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STRATEGIC RELATIONS BETWEEN THE FORMER SOVIET REPUBLICS

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INTRODUCTION

There is widespread concern in the West about the future of relations with the republics of the former Soviet Union. Almost as important is the future of relations between those newly independent republics.

The nature of such relations likely will be determined by a number of questions that have not yet been resolved: Can the growing political, economic and ethnic tensions between the republics be resolved without open conflict? Who will control the nuclear weapons of the former Soviet Union? How will the former Soviet armed forces be divided among the republics?

It still is too early to ascertain the answer to these and other questions. But some interim conclusions can be reached:

1) Instead of one "common defense space" on the territory of the former Soviet Union, four regional strategic theaters are likely to emerge: European, Caucasian, Central Asian, and Far Eastern. Russia will be the only former Soviet republic that will be active in all four theaters.

2) A key challenge will be to fine-tune the multilateral military balance in the European part of the former Soviet Union so that no non-Russian republic feels threatened and Russia does not feel isolated.

3) Kazakhstan could play a key role in a NATO-style multilateral alliance in which Russia could help defend Central Asian republics from potential aggression from the south.

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4) A NATO-style alliance is not very promising in the Caucasus region because of the "Lebanonization" of various republics and the disintegration of the armed forces there. Russia must try to prevent the spread of national-ethnic conflicts toward its borders by halting the transfer of arms to the Caucasus and reaching political agreements with its own restive autonomous ethnic regions.

5) New political and military relations between the former Soviet republics require new approaches to arms control and disarmament.

Much already has been said about the possible negative security consequences of the rapid Soviet collapse. It is clear that at least some of these consequences could be prevented if, from the beginning, the former Soviet republics could be "anchored" into some kind of international security system based on respect for international law, including the major political, human rights, and arms control agreements that have been signed by the former U.S.S.R.

Russia as Nucleus. The current position of the military establishment in Moscow is based on the assumption that it is still possible to preserve a "common defense space" embracing most, if not all, the territory of the former Soviet Union with a common military doctrine for all the members of the Commonwealth of Independent States (CIS). The idea is that the defense postures of Russia and other republics should be based on two military doctrines: their own republican doctrines reflecting specific defense needs of each republic and a common inter-state military doctrine of the Commonwealth worked out together. Russia is perceived as the nucleus of the entire CIS security system with its special responsibilities (the major share of the Commonwealth defense expenses) and rights (a special role in decision making at the operational level).

If the central military leadership (the Moscow General Staff and the Ministry of Defense) had its way, the CIS would end up with united armed forces including integrated "strategic forces" understood in the broadest possible sense. The central command would control not only all nuclear systems but also all conventional arms that could be labelled "dual-purpose."

Only small-scale self-defense units of the political leaderships of the CIS's member states would remain outside the authority of the central command. For operational control and planning an organ similar to the United States Joint Chiefs of Staff (representing chiefs of republican General Staffs or republican Defense Ministers) would be established. Politically a NATO-type collective security mechanism could be formed.

Impractical Plan. However, a new NATO-type system of collective security, which was proposed by Russian President Boris Yeltsin in December 1991 and persistently has been pushed by the Commonwealth military leaders, does not seem to be workable. It is impractical not only because of Ukraine's and Azerbaijan's quests for uncompromised independence in military decisions; it also is impractical because of the diverging security interests of various CIS members, which are tearing apart the "common defense space" of the former Union.

NO SINGLE SOLUTION FOR ALL

A system of collective security presupposes that its participants are united by significant common, or at least overlapping, security interests. Moreover, a stable security mechanism (that would include appropriate political and military institutions, legal framework, burden sharing and strategy planning procedures, and so forth) can be created only if these interests have a long-term, steady nature. Otherwise participating states can afford only temporary coalitions aimed at achieving specific security goals and results (like anti-Hitler or anti-Iraq coalitions). Such coalitions tend to disintegrate once they have accomplished their goals.

