulate not only onslaughts of terrorist insurgents, but also a military framework for what the CSTO could actually become. Although Russia’s capacities to fill the framework with content may be questioned, there is no doubt that the closely interrelated process of revamping the Collective Security Pact and holding regular exercises has made individual states within the CIS more receptive toward accepting Russian bases on their territory. In the case of Kyrgyzstan, this was evident from June 2002, when Russian Minister of Defence, Sergey Ivanov, discussed possible Russian utilization of three military objects in Kyrgyzstan and the status of Russian forces.³²⁶ Come December 2002, a first detachment of Russian SU-27 and SU-25s landed at the Kant airbase outside Bishkek, signalling the onset of the first Russian base in Central Asia since the collapse of the Soviet Union.³²⁷ After a meeting with Sergey Ivanov in early December 2002, Esen Topoyev announced that Kyrgyz authorities would allow the stationing of 700 Russian forces at Kant in 2003, along with 10 Su-25 and Su-27 attack jets, five training jets, two transport planes and two Mi-8 helicopters.³²⁸ The airbase was reportedly intended to support the CRRF regional Central Asian forces that were established in 2001 with Armenia, Belarus, Kazakhstan Kyrgyzstan, Russia and Tajikistan, and were planned to have a total strength of 5,000 personnel.³²⁹ Finally, the stationing of Russian forces was to be regulated by a bilateral agreement between Kyrgyzstan and Russia on security, and a document extending the repayment terms of the 160 million USD debt of Kyrgyzstan to Russia by 20 years.³³⁰

The establishment of the Kant airbase marked the high point of the “Akayev doctrine”. In December 2002, Akayev argued that Kyrgyzstan would allow both Russian and US bases on its territory, and that small states should have as many strong friends as possible. “I do not adhere to the position of ‘either–or’”, Akayev replied to a question on how it was possible to allow both US and Russian bases in Kyrgyzstan: “We have no intentions of putting these states up against one another. We consider both states friendly states and

³²⁵ *Jamestown Monitor*, 23 April 2002.

³²⁶ “Moskva i Vashington delayut odno delo v odnom meste”, *Nezavisimaya gazeta*, 14 June 2002.

³²⁷ “Russia to Open First Base Abroad Since Soviet Days”, *Reuters*, 22 September 2003.

³²⁸ “Kyrgyzstan Squares Circles in Efforts to Triangulate Russia, U.S. and China”, *Central Asia Report*, 29 December 2002. Reports vary about the actual number of troops to be stationed at the Kant airbase. The number of 700 was a relatively high estimate, perhaps prompted more by the Kyrgyz ambitions than economic realities. Other reports hold that 300 is more close to reality. See “Russia to Open First base Since Soviet Days”, *Reuters*, 22 September 2003.

³²⁹ “Ivanov prigotovil dlya Putina syurpriz”, *Nezavisimaya gazeta*, 5 December 2002.

³³⁰ *Eurasianet*, 29 April 2003.

strategic partners”.³³¹ Although this policy was formulated as a rationale for allowing several powers to hold bases on Kyrgyz territory, the anti-terror rationale of the CSTO was given ample space in Kyrgyz deliberations. Defence Minister, Esen Topoyev, reproduced the frame for the CSTO by stating that:

There is a need for a permanent Russian military base dictated by those threats and challenges to the Central Asian region [emanating from Islamic extremism]. And it is a component of building up a collective rapid reaction force. It will conduct two tasks: One is purely on the united air defence system, which includes Su-27 aircrafts, and the other is on securing land-forces. These are army aviation, or attack planes as we call them, which are Su-25s, and they will be deployed here starting next year.³³²

The statement is important since it codifies two aspects of the CSTO security framework – the collective air defence system, where Kyrgyzstan has been member since 1995; and an offensive reaction capacity. Assault planes were intended for the latter, to serve as an offensive air support of the CSTO CRRF forces,³³³ although there also was an element of collective defence. Putin explicitly linked the future functions of the base to the Islamist incursions in 1999–2000: “terrorists entered Kyrgyzstan as if it was their own home and killed people without being punished. If we’d had a base then, events would have unfolded according to a different scenario”.³³⁴ The “collective effort” was carried by Russia, however. The Russian side would carry financial responsibilities estimated at 79 million RUR for modernizing the airfield, 219 million RUR for establishing the airbase, and an annual 130 million RUR for maintenance. These expenditures were to be covered from the MOD budget for 2003, and from a separate chapter in the Russian budget on “national defence” from 2004 and onward.³³⁵ Moreover, despite the official ambition that the base would serve as a component in CRRF forces for the CSTO, Russian media reports indicated that this was a myth, since the Russian side bore all expenses for the base, and since it was formally registered as a part of the Ural airborne infantry in Yekaterinburg.³³⁶

Evidently, the Russian military presence resolved several security priorities of the Kyrgyz authorities, and Russia gained in salience whenever Kyrgyz officials reproduced the central tenets of the Akayev doctrine. Although refusing allegations that the Kant base was a sign of renewed influence for Russia in Central Asia, the presidential catchword “Russia is given to us by God and history” was flagged several times during 2003, but interpreted explicitly as a part of a balancing strategy. There are indications that Akayev has been more prepared to yield to Russian security interests and rhetoric than has been

³³¹ “Neytral’naya polosa prezidenta Akayeva”, *Nezavisimaya gazeta*, 20 December 2002. Refraining from answering the question on which side, the Russian or the Kyrgyz, that took the initiative to establish the base, Akayev said that it was a CIS base, and hence, that the decision was a “collective one”.

³³² “Central Asia: Diplomatic Visits Highlight U.S., Russian Competition”, *RFE/RL Special Report*, 5 December 2002.

³³³ “Voennye nashli svoyu ‘poddushku’”, *Izvestia*, 23 October 2003. At: <http://www.izvestia.ru/politic/article40180>.

³³⁴ Ibid.

³³⁵ Ibid.

