Using belligerents as peacekeepers

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'I went out to visit a jointly manned peacekeeping post with the commanders of each side. They had a lot of trouble finding the place, and, at last, stopped to ask a farmer. He waved his arm up the road and said: 'The post was there, but the soldiers all went home some days ago to help tend the cows.'

OSCE Mission Member, Republic of Georgia, 1999

On the subject of using belligerents within the composition of a peacekeeping force, most of the world's defining literature is silent. The issue of using or not using belligerents is not mentioned in the United Nations Charter, yet UN missions have traditionally never included warring factions in the peacekeeping force structure. The doctrines and field manuals of NATO and the United States military establishments do not expressly forbid using belligerents, but, in practice, there are no examples of this. In its various ministerials and other meetings, the CSCE developed a scheme for peacekeeping and later, in the OSCE's Code of Conduct, refined the idea into methods of 'benevolent interference'. However, there is no documented opinion on the role for belligerents in this instrument of interference. The main CIS framework for peacekeeping — the Kiev Agreement — specifically excludes the use of belligerents. However, the Russian federal peacekeeping law, under which all peacekeeping in the former Soviet Union is actually conducted, does not address the issue. All of this seems logical after all. That is to say if the military object of armed intervention is to create a stable environment, then orchestrating the armed factions is, at least, not disarming them, and, at most, it assumes a great risk of being caught in the middle of any renewed fighting. Therefore, it is interesting to take note of the military peace support arrangements in the Transdniester area of Moldova and the South Ossetian region of Georgia, areas where conflict management has included the warring factions in the design of the peacekeeping force from the very beginning.

With an analysis of any particular conflict the details of the origins and conduct of the conflict are crucial to understanding the template of resolution.

However, in order to focus on this one specific aspect of conflict management — the use of belligerents in a peacekeeping role — this article will limit itself to identifying the essential mechanisms and evaluating them. The historical accounts of conflict and violence in Transdnieter and South Ossetia are as infinite and intractable as the opinions of each individual affected by these conflicts and they obfuscate the benefit of examining a potential, useful tool for conflict resolution. Nevertheless, a concise background of these conflicts follows for the sole purpose of identifying assumptions.

The immediate causes of the conflict in Transdniester are linked to the organized development of Moldovan-Romanian nationalism during the final years of the Soviet Union and the manifestation of nationalist politicians and bureaucrats in the Moldovan government in 1989. Taking on the form of a bona fide political movement, Moldovan nationalism continued to gain momentum in the years up to 1992. Its particularly virulent features included legislation establishing the primacy of the Romanian language in official society, an orchestrated political effort to have Romania annex Moldova, mass anti-Russian rallies, and violent political demonstrations. The large, ethnic Slavic community living in Moldova’s western borderland, Transdniester, declared its independence and set up an independent, Soviet-style government before the dissolution of the Soviet Union.

The position from the ailing Kremlin at the time, however, was for the citizens of the titular Moldovan Soviet Socialist Republic to solve the problem on their own with the caveat, however, of maintaining territorial integrity. The Transdniestrians armed themselves and in September 1990, clashes erupted between the Transdniester-based Moldovan police and the newly-formed militias of the Transdniester S.S.R.. Alternating clashes and emergency efforts to stabilize the situation occurred throughout the year, and involved the local Russian-based garrison. Fighting intensified to include larger scale operations by both sides and crescendoed in the summer of 1992. A diplomatic effort to establish a cease-fire produced a signed agreement by the Presidents of Russia, Ukraine, Moldova, and Romania in June 1992. This agreement included the provision for a 'mixed commission' including the belligerents to function as the monitoring agency. Fighting continued for another month, however. In July, a true cease-fire precipitated by intensified diplomatic pressure and the governments of Moldova and Russia created a conflict settlement agreement that was observed.

The second article matter-of-factly identified a 'Joint Control Commission consisting of representatives of the three parties' \(^4\) as the responsible organ for

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\(^4\) Agreement on Principles of a Peaceful Settlement of the Armed Conflict in the Transdniestrian Region of the Republic of Moldova, Article 2, Section 1, 21 July 1992, in Russian from a copy of the original document at OSCE Mission to Moldova, Chisinau, Moldova.

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