In the case of the former Soviet republics there are no long-term common interests important enough to overcome mounting nationalism and keep emerging states in one security structure. Political and social instability in most of the republics, moreover, makes it difficult to define their respective long-term security interests and foreign policy orientations, which may fluctuate considerably.

The need to preclude the uncontrolled decomposition of the Soviet military, accidents, or military coups is, of course, a crucial uniting task recognized to a certain degree by all republican leaders. However it is a short-term rather than a long-term issue.

The preservation of an integrated military structure, moreover, is politically dangerous for republican leaders. Until they get full control over troops and weapons deployed on their respective territories, they face the possibility of a military coup aimed at the forceful restoration of the Soviet Union. A weak CIS political structure might allow armed forces to escape any meaningful political control, thus turning them into an independent political actor. Even if a Commonwealth summit makes a decision, the military establishment will have a lot of ways to sabotage it.

Another fear in non-Russian republics is that a "united Commonwealth armed forces" is nothing but a euphemism for the Russian army. The current Russian commitment to the concept of integrated CIS armed forces politically is a self-defeating tactic that raises old suspicions of Russian imperialism and domination. The Russian government and the Parliament should demonstrate a greater sensitivity toward the independent states' new and understandable assertiveness.

It is unlikely that any comprehensive security structure emerging on the territory of the former U.S.S.R. would embrace all fifteen (or even twelve, excluding the Baltic states) republics.

Partnership Shortcomings. The Commonwealth partnership has demonstrated shortcomings from the moment of its creation last December. The documents signed by republican presidents turned out to be declarations of intent, not binding agreements. The subsequent Russian-Ukrainian dispute over the future of the Black Sea Fleet and definitions of "strategic forces" have exposed all the fragility of the Commonwealth. It might continue to be a "regional United Nations"—a forum for republican presidents to make a statement, get media attention, and score some points with their constituencies at home.

But the Commonwealth in 1992 does not look like the NATO Alliance in 1949—there is neither a common enemy nor a clear understanding of common values. And

the Commonwealth does not show a lot of vitality, at least as far as security issues are concerned.

The current centrifugal trends and aggravation of political and economic problems between the republics will accelerate their military separation. Following the examples of Ukraine, Moldova, and Azerbaijan, the other Soviet successor states, including Russia, are thinking about building their own armed forces, in most cases on an ethnic basis.

New Commanders. Ukrainian President Leonid Kravchuk probably has taken the most spectacular action. After three former Soviet military districts—Kiev, Odessa, and Carpathian—had been transferred to Ukrainian jurisdiction, he immediately cut off direct connections between the districts' headquarters and Moscow and then appointed new commanders loyal to him in all three.

Due to the immense economic, technical, and political problems related to the formation of independent armed forces, not all the former Soviet republics are able to accomplish it at the same speed and with the same success. A considerable gap may emerge between those that are self-sufficient in meeting their security needs and those with a heavy dependence on Russia.

Naturally fifteen new states with separate or quasi-separate armed forces will be engaged in rather complicated relationships with each other. The most probable development is the rise of regional security systems in Eurasia that will include different combinations of republics. The rules of the game and the structures of the respective military alliances will not be the same for all the new states.

SECURITY RELATIONS BETWEEN THE EUROPEAN REPUBLICS OF THE FORMER U.S.S.R.

The security arrangements on the European part of the former U.S.S.R. will depend on the political relations within the Russian-Ukrainian-Belarus triangle, the heartland of the Commonwealth containing most of the Soviet military potential, industrial base, and labor. Other actors in this region are somewhat marginalized, forming two additional triangles — the North Western (Russia, the Baltic states, and Belarus) and the South Western (Russia, Ukraine, and Moldova).

Despite the many differences among the European republics of the former Soviet Union, the dominant trends in the region most likely will be toward military and political "decoupling" from other republics, independent military decisions, and attempts to integrate into West European and Atlantic security structures. Such severance will be not only a symbol of newly acquired independence but also a manifestation of the Europe-oriented strategies of the republics.