³³⁶ “Rossiya vernulas’ v Tsentral’nyuyu Aziyu”, *Nezavisimaya gazeta*, 24 October 2003. At: http://www.ng.ru/politics/2003-10-24/2_asia.html.

the case with other Central Asian states, however. An instance in point is the statement made by Akayev at the CIS summit on 16 September 2004, where he claimed to be a wholehearted supporter of the principle of pre-emptive strikes launched by the Russian General Staff after the Beslan events of August/September 2004.³³⁷ According to Akayev, his support was based on “the lessons learned from the fight against armed groups of militants in Kyrgyzstan in 1999–2000”. He continued:

But then there was no mechanism to bring into play the high-precision weapons that are needed for pre-emptive strikes. At present, there is such a mechanism – the Collective Security Treaty Organization (CSTO) and its rapid-reaction forces in Central Asia.³³⁸

Finally, Akayev stated: “We cannot [simply] ‘wait and see’ until terrorists from Afghanistan or other places come to us. [If that happens] we would have to fight against them on our own territory and lose our own soldiers and civilians”.³³⁹ Again, speaking to Russian World War II veterans on 14 November 2004, Akayev repeated his support to the post-Beslan pre-emptive strike announcements of the Russian General Staff, stating: “We support Russia’s position on undertaking pre-emptive strikes against international terrorism. Our approach is the same as Russia’s, and the evidence is the opening of the Russian military base in Kant and the creation of the Collective Security Treaty Organization.”³⁴⁰

Moscow’s policies of providing assistance to allies had, in other words, resulted in direct endorsement of the pre-emptive strike concept in the Kyrgyz case. Kyrgyzstan would serve not only as a home base for Russian-led CRRF forces, but also as a state endorsing the pre-emptive strike principle. Moreover, as in the Tajik case, the Kremlin has underpinned renewed security co-operation with a more tailored economic approach. During 2004, Russia has flagged considerable investments in Kyrgyz hydroelectric energy projects coupled with writing off a considerable part of Kyrgyzstan’s debt to Russia. A bilateral meeting between Putin and Akayev held on 11 November 2004 in Novo-Ogarevo and a subsequent meeting with St. Petersburg governor Valentina Matvienko confirmed Russia’s intentions of providing contracts worth about 1 billion USD for the reconstruction of the Kambarata-1 and Kambarata-2 hydroelectric power plants in Kyrgyzstan.³⁴¹ Among the matters discussed at the bilateral Putin–Akayev meeting was the framework of a debt-for-equity scheme allowing Russian companies to take control over Kyrgyz military production facilities in return for writing off

³³⁷ “Analysis: Terrorism, Common Ground, And the CIS Summit”, *RFE/RL Feature Article*, 20 September 2004. This stands in stark contrast to Kyrgyz officials’ statements during the “Friendship-2001” exercise in August, when Kyrgyz Security Council Chairman Misir Ashyrkulov said that the CRRF would not launch pre-emptive strikes on terrorist bases, since most were located in Afghanistan and the CRRF would not operate outside the CIS. See *RFE/RL Central Asia Report*, 31 August 2001.

³³⁸ *Ibid.*

³³⁹ “CIS: Leaders Show Unity in the Fight Against Terrorism”, *RFE/RL Feature Article*, 16 September 2004. At: http://www.rferl.org/features/features_Article.aspx?m=09&y=2004&id=7DF3F5EB-7010-4862-B46A-1E1B26982501.

³⁴⁰ *RFE/RL Central Asia Report*, 16 November 2004.

At: <http://www.rferl.org/reports/centralasia/2004/11/42-161104.asp>.

³⁴¹ *Ibid.*

Kyrgyzstan's 180 million USD debt to Russia.³⁴² The focal point of this deal will be the Dastan facility, which produces Schkval VA-111 torpedoes. The Kyrgyz parliament has already recommended sale of the Kyrgyz state's share in this production facility of about 37% (valued at 5 million USD) to Russian companies.

While Kyrgyzstan has consistently argued in favour of a "both-and" strategy, the rapid rapprochement between Kyrgyzstan and Russia within the CIS framework has engendered comments also about other areas in the post-Soviet space. As Akayev stated in September 2004: "I think that the further spread of the Rose Revolution technique is intended to weaken the CIS".³⁴³ This statement echoed not only Kyrgyz priorities with regard to maintaining what Putin at the September CIS meeting termed the "geopolitical space of the CIS",³⁴⁴ but also the intentions of the Kyrgyz authorities to contribute Kyrgyz forces to the Russian "CIS peacekeeping" unit in Abkhazia, thereby meeting Moscow's desire to increase the contingency.³⁴⁵ Moreover, Kyrgyz concerns for the CIS space works both ways. Russia has not been putting forward extensive demands of regime changes in dealing with Central Asian states, but seems to be cultivating friendship agreements with them without a look at local authoritarian practices. As reported in *Nezavisimaya gazeta*, Russia's success in integrating Central Asia has been based on the fact that "Russian authorities takes political realities as a given in the region and do not strive to teach Central Asian leaders democracy".³⁴⁶ Again, this argument easily boosts the Central Asian states' immanent feeling of insecurity since many regimes consider a more democratic posture to be compatible with yielding to extremist forces in the region.

In sum, the Kyrgyz path is not one of "both-and", but of "either-or". Throughout 2004, Russia's strengthened position in Kyrgyzstan was manifest. The state-owned Russian Rosoboronexport gave Kyrgyzstan the equivalent of 2.3 million USD in military aid in April 2004 in order to equip Kyrgyz CRRF forces.³⁴⁷ Kyrgyz forces received firearms, optical sites, bullet-proof vests, ammunition and uniforms in a special ceremony, an event considered to be more than a one-off. Moreover, CRRF forces held an anti-terror exercise in August 2004 called "Border-2004" that included spetsnaz forces and attack aircrafts.³⁴⁸ The exercise included some 2,000 spetsnaz, airborne infantry and other forces transported from Russia (Privol'sk-Uralskiy district), Kazakhstan and Tajikistan. The exercise also involved some 30 aircraft from the Kant airbase, including attack helicopters and Su-24 and Su-25 attack planes, also from bases in Kazakhstan. The frame for the exercise was

³⁴² Ibid.

³⁴³ *RFE/RL Central Asia Report*, 21 September 2004.

³⁴⁴ "Immovable Union", *Kommersant*, 15 September 2004.

At: <http://www.kommersant.com/archive.asp?m=9&y=2004&d=15&id=505353>.