Serious security concerns might appear in the relations of these states with their neighbors in Central Europe. Examples: Romania could threaten Ukrainian interests if it absorbed Moldova and declared territorial claims to North Bukovina. Polish-Lithuanian relations could be strained because of problems related to the Polish minority in Lithuania.

But these threats hardly will be considered significant enough for these European republics to enter a military union with Russia, a union which undoubtedly would meet

powerful domestic opposition within the republics. In any case, since the European republics find themselves in a relatively favorable geostrategic situation, they hardly will consider it appropriate to spend money on the defense of lengthy southern and eastern Russian borders, to take any responsibility for security of Central Asian republics, or to invest in a blue-water navy.

This does not mean that European republics inevitably will drop all ties with Russia in the military and political spheres. Russia, because of its geographic position, always will be interested in preventing its western neighbors from turning into bridgeheads or corridors for hostile powers.

As for them, the Baltic states, Belarus, and Ukraine may be interested in some military guarantees from Russia, especially in case of political and military instability in Central Europe. Another uniting factor will be the nature of defense industries located in these republics: they are integrated broadly into the Russian economy and cannot operate on their own. Some cooperation in arms production is practically unavoidable.

Finnish Model. In the future, Russia could sign bilateral security agreements with these republics based on mutual interests. For the Baltic states and Belarus, the "Finnish model" is the most they can give Russia. Russia and its partners would take on obligations similar to those fixed in the Soviet-Finnish Treaty of 1948. Such an arrangement would ease Russian security concerns without compromising the national sovereignty of its neighbors. It might become more attractive to the Balts and Belorussians if it was accompanied by preferential economic treaties.

Two factors appear important for the future of Russian-Baltic security relations. First, there is the highly sensitive issue of the Russian population in Lithuania, Latvia, and Estonia. Any political, cultural, or economic discrimination against Russian residents by the Baltic states, or any attempts by Moscow to use Russian settlers as a fifth column of the Russian Federation in the region will inevitably color all spheres of Russian-Baltic relations, undermining chances to create a stable political and security partnership.

Second, much will depend on the extent of security cooperation among the Baltic states. They already have formed a political Baltic Union that could turn into a regional security alliance.

Yet, there are significant disagreements between Estonians, Latvians, and Lithuanians on how far political and military integration should proceed. Vilnius would like to move ahead quickly, with the European Community (EC) and Western European Union (WEU) models in mind, while Riga and especially Tallinn take a more cautious and more nationalistic approach. If the Baltic region emerges as a united political and military entity, it definitely will have a stronger bargaining position in subsequent negotiations with Russia than if the Baltic states stay apart from each other.

Cooperation with Belarus. Russia could probably achieve more than just a Finnish model of security cooperation with Belarus. The relatively low level of Belorussian nationalism and anti-Russian sentiment, combined with close ethnic and cultural ties to Russia, permit a higher degree of military cooperation, including, perhaps, common infrastructure, joint exercises, coordinated military reforms, and maintenance of a common military infrastructure.

By contrast, for Ukraine a Finnish model will be unacceptable due to the size of the country, its military potential, and the quest for symbolic parity with Russia. In this case a different type of strategic arrangement will be needed.

Ukraine Military Edge. If the 1990 Paris Treaty on conventional forces reductions in Europe is implemented, Ukraine theoretically could keep far more military equipment on its territory than Russia could keep west of the Urals. In fact, the military balance between Russia and Ukraine now surprisingly favors Ukraine. The three Ukrainian military districts contain the best-trained and -equipped elite troops of the former Soviet army, while almost all divisions now stationed in Russia are second echelon units equipped and manned to only 50 percent to 60 percent of their combat capacity.

So in a hypothetical conflict, as one of the senior officers of the Moscow General Staff put it, the military forces now in Ukraine could "easily defeat the whole of Russia just in a matter of days."

Such a scenario clearly is unacceptable for Russia, which is trying to negotiate a more favorable distribution of military assets covered by the Conventional Forces in Europe (CFE) Treaty.