³⁴⁵ Ibid. According to *Kommersant*, Moscow has been concerned that the Russian-Georgian conflict over South Ossetia might be depicted in Tbilisi as a conflict between Russia and Georgia, and, forestalling the involvement of the predominantly Russian CIS forces in Abkhazia in a conflict, Russian would like to secure a broader CIS mandate for the peacekeeping force.

³⁴⁶ "Pokhorony SNG otkladivayutsya", *Nezavisimaya gazeta*, 13 September 2004. At: http://www.ng.ru/courier/2004-09-13/11_sammit.html.

³⁴⁷ *RFE/RL Newslines*, 27 April 2004.

³⁴⁸ "Voennye igry na fone teraktov", *Nezavisimaya gazeta*, 5 August 2004.

as earlier Islamist incursions in the Batken region of Kyrgyzstan, more precisely a scenario where 300 insurgents (Tajiks, Uzbeks, Kyrgyz and Chechens) entered Kyrgyz territory, and where Uighur unrest on the Chinese side of the border resulted in attempts to seize power in certain regions of Tajikistan and Kyrgyzstan.³⁴⁹ The significance of “Border-2004” should not be underestimated, as it was the first in its kind in terms of the level of co-ordination, the number of units participating in exercises and the use of strategic aviation.³⁵⁰ Moreover, at a meeting among the Ministries of Defence of the CSTO on 25 November 2004 in Moscow, Russian officials announced that the exercise would serve as a blueprint for similar exercises in Tajikistan in 2005.³⁵¹

3.2.3: A Withering US Stronghold? – Uzbekistan.

Uzbekistan is a different case from Kyrgyzstan and Tajikistan, conducting a far more independent foreign and security policy vis-à-vis Moscow than the latter two in the 1990s. Although the Uzbeks quit the CST in 1999 and linked up to the GUUAM structure, Uzbekistan was from 1999 and onwards, however, also more receptive to reformulating its relationship to Russia. A major reason for this has been the effect of Islamist attacks in Tashkent. A bomb explosion in Tashkent in February 1999 that wounded more than 100 persons and that was directed at Islam Karimov was attributed to IMU leaders Dzhuma Namagani and Takhir Yuldashev.³⁵² Uzbek authorities responded by closing the borders to Tajikistan and intervening in Kazakhstan and Kyrgyzstan in order to hunt down Uzbeks with Islamist sympathies.

Although Uzbek authorities, unlike the Kyrgyz, did not turn to Russia for assistance, at a bilateral meeting between Yeltsin and Karimov in the latter part of 1999, growing concerns were expressed over the situation in Afghanistan. In a joint declaration lambasting the Taliban regime for harbouring international terrorist groupings, Russia and Uzbekistan maintained: “The interference in the internal political situation in Afghanistan by certain forces, the establishment of an extremist regime, which fiercely violates international human rights and cover for terrorism and illegal drug trade is a direct threat to the CIS”.³⁵³ Moreover, in 2000, Uzbek President Karimov announced at a bilateral meeting with Putin: “we recognize the interests of Russia in Central Asia, and we have in our turn a keen interest in the stability, security and territorial integrity of Russia. In order to secure peace and tranquillity in our region, we support ourselves on the assistance of Russia, especially in the struggle against the creeping enlargement of terrorism and extremism. We’re convinced that assistance from Russia and Russian presence will allow us to repel this creeping enlargement.”³⁵⁴ Putin followed up by stating that Russia was, like the Uzbek authorities, “concerned by the revelations of

³⁴⁹ “Terroristy ostanovili za chas”, *Izvestia*, 7 August 2004. At: <http://www.izvestia.ru/army/article250593>.

³⁵⁰ “‘Chernaya akula’ protiv tsentral’no-aziatskikh terroristov”, *Izvestia*, 2 August 2004. At: <http://www.izvestia.ru/army/article236545>.

³⁵¹ “Obshchii mentalitet splotit ministrov oborony SNG”, *Izvestiya*, 30 November 2004. At: <http://www.izvestia.ru/armia2/article769598>.

³⁵² Jonson, *Vladimir Putin and Central Asia*, p. 55.

³⁵³ “Sovmestnoe zayavlenie prezidentov Rossiyskoy Federatsii i Uzbekistana v svyazi s polozheniem v Afganistane”, *Diplomaticheskii vestnik*, no. 11, 1999.

³⁵⁴ “Tashkent nadeetsya na pomoshch Moskvu”, *Nezavisimaya gazeta*, 16 May 2000.

extremism and terrorism [in the region], and we're prepared to put a halt to this evil through collective efforts".³⁵⁵

This emerging rapprochement on terrorism had a military component. Military-technological co-operation between Uzbekistan and Russia had been initiated by an agreement signed on 11 December 1999, subsequently ratified by the Uzbek parliament in February 2000. According to Russia's MFA, the treaty "enables Russia to strengthen its positions in the region. It envisages the inclusion of Uzbekistan in the Treaty on Collective Security and confirms Uzbekistan's pledge not to take part in military alliances or agreements of a military character directed against Russia".³⁵⁶ The Putin-Karimov meeting in 2000 followed up on this and produced an agreement of military-technical co-operation valued at 32 million USD.³⁵⁷ At this stage, however, the Putin administration clearly recognized that Uzbekistan was a different case for integration in the CIS security sphere. Putin emphasized in his speech to the Federation Council in December 1999 that there were three "circles" as to the level of integration within the CIS. Belarus belonged to the first circle, members of the CIS Custom Union to the second (Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan and Tajikistan in addition to Russia and Belarus), whereas Uzbekistan belonged to the third. Still, Putin assessed the emerging military co-operation with Uzbekistan as a decisive improvement of relations to the degree that Russia was embarking on a strategic partnership with Uzbekistan.³⁵⁸ In fact, he even indicated that the bilateral relationship with Uzbekistan was of greater importance than the collective efforts within the CIS.

The latter statement did little more than confirm the tendency of Russia to extol bilateral relations in order to facilitate long-term ambitions: to integrate the CIS security space. As suggested above, Moscow readily framed bilateral breakthroughs as the result of "collective" CIS efforts. In the Uzbek case, progress was slower, however. New pledges within military-technical co-operation were made in 2001, although the Uzbek side was reportedly unhappy about the delay in Russian military deliveries, basically artillery systems and automatic small arms. Russia apparently linked this to the 600 million USD debt that Uzbekistan had to Russia, but also to Uzbekistan's reluctance to join hands in Russia's collective efforts within the CIS. Russia was also displeased that Tajik-Uzbek disagreements in combating international terrorism slowed co-operation within the ATC. Downplaying this issue, however, Russia seemed to actively lobby for Uzbek membership in the Shanghai forum. According to one news report, Russia saw Uzbek membership in the China-Russia configuration as a further step toward more comprehensive Uzbek-Russian co-operation in the struggle against extremism and terrorism.³⁵⁹ When the Shanghai-five was transformed to an organization in June 2001, Uzbekistan joined the SCO, apparently for lack of other options.

³⁵⁵ Ibid.

³⁵⁶ "On the Legislative Activities of the State Duma in the Field of Military Security in March 2001 (Factsheet)", *MID Daily News Bulletin*, 10 April 2001, at: <http://www.in.mid.ru/Bl.nsf/arh/7202CCDAF30C655B43256A2B0038A5B5?OpenDocument>.

³⁵⁷ "Putin ponyal Karimova", *Nezavisimaya gazeta*, 20 May 2001.

³⁵⁸ Jonson, *Vladimir Putin and Central Asia*, p. 65.

³⁵⁹ "Rossiya – Uzbekistan: nastupaet epokha potepeniya", *Nezavisimaya gazeta*, 5 May 2001.

Disagreements between Tajik and Uzbek authorities within the ATC reflect the wariness that has characterized Uzbek officials' perception of the Russian presence in Tajikistan. When Tajik and Russian officials first mentioned the option of establishing a permanent Russian base in 1999, Uzbek authorities criticized the plans, stating that Tajikistan had no need for such a base.³⁶⁰ They argued that Russia had consistently overplayed the threat from international terrorism in the region, and was utilizing this as a means to refocus on security integration.³⁶¹ Uzbek authorities were clearly not comfortable with the trilateral agreement between Tajikistan, Russia and Uzbekistan from 1998, according to which the parties would enhance co-operation within the CIS, the OSCE and the UN and increase military and security co-operation on the basis of "separate agreements".³⁶² In 2000, Uzbek authorities grew even more concerned about developments in Tajikistan due to the inclusion of UTO members in the Tajik government, and started preparations to mine the border with Tajikistan.³⁶³

Moreover, although Uzbek authorities had supported a harsh declaration against the Taliban in 1999, Karimov tried to take a more balanced position vis-à-vis the Taliban regime in 2000, among other things by using the UN millennium summit to call for a more comprehensive strategy in dealing with the Taliban, and possibly to open a dialogue with the regime. Uzbek authorities also initiated bilateral talks with the Afghan ambassador in Pakistan on relaxing border controls between Uzbekistan and Afghanistan.³⁶⁴ This was exactly the opposite of what Russian authorities had called for during the UN summit, when Igor Ivanov had underscored the need for strict sanctions against the Taliban regime. Moreover, President Karimov consequently disparaged all integration efforts within the CIS as being ineffective and without concrete results. Anticipating the December 2001 CIS summit, Karimov stated bluntly that the CIS was a failure as an organization, and that "a great number of resolutions were passed with no results".³⁶⁵

The reluctance of Uzbek authorities to link up to the CIS security framework was clearly expressed in the aftermath of the 11 September attacks, when Uzbekistan, as the first Central Asian state, on 12 October 2001 entered a bilateral agreement with the USA allowing the coalition to station about 1,500 troops in Khanabad, close to the Afghan border. The agreement stipulated that there was a "need to consult on an urgent basis about appropriate steps to address the situation in the event of a direct threat to the security of territorial integrity of the Republic of Uzbekistan",³⁶⁶ a phrase that has been interpreted as stopping short of being a direct security guarantee from the USA to Uzbekistan.³⁶⁷ What the agreement offered was basically consultations, not guarantees,

³⁶⁰ "Tajikistan: Uzbek President Criticizes Proposed Russian Base", *RFE/RL Newswire*, 9 April 1999.

³⁶¹ "Russia: Analysis From Washington—Agreement And Fragmentation", *RFE/RL Newswire*, 11 October 2000.

³⁶² "Deklaratsiya o vsestoronnem sotrudnichestve Rossiyskoy Federatsii, Respubliki Tadzhiqistan i Respubliki Uzbekistan", *Diplomaticheskii vestnik*, no. 11, 1999.

³⁶³ Jonson, *Vladimir Putin and Central Asia*, p. 71.

³⁶⁴ *Ibid.*, pp. 71–72.

³⁶⁵ *RFE/RL Central Asia Report*, 6 December 2001.

³⁶⁶ *RFE/RL Central Asia report*, 18 October 2001.

³⁶⁷ Jonson, *Vladimir Putin and Central Asia*, p. 89.

however, but it did secure a realignment of Uzbekistan with the coalition against terror. Hence, during a meeting in the EAPC in December 2001, Uzbek Minister of Defence Kadir Gulonov expressed direct support to the US coalition: “Uzbekistan fully supports the decision made by all anti-terrorist coalition members, and particularly that of the United States and its NATO allies, to fight the extremist regime of Taliban in Afghanistan”.³⁶⁸

After 11 September Uzbekistan has served as a stronghold for US interests in Central Asia. Since October 2001, Washington has tripled its aid to Uzbekistan, which by 2004 had reached a level of 300 million USD.³⁶⁹ Moreover, the rapid installation of a US base in the country after 11 September made it possible for Washington to develop a comprehensive security dialogue with Uzbekistan. In March 2002, the USA and Uzbekistan issued a strategic partnership agreement, which declared: “The U.S. affirms that it would regard with grave concern any external threat to the security and territorial integrity of the Republic of Uzbekistan. The two countries expect to develop co-operation in combating transnational threats to society, and to continue their dynamic military and military-technical co-operation”.³⁷⁰ Russia has remained concerned, however, that Uzbekistan would utilize the opportunity to strengthen its position as a regional power and to “solve disputes with neighbouring states by use of force”.³⁷¹