Another controversial issue separating Russia and Ukraine is the destination of the Soviet military equipment withdrawn from the former East Germany. A portion of the equipment that Russia cannot absorb itself it prefers to station temporarily in the Baltic states, while Ukraine wants to get its share.

The new security arrangements on the European part of the former Soviet Union will form an open, not a closed, system. For example, to balance Russian military influence, the Baltic states will try to work on some kind of Nordic subregional security system with Scandinavian countries. Or Ukraine might choose to have a special partnership with Poland or Germany.

Russia, in turn, is likely to try to reach over its next-door neighbors to get special deals with Central and West European countries as well as with European transnational institutions. Central European nations that have broken almost all political and military ties with former Soviet republics but have been granted a place only in the waiting room of Western security structures, instead of full NATO membership, will sooner or later engage themselves in security cooperation with some of their Eastern neighbors.

Regional Confederation. Some leaders in this region have more ambitious plans. Lithuanian President Vitautas Landsbergis persistently puts forward the idea of the so-called Black Sea-Baltic Confederation including Ukraine, Belarus, and the three Baltic states.

Such a union would have at least an implicit anti-Russian content. Theoretically if this Confederation is formed it could achieve, especially after ratification and implementation of the CFE agreement, a very substantial military advantage over Russia. It would claim some 65 percent to 75 percent of tanks, artillery pieces, and armored personnel carriers currently deployed on the European part of the former U.S.S.R.

During the CFE talks in Vienna the former Soviet leadership persistently fought for the right to redeploy the bulk of its conventional forces in Central Europe. The reasons were clear enough: first, to keep the power-projection capabilities in Europe at the highest possible level; and second, to deploy the troops in regions with better military

Russians in the Former Soviet Union

Scale: 1000 miles

Source: *The Washington Times; USSR Facts and Figures Annual; Europa Yearbook.*

infrastructure and living conditions for servicemen. This strategy, however, now has backfired, giving Ukraine, Belarus, and the Baltic states a number of formal advantages over Russia.

The idea of the Black Sea-Baltic Confederation has not yet received any considerable support outside Lithuania and can hardly be organized in the near future. The states of the region depend too much on Russia and have too many problems between themselves. Besides, these states will not be able to afford the military capabilities that the CFE agreement formally will allow them to keep.

An extremely important challenge will be to fine-tune the multilateral military balance on the European part of the former U.S.S.R. in a way that no non-Russian republic feels threatened, and Russia, in its turn, does not feel isolated.

To achieve these goals, bilateral and possible multilateral negotiations should try to achieve:

- A rough parity in troop levels and basic types of weapons between the European part of Russia on the one hand, and all other European, ex-Soviet republics on the other;
- An obligation on the part of Russia not to redeploy troops and weapons from Asia and Europe without prior consultations with its western neighbors;
- A military parity between the "southern flank" (Ukraine and Moldova) and the "northern flank" (Belarus and the Baltic states) of Eastern Europe;

- A commitment by Russia to additional sub-regional limits. Russia should agree to deploy along the borders with its Western neighbors only as many troops and weapons as they have on the other side of the border. The same assurances should be given by the larger republics to the smaller ones (by Ukraine to Belarus and Moldova, for instance; by Belarus to Lithuania and Latvia; and by Lithuania to the Kaliningrad district of Russia);

- A system of confidence-building measures similar to that of the CFE agreements to prevent a covert mobilization or redeployment of troops withdrawn from Europe;

- A system by which all republics agree to preserve existing links between their respective defense industries, providing for mutual shipments of spare parts and needed equipment.

SECURITY RELATIONS BETWEEN THE ASIAN REPUBLICS OF THE FORMER U.S.S.R.

The independent republics of former Soviet Central Asia, Kazakhstan, and the Caucasian republics have much less favorable geostrategic positions than those of the European republics. Consequently, they should be interested in preserving a more solid political and military alliance with Russia, provided they manage to avoid hyper-nationalism, religious fundamentalism, or total economic and social collapse.

No longer part of the Soviet Union, these states will become embroiled in the geopolitics of the chronically unstable regional international systems in the Middle East and South Asia. As such, these new states inevitably will become objects of political pressure and blackmail by such stronger neighbors as Pakistan, China, Iran, and in some cases even Turkey.

Ethnic maps of the regions reveal how very mixed the populations are. The boundaries of the republics primarily reflect the colonial demarcation between the British and Russian Empires in Central Asia, and the Russian, Ottoman, and British Empires in the Caucasus.

Historical Justifications. Territorial claims by the states of this region against their neighbors can be supported on historical grounds and can find considerable domestic support in authoritarian or semi-democratic countries. For example, Afghanistan, which probably will start to fall apart once Soviet military and economic support comes to a complete end, might turn into a bone of contention between Pakistan and the former Soviet Central Asian republics. Tajikistan is especially interested in projecting its influence south of the former Soviet border because of the large Tajik minority in Afghanistan. A similar problem might emerge in Azerbaijani-Iranian relations because of the existence of at least seven million ethnic Azerbaijanis in northern Iran.

If the former Soviet republics in these regions consolidate themselves as viable states, they will have to seek Russian military guarantees against perceived threats from the south. Major economic and technical constraints will not allow them to ensure a stable military balance at the regional level without involving Russia. Indeed, Kazakhstan President Nursultan Nazarbayev, who has never been a very close ally of Boris Yeltsin, stated this January that his government had no intentions of building its

own army, and that he strongly supported the idea of the united Commonwealth Armed Forces "even if such Forces would be only a Russian-Kazakhstan army."

An alternative security solution for Central Asian republics and Kazakhstan could involve the creation of an Islamic alliance with powerful southern neighbors. The former Soviet republics could turn into junior partners of Pakistan, Iran, or Turkey, receiving in exchange guarantees of their territorial integrity and some economic assistance.

Islamic Alliance. Pakistan already has proposed a political and economic "Union of Ten" that would include Afghanistan, Iran, Pakistan, Turkey, and the former Soviet republics of Azerbaijan, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Tajikistan, Turkmenistan, and Uzbekistan. This proposed union would dominate the political and strategic landscape of the region. Politicians in Islamabad express their readiness to act as mediators in conflicts between the Central Asian republics themselves.

Pakistani influence in this area undoubtedly will increase considerably. Yet, Islamabad hardly can replace Moscow as the Asian republics' strategic ally or main trading partner. Geographical proximity and ethnic closeness paradoxically might appear as a complicating factor raising suspicions of regional domination or even absorption. It is not surprising that the President of Uzbekistan, Islam Karimov, recently visited India and not Pakistan.

It is more likely that the main struggle for political influence in the region of Central Asia will take place between Turkey and Iran. Turkey has more opportunities with Kyrgyzstan and Kazakhstan: these countries are united not only by a common Turkish language but also by relatively democratic political systems and by the orthodox Sunni branch of Islam. Azerbaijan also is a natural Turkish client.

Iran, by contrast, might be better positioned to establish closer relations with autocratic and less-developed Tajikistan and Turkmenistan.

Uzbekistan, the strongest ex-Soviet power in the area, will most likely try to distance itself from both "protectors." Russia should still be considered an important counterweight to the southern powers by all the former Soviet republics in the Central Asian and Caucasian regions.

WESTERNIZERS VS. SLAVOPHILES

The Russian interests in the Caucasian and Central Asian regions are somewhat contradictory. On the one hand, Russia is interested in stability south of its borders and therefore in keeping a buffer zone between itself and the explosive Middle East and South Asian regions. This interest is intensified by the need to protect large Russian and Russian-speaking communities existing in all republics of these regions, excluding Armenia.

Any major migration of Russians from Central Asia or the Caucasus back to Russia because of political instability, ethnic violence, or war inevitably will destabilize Russia itself, boost Russian nationalism and xenophobia, and undermine Russia's still very fragile democratic political institutions. Meanwhile, the numerous and politically vocal Turkish-speaking Moslem ethnic groups within Russia, which have diverse ties with Central Asia and Kazakhstan, are a powerful lobby preventing Russian politicians from turning their backs on the south.