Despite Russian fears that Uzbekistan would turn into a US-backed regional power, Uzbek authorities have not been able to ignore Russia. In December 2001, Uzbek authorities started bilateral talks with Tajik authorities on defusing tensions along the Uzbek–Tajik border; and at a bilateral meeting hosted in St. Petersburg in June 2002, 25 crossing points on the Tajik–Uzbek border were reopened and part of the Tajik debt to Uzbekistan was written off.³⁷² Moreover, in June 2002, Uzbekistan resumed talks on economic relations with Russia, as an Uzbek–Russian intergovernmental commission led by Deputy Prime Minister Viktor Khristenko took up bilateral negotiations on improving trade relations.³⁷³ Also in June 2002, Putin said that, although he was not concerned about the US presence in Central Asia, Russia still considered the CIS as a special sphere of interest. Russia’s interests were first and foremost “humanitarian”, Putin stated before a CSO meeting in June: “Russia openly states that it has special interests within [the zone of] the Commonwealth of Independent States [CIS] as far as the protection of its national security is concerned. There are over 20 million of our compatriots living in CIS

See: <http://www.state.gov/s/ct/index.cfm?docid=5354&CFNoCache=TRUE&printfriendly=true>.

³⁶⁸ “Address by Kadir Gulonov at the EAPC”, December 2001,

at: <http://www.nato.int/docu/speech/2001/s011219d.htm>.

³⁶⁹ Ian Berman, “The New Battleground: Central Asia and the Caucasus”, *The Washington Quarterly*, vol. 28, no. 1, 2004, p. 60.

³⁷⁰ “United States–Uzbekistan Declaration on the Strategic Partnership and Cooperation Framework”, 12 March, 2002.

<http://www.state.gov/r/pa/prs/ps/2002/8736.htm>.

³⁷¹ “Novaya rol’ Uzbekistana”, *Nezavisimaya gazeta*, 9 April 2002.

³⁷² Jonson, *Vladimir Putin and Central Asia*, p. 92. Tajik officials were cautiously optimistic about a change of climate between Tajikistan and Uzbekistan, and linked this to a resolution of the Afghan problem. See “Dushanbe pomozhet Kabulu”, *Nezavisimaya gazeta*, 17 June 2002.

³⁷³ *Ibid.*, p. 110.

countries, and Russia cannot and will not abandon its responsibility for the way they live and how their rights are observed”.³⁷⁴

Throughout 2002, Uzbek authorities’ attempts to balance Russian presence were gradually backsliding as Russia put more visible emphasis on economic relations. In June 2002, Uzbekistan announced that it would resign from GUUAM, arguing that the configuration of states had failed to achieve its most important objective: to remove obstacles to trade among its members.³⁷⁵ Moreover, when the SCO was finally transformed into an international organization in June 2002, Uzbekistan’s President Karimov was quick to commend the organization for being an effective tool for combating international terrorism and providing regional security in Central Asia.³⁷⁶ True, Uzbek reservations against CIS co-operation were mentioned at the meeting. When signatories decided to create a SCO anti-terrorist centre in Bishkek and an SCO secretariat in Beijing (opened in 2003), Uzbek President Karimov was opposed to the latter idea, allegedly because of fears that it would become just another “CIS-like” structure.³⁷⁷ On the other hand, the SCO adopted a declaration on preserving global strategic stability and the preservation of the ABM Treaty as a cornerstone of strategic stability. In sum, what Moscow was not able to achieve through the Tajik–Uzbek–Russian troika was achieved in the context of the SCO and Russia’s increasingly active foreign and security policies in Central Asia. Uzbekistan was gradually softening its policies towards Tajikistan, resuming the bilateral trade dialogue with Russia and supporting CSO statements against a unipolar world.

It should be noted that Uzbekistan has consistently tried to balance Russian interests, among other things by adopting a positive stance on the US war against terrorism in Iraq and by constantly downplaying the significance of the CIS. Prior to the 2004 CIS summit in September, Karimov stated in the Uzbek press: “CIS summits are held regularly, as if they are actually doing something. But do they have any impact? I think this is a natural question. We pinned great hopes on the CIS. Unfortunately, its activity over the past 13 years has not met our expectations”.³⁷⁸ Despite Uzbek reluctance to engage deeply in CIS security co-operation, however, Karimov has lost room for manoeuvre as surrounding security frameworks have grown in importance and salience. Moreover, Western international organizations have increasingly focused on human rights violations in Uzbekistan, lamenting that the strategic importance of Uzbekistan for the USA is in poor keeping with the regime’s human rights records.³⁷⁹ In the summer of 2004, the US Congress responded to this by slashing 18 million USD in aid to Uzbekistan and calling for a more decisive follow-up on bilateral agreements for improving human rights in Uzbekistan.³⁸⁰

³⁷⁴ RFE/RL *Newsline*, 5 June 2002.

³⁷⁵ RFE/RL *Central Asia Report*, 20 June 2002.

³⁷⁶ RFE/RL *Newsline*, 7 June, 2002.

³⁷⁷ “Bor’bu s terrorizmom ‘Shangkhayskaya shesterka’ povedet iz Bishkeka”, *Izvestia*, 8 June 2002.

³⁷⁸ “Analysis: Terrorism, Common Ground, And the CIS Summit”, RFE/RL *Central Asia Report*, 20 September 2004.

³⁷⁹ See for instance “U.S. looks away as new ally tortures Islamists”, *The Guardian*, 23 May 2003.

³⁸⁰ “U.S. Cuts Aid to Uzbekistan”, *Anti-War.com*, 16 July, 2004.

In addition, the political situation in Uzbekistan has become increasingly volatile, as the Karimov regime has been assailed by new terrorist actions. In March/April 2004, Uzbekistan was rocked by new terrorist onslaughts, when several explosions went off at various locations outside Tashkent and in the capital. Uzbek authorities attributed several suicide attacks to the banned Hizb ut-Tahrir organization, and interpreted the attacks as a deliberate extremist attempt to undermine the coalition against international terrorism. Symptomatically, Russian news agencies interpreted the onslaught as a consequence of Uzbekistan aligning with the USA in the struggle against international terrorism.³⁸¹ As the Uzbek authorities responded by closing borders to Tajikistan and Kyrgyzstan, Russian media reports suggested that Uzbekistan was indulging in “self-isolation”, and that this would not help Uzbek authorities in dealing with the volatile political situation in the republic. Following the unrest, Karimov made a visit to Russia, which was paralleled by statements from Uzbek officials that: “unlike the West, Russians are not going to raise issues such as the status of opposition parties and human rights. Therefore, co-operation with Russia is convenient for Central Asian governments”.³⁸² Moreover, Karimov expressed dissatisfaction concerning the quality of Russian–Uzbek relations: “I think my aim is that we need to provide mutual help to each other, recognize each other, back each other’s policy, even support each other”.³⁸³

All in all, Russia has apparently succeeded in drawing Uzbekistan closer into its orbit. The 16 June 2004 meeting between Karimov and Putin brought together several strands of the agenda that had been discussed in April that year. The Presidents of Russia and Uzbekistan signed an agreement of strategic partnership in Tashkent, and according to a Russian military source, “relations will develop not only in the sphere of economics, but also in the field of military-political relations”.³⁸⁴ Sergey Ivanov was more precise in his assessment: “We are ready to respond to an invitation from the Uzbek side to conduct large-scale joint military exercises next year...We’re ready to send our special forces, paratroopers, and to use our military aircraft,” and “Large-scale military exercises with Uzbekistan are planned for next year using air power, helicopters, and special forces at an outstanding high-altitude training field not far from Samarkand”.³⁸⁵

Although Russian military sources stated that the agreement of strategic partnership would not result in “immediate contracts on arms deliveries”,³⁸⁶ the agreement was still extensive with regard to the future framework for military co-operation. The agreement stipulated, among other things, that Uzbekistan and Russia opened for the use of military facilities on each others’ territories on the basis of new separate bilateral agreements. Moreover, Uzbekistan would send officers to Russian training facilities and purchase light arms from Russia.³⁸⁷ Giving Russian investment capital shares in Uzbek production

³⁸¹ “Mest’ za soyuznichestva”, *Nezavisimaya gazeta*, 31 March 2004. At: http://www.ng.ru/cis/2004-03-31/1_uzbekistan.html.

³⁸² “Uzbekistan: Karimov Makes Rare Visit To Moscow For Talks With Putin”, *RFE/RL Feature Article*, 15 April 2004.

³⁸³ *Ibid.*

³⁸⁴ “Uzbekskie samolety stanut rossiyskimi”, *Nezavisimaya gazeta*, 18 June 2004.

³⁸⁵ *RFE/RL Central Asia Report*, 23 June 2004.

³⁸⁶ “Uzbekskie samolety stanut rossiyskimi”, *Nezavisimaya gazeta*, 18 June 2004.

³⁸⁷ *RFE/RL Central Asia Report*, 23 June 2004.

facilities would cover parts of these purchases. According to Russian news reports, Russia was especially interested in the Chkalov Aircraft Production Company, which produces the Il-76Mf transport aircraft, and a share in the Navoyskiy metallurgical company for mining non-enriched uranium. As in the case of Tajikistan and Kyrgyzstan, Moscow's policy also had a considerable economic underpinning. Uzbek authorities signed a 35-year long production sharing agreement with Russia, allowing for joint exploitation of the Kandym gas field. A joint venture between LUKoil and Uzbekneftegas was reportedly in the pipeline, where LUKoil would have the overwhelming share of 90% against Uzbekistan's 10%.³⁸⁸ In addition, LUKoil would invest 1 billion USD in the project, giving Uzbekneftegas an advantageous share of about 50% of profits after start-up of production in 2007. Moreover, Putin stated that Gazprom was preparing for a 1 billion USD investment in Uzbekistan to develop gas fields in the Ustyurt region.

While Uzbekistan still holds a relatively independent position in Central Asia, recent statements from President Karimov have illustrated that the principle of pre-emptive strikes can be adopted also by individual states. In the Georgian case, policy statements have become more assertive as the rhetoric of striking against terrorist bases has taken on a clout of legitimate unilateral action. In this vein, Uzbek President Karimov stated on 13 January in connection with the Homeland defenders Day: "We should be ready to launch pre-emptive strikes and neutralize armed attacks by international terrorists and the centres which direct them [...] Today, we all understand...what threats and great dangers are being posed to our region, and the entire world, by international terrorism.... Our task is to continue our work to reinforce our armed forces."³⁸⁹ While Karimov did not stress the significance of the CSTO in this regard, the statement underscores that once great powers sanction the principle as legitimate, other states may bandwagon on it, thereby lowering the threshold for applying military force.

In sum, throughout the period from 2000 to 2004, Russia has persistently improved its lost positions in Central Asia by assisting Central Asian states in the struggle against international terrorism, and by holding regular exercises within the CSTO. Russia has focused on bilateral relations, while simultaneously framing all bilateral breakthroughs as a "collective" CIS effort, although they are basically founded on Russian military personnel and hardware. The opening of the Kant airbase has been widely interpreted as Russia's "return to Central Asia".³⁹⁰ According to one such account, Russia has pursued this line, not in order to compete with NATO, but in "order to fulfil tasks stemming from Russia's interests".³⁹¹ These interests are not necessarily compatible with those of the USA, however. The Kant airbase is "a military base that can receive large contingencies of troops (up to 100,000) at very short notice, a group that would not be comparable to NATO forces, since any deployment of NATO forces at Manas is linked to overflights

³⁸⁸ Ibid.

³⁸⁹ *RFE/RL Newslines* 14 January 2005.

³⁹⁰ Vladimir Mukhin, "Rossiya vernulas' na Tsentral'noy Azii", *Nezavisimaya gazeta*, 24 October 2003.

At: http://www.ng.ru/politics/2003-10-24/2_asia.html.

³⁹¹ Ibid.

over Russian territory and the territory of its allies”.³⁹² Such statements confirm that Russia has wide-ranging ambitions for Central Asia, and that this policy harbours an element of the “Russian imperial impulse”, to quote one assessment.³⁹³ Assisting “allies” in Central Asia has paid off, engendering outright support for Russian positions on pre-emptive strikes, military bases that are free of charge, and large-scale economic contracts.

In the next section, we compare Russian policies in the Caucasus and Central Asia with reference to the main assertion in this study: that Russia has “borrowed” central US military postures and put these to effect in the CIS. We will also discuss whether this implies a lower threshold for the use of military force in the regions.