On the other hand, direct involvement in conflicts in the South is evidently not in Russia's interests. In the wake of the war in Afghanistan, no political leadership in Moscow is able to generate wide public support for a military engagement in this area. The material resources needed for such a military engagement are not available in Russia now. Moreover, any significant Russian involvement in Central Asia or the Caucasus will mean that Russia would take sides in many "domestic" conflicts and clashes: between Uzbeks and Tajiks, between Kirgiz and Uzbeks, between Armenians and Azerbaijanis, and so on.

In fact, the question of setting the level and goals of Russian involvement in Central Asia and the Caucasus boils down to debates between Russian Westernizers and Slavophiles that are almost two centuries old, and that reassert themselves at every historic juncture the country reaches.

The Westernizers' position is based on the assumption that Russia, after all, is a European state—although a very special one. True, Russians acquired their culture and religion from the Byzantine, not the Roman, empire. True, for centuries it was separated from the rest of Europe by the Mongol yoke and the xenophobia of Russian czars. And seven decades of communist rule could not but widen the gap between Russia and the West.

But all the history of Russia, claim the Westernizers, is a record of desperate attempts, sometimes inventive and successful but mostly clumsy and abortive, to rejoin the West. The prodigal son is still on his way home.

Separate Civilization. The Slavophiles' vision of Russia is quite different. For them, Russia is not and never has been a European country. Russia is, they insist, a separate civilization, squeezed between Europe and Asia. It is not just a large version of Poland or Romania. Its geographic position, ethnic composition, culture, and traditions put Russia into its own class. "Scratch a Russian and you'll see a Tatar," as Napoleon put it. A society that was ruled after Peter the Great by a European elite still retained a mostly Asiatic population.

Therefore Russian history is read as a constant search for a stable balance in dealing with the West and the East, Europe and Asia, Christianity and Islam.

If Russia belongs to a larger European cultural and political space which now embraces most countries of the Northern hemisphere from America to Japan, the goal of integration — or rather reintegration — into this space becomes of paramount importance.

Everything that contradicts this goal and undermines it in one way or another, should be sacrificed. This means, for example, that Russia has to cut its economic and military ties with radical Third World regimes that it inherited from the imperial Soviet Union. Russia also has to distance itself from the remnants of the Communist world still existing in Asia—Vietnam, North Korea, and even China. This means, too, that Russia should take a strong pro-Western position in the United Nations and other international organizations and give its full support to Western efforts on a broad range of matters, such as curbing nuclear and ballistic proliferation and limiting the arms trade.

Inferiority Complex. But if Russia is a special case, then all attempts to rejoin the West are doomed. No matter how smart and far-sighted Russian leaders may be, Rus-

sia will be dependent on the good will of its Western partners. In the community of prosperous Western democracies, Russia always will have an inferiority complex.

It thus would be much more advantageous for Russians to preserve their "natural" place between Europe and Asia, North and South. Since the 21st century will be marked by a deep systemic conflict between the developed and developing worlds, Russia should keep all its options open to act as an honest broker in this conflict.

These different perceptions of the future Russian role in international system already have been reflected in practical foreign policy actions. The Persian Gulf crisis of 1990-91 is just one example of struggle between modern Westernizers and Slavophiles. Though this crisis took place before the Soviet disintegration and the subsequent re-emergence of Russia in international relations, it was characteristic of what will be the future clashes within the Russian political establishment.

Immediately after Iraq occupied Kuwait, there were somewhat conflicting signals coming from Moscow that indicated two apparently different attitudes toward the conflict existing within Gorbachev's team.

The first attitude, personified by Foreign Minister Eduard Shevardnadze, implied consistent and unambiguous support of America and the American-led coalition, including readiness to break the long-term Moscow-Baghdad partnership for the sake of continuing Soviet-American detente.