4. Competitive Cohabitation: Russia, the USA and Caucasus–Central Asia

We started out by asking whether Russia has borrowed the Bush doctrine from the USA in its dealings with countries in the post-Soviet space, and whether this, in the long term, may have lowered the threshold for the use of military power in the CIS. We have found that in Georgia this has very much been the case. Although the Chechen war was framed as an anti-terror operation as early as in 1999 and allegations were made that Georgia was unable to handle “terrorists” hiding on its territory already at this time, this type of rhetoric increased considerably after 11 September. This paved the way for open adoption of more offensive military actions against Georgia. Russia has repeatedly violated Georgian sovereignty by conducting unannounced air raids over Georgian territory. This was also done before 11 September, but more covertly – which indicates that prior to the advent of the Bush doctrine such action was not deemed legitimate.

While there were no traces in the Russian MD and NSC documents of the more assertive approach to fight terrorism enshrined in the US concepts, Russia has numerous times put into effect the concept of striking against third countries under allegations that they harbour terrorist groups. At the same time, there have been strong rhetorical signals that the MD and NSC are up for revision and that they in the future will provide for a more assertive Russian approach to fighting terrorism. Finally, Moscow has also made it clear that it will build bilateral relations depending on how they deal with the perceived terrorist threat. Our claim has been that Russia has assertively built a case for a “failed state” in Georgia, and exercised military pressure on Georgian authorities according to the American recipe on how to deal with such threats. This has resulted in increasing tension in relations, to the point that war has seemed imminent.

Warnings of pre-emptive strikes have been flagged also in the case of Central Asia, this time against Afghan territory. Unlike the Georgian case, however, Russia has converted this strategy into a well-orchestrated effort to reinvigorate the defunct security framework for the CIS that was well underway before 11 September. Russia has assisted “allies” in driving off Islamist insurgents in the region, stepped up military aid and exercises within the Collective Security Treaty, installed a military base in Kyrgyzstan and converted the 201st motorized division in Tajikistan into a permanent base. We have argued that the

³⁹² Ibid.

³⁹³ Ilan Berman, “The New Battleground: Central Asia and the Caucasus”, *The Washington Quarterly*, vol. 28, no. 1, 2004–05.

focus on threats from Islamist insurgents, the process of conveying bilateral breakthroughs into a “collective” security framework and Russia’s military potential have been instrumental in these achievements. Russia carries the financial and the military burden of the CRRF forces, and has been instrumental in setting up an intelligence co-operation framework for the CIS. This latter fact would appear to be in poor correspondence with the defensive postures set out in the MD and the NSC, where the CIS in general is envisaged not as a sphere of influence, but as an eroding geopolitical structure prompting Russia to consider a multilateral approach to deal with the CIS space. However, our comparisons of the Georgian and the Central Asian cases have clearly shown that increasing Russian assertiveness under the banner of the terrorist threat has not resulted in high tension and war-like situations in Central Asia. This is primarily because the Central Asian states have agreed to Russia’s interpretation of the threat. Strong rhetorical leverage has not been necessary to convince these states of the need for a stronger Russian military presence – rather, Russia has almost been invited in. Uzbekistan is a separate case here, however, although recent statements by President Karimov and Sergey Ivanov seem to underscore that Russia’s military presence might be forthcoming.

At a more general level, we contend that Russia’s bandwagoning on the US coalition against terrorism and its gradual adoption of the pre-emptive strike principle may create long-term complications in Washington–Moscow relations. Russia is still militarily inferior to the USA, but has adopted both the principle of pre-emptive strikes and the anti-terror rhetoric. Hence, although after 11 September the USA and Russia have adopted a bilateral declaration that the powers are not competing for influence in the Central Asian and Caucasus regions,³⁹⁴ Russia is increasingly tying certain conditions to continued co-operation while actively fortifying its positions in Central Asia and the Caucasus. One of these conditions is that the international community and the USA should recognize the CSTO as a future security organization for Central Asia. When announcing in March 2004 that Russia intended to strengthen the CRRF forces in Central Asia, among other things by creating CSTO spetsnaz forces, Secretary General Nikolay Bordyuzha was explicit in stating that the purpose was not only to collaborate with NATO, but also to flag the CSTO as a new security organization. The new force structure would perform a variety of functions in the struggle against international terrorism, drug trafficking and proliferation of nuclear material, Bordyuzha said, adding that the CSTO

³⁹⁴ The bilateral declaration between the U.S. and Russia from 2002 states: “In Central Asia and the South Caucasus, we recognize our common interest in promoting the stability, sovereignty, and territorial integrity of all the nations of this region. The United States and Russia reject the failed model of ‘Great Power’ rivalry that can only increase the potential for conflict in those regions. We will support economic and political development and respect for human rights while we broaden our humanitarian cooperation and cooperation on counterterrorism and counternarcotics”. The statement calls explicitly for the support of “UNSC Resolutions 1368, 1373, 1377 and 1390, directed against terrorism, the Taliban, and al-Qaeda, and to become parties at the earliest opportunity to the twelve international antiterrorism conventions, including the Convention for the Suppression of the Financing of Terrorism”. Joint Statement by President George W. Bush and President Vladimir V. Putin on Counterterrorism Cooperation”, *MFA of the Russian Federation News Bulletin*, 24 May 2002.

<http://www.in.mid.ru/bl.nsf/900b2c3ac91734634325698f002d9dcf/df9a9a6bb8e0d4443256bc3005201fb?OpenDocument>.

was also considering peacekeeping operations as one of several tasks for the new RRF.³⁹⁵ In the Georgian case it is obvious that also the USA is trying to fortify its position under cover of the anti-terrorist paradigm, primarily by linking Georgia into closer strategic co-operation and an increasing military presence.

Although many have traced US–Russian rapprochement back to the emerging intelligence co-operation from 2000 and onward,³⁹⁶ our contention is that developments on the ground look different. Boris Myl’nikov, Head of the ATC, stated in June 2002 for instance that the ATC had attempted to establish contacts with US intelligence structures in Central Asia, but to no avail.³⁹⁷ Moreover, Russian officials have remained concerned that the allied operation in Afghanistan has created a pretext for long-term US military presence in the region. Nikolay Bordyuzha, Secretary to the CSTO, stated in May 2003 that he hoped that US forces would be stationed in Central Asia only for the period of Operation Enduring Freedom.³⁹⁸ Finally, at the current stage, Russia and the USA have established parallel military bases, but co-ordination between the CSTO and the allies in Central Asia remains low. Hence, NATO’s new representative for the Caucasus and Central Asia, Robert Simmons, stated in Russian press that there were no plans and no detailed discussions on closer collaboration between the coalition and the CSTO, a question raised by Kazakhstan in the capacity of holding the CSTO chairmanship.³⁹⁹ Also in the case of Georgia, the increasing engagement of both the USA and Russia has resulted in next to nothing in terms of concrete co-operation, for example in the Pankisi Gorge. Thus, although there on the rhetorical level has been agreement between the USA and Russia on the gravity of the terrorist threat and increasingly on the legitimacy of offensive concepts to counter this threat in Central Asia and Caucasus, in practice their new engagement under this doctrine has served to trigger new competition.

A major problem may be that repeated statements about pre-emptive military action also include an element of conceptual stretching of international law. By repeatedly stating this as an option, Russia has succeeded in getting some Central Asian states – such as Kyrgyzstan – to accept the principle *de facto* and possibly also *de jure*. By contrast, Georgia has been the object of intensified military leverage. This latter fact illustrates the point made at the beginning of this study, that the adoption of norms in the international community does not confine itself to *positive* norms. In the Central Asian case, Russia has adopted not only the “collective defence” model of the NATO alliance, but also the rapid reaction concept and the right to strike pre-emptively against terrorist bases. Indeed,

³⁹⁵ “Nikolay Bordyuzha sozdaet svoy spetsnaz”, *Nezavisimaya gazeta*, 12 February 2004. At: http://www.ng.ru/cis/2004-02-12/4_borduzha.html.

³⁹⁶ Lena Jonson has argued that the preconditions for Russia–U.S. rapprochement on the terrorist issue started with talks between Armitage and Trubnikov in August 2000 and resulted in the U.S. and Russia jointly pressing for UNSC Resolution 1333 on limited sanctions against Taliban and extradition of bin Laden in December 2000. Moreover, the ATC in Bishkek has according to Jonson provided intelligence for the US–Russian dialogue within counterterrorism. Jonson, *Vladimir Putin and Central Asia*, pp. 75 and 74n.

³⁹⁷ “Do korennoogo pereloma v bor’be s terrorizmom eshche daleko”, *Dipkur’er NG*, 10 June 2002.

³⁹⁸ “Mladenets rodilsya s zubami”, *Izvestiya*, 23 May 2003.

³⁹⁹ “My gotovy obsudit’ s Rossiey situatsiyu na Kavkaze i Tsentral’nyu Aziyu”, *Izvestia*, 4 October, 2004. At: <http://www.izvestia.ru/politic/article478526>.

this latter norm has served as *the* central vehicle for Russia in asserting its interests in Central Asia, and for exercising leverage on Georgia. Since the increasing US engagement in these areas has also been undertaken with reference to the need for a more offensive military strategy and has thus manifested itself in a growing military presence, the growing US–Russian competition is probably more problematic today than when such competition was confined to “pipeline wars” within the economic realm.

In sum, the framework for US–Russian relations is one of *competitive cohabitation*. While each has officially recognized the other’s interests in Central Asia and the Caucasus, there is still much uncertainty as to the compatibility of these interests. It could be argued that Russia has supplemented the security strategy from 2000 and onward with a policy more oriented toward geo-economics – to secure long-term economic interests in Central Asia. Here, however, it should be remembered that Russia does not tie economic interests to regime change and human rights issues, but seems more prone to accept semi-authoritarian regimes in Central Asia for reasons of preserving the geopolitical space of the CIS. At the CIS summit in July 2004, Putin stated: “the CIS is approaching a point where we would have to choose between a qualitative strengthening of co-operation, or [geopolitical] erosion. The latter should not be allowed to happen”.⁴⁰⁰ This might prove to be a Russian asset, which the USA does not have at its disposal in its bid to win influence over the Central Asian states. At any rate, we maintain that, although Russian economic interests have been more clearly articulated in Central Asia, the conceptual framework for this is Russia’s military capability to rebuff terrorist incursions in the region. Russia started out by *securitization*, and then followed up by forging economic ties. This strategy has played directly into what we have seen as the centrepiece of this study – Russia’s emphasis on striking pre-emptively against terrorist bases in third countries, except that Russia does not seem to have a vision for promoting democratic regimes.

What, then, about future developments? We cannot exclude the possibility that Russia may implement the concept of using pre-emptive military power in the CIS. Yuriy Baluyevskiy, who in September 2004 made explicit statements on Russia’s intention to conduct pre-emptive strikes against terrorist bases, was in November 2004 promoted to Chairman of the Heads of CIS General Staffs at a meeting within the CSTO – which may indicate that Moscow aims to make the principle more valid within the CIS framework.⁴⁰¹ We started this report by asking whether Russia has adopted the “Bush doctrine” and followed the US lead after 11 September, and have found that elements of a more active military posture for Russia were in place well before the terrorist events of 11 September. Hence, it would be wrong to claim that the USA in any way has directly caused this turn. On the other hand, once the genie of pre-emptive strikes is let out of the bottle, it might prompt other states to adopt the principle openly and act accordingly – also states that harboured such ambitions *before* 11 September. As observed by Bertil Nygren: “beyond the presidential elections in Russia and the United States (even if Putin and Bush Jr.

⁴⁰⁰ “Libo ukrepitsya—libo razmoetsya”, *Izvestia*, 20 July 2004. At: <http://www.izvestia.ru/politic/article208697>.

⁴⁰¹ “Obshchiy mentalitet splotit ministrov oborony SNG”, *Izvestiya*, 30 November 2004. At: <http://www.izvestia.ru/armia2/article769598>.

remain in charge [*and they did*]), there are too many structurally problematic issues for the present ‘brothers-in-arms’ relationship to hold in the long run”.⁴⁰² And, as we have demonstrated through the analysis here, Central Asia and the Caucasus may be among these structurally problematic issues.

⁴⁰² Bertil Nygren, “Russia’s Immediate Security Environment under Putin, before and after September 11th”, p. 196.