The second attitude, most often attributed to academician Evgeny Primakov, assumed that a more independent Soviet position would allow the U.S.S.R. to escape turning into a junior partner of America, preserve its positions in the Arab world and under certain circumstances to play a role of mediator between the conflicting sides.

Gorbachev tried to combine both approaches, fluctuating from one to the other. Finally the logic of events brought him to accept Shevardnadze's attitude, but only after the Foreign Minister had to resign.

No Clear-Cut Option. For the future, the question is what choice will be made by the emerging Russian political establishment. It is hardly possible to speak of any clear-cut option. Both Westernizers and Slavophiles will be present on the Russian political scene. The domination of one or the other trend will depend on a number of factors.

In particular, much depends on how fast and how successful the Russian transition to the market economy will be. Rapid privatization of state property, the aggressive entrance onto international markets, and the creation of conditions for massive foreign investments will push Russia toward Europe and distance it from the Third World, including the Central Asian republics.

If, however, reforms slow under the mounting pressure of egalitarian-oriented populists, and if attempts to join the Western economic structures turn out to be futile, Russia will turn into a Third World country with many problems and perceptions similar to those of the Central Asian republics.

In any case, Russia will be somewhat ambiguous about its political and military involvement in the region. A possible solution to its dilemma might be a NATO-type multilateral alliance with Russia playing the role of America, and Russia's Central Asian partners playing the role of Western Europe.

Russia would provide its allies with a nuclear umbrella against possible aggression from the south (in this case, however, it has to reconsider traditional "no first use" Soviet strategic doctrine) and assume military responsibility for meeting some of their defense needs as America did during the Cold war in Europe. But this alliance will not imply any automatic Russian involvement in a conventional conflict or any Russian obligations to mediate in "domestic" disputes and clashes.

Key Player. Any military alliance built by Russia and its Central Asian partners should imply a coalition defense doctrine with clear understanding that the members of the alliance will have very different social, political, and economic structures, different perceptions of democracy, human rights and so forth. In this sense it might have more in common with the Organization of American States than with NATO.

A key role in such an alliance would be played by Kazakhstan, which should get special attention from Russia. Not only does Kazakhstan share hundreds of miles of border with Russia, but its 16.5 million population is almost half-Russian. Another important factor is that today Kazakhstan is in a better position to lead the vast region of Central Asia than any other local power center.

Uzbekistan, which rivals Kazakhstan in population and economic potential, still is controlled mostly by hard-line communists and is lagging in economic reforms. Azerbaijan, technologically more advanced than other Moslem republics, is too busy settling accounts with Armenia and therefore is unable to project any significant influence into Central Asia. Kyrgyzstan, so far the most successful in managing political and economic change, simply is too small to have any regional domination ambitions.

Kazakhstan therefore is able to fill the vacuum left by the late Soviet Union in the region. Kazakhstan's President, Nursultan Nazarbayev, made a bid for regional leadership last December by successfully demanding a founder's role for each the Central Asian republics in the Commonwealth of Independent States which had been started by the Slavic republics. He made another move in February, stating at a press conference in New Delhi that Kazakhstan will have its own nuclear arms reductions strategy, that the future of the Soviet nuclear potential will not be decided only by the Slavic republics, and that these republics are not the only ones deserving international attention.

THE CAUCASUS: SLIDING INTO ANARCHY

The NATO solution does not look very promising for the Caucasus. A "Lebanonization" of the region already is a *fait accompli*, and it is unlikely that there will be political and military stability in the region in the near future. The conflicts tearing apart the Caucasus (Nagorny-Karabakh conflict, Armenian-Azerbaijani border war, South Ossetian-Georgian war, civil war in Georgia itself) have deep historical roots and have no evident solutions. They were suppressed for almost two centuries, first by the Russian Empire and then by the totalitarian communist rule; now the genie is out of the bottle again.

Another complicating factor is that the disintegration of the former Soviet armed forces in this region already has gone deeper than the level of republics. The disintegration processes have gained momentum and appear to be uncontrollable. It goes down from military districts to armies to corps to divisions, regiments, battalions, and further.

Local field commanders, left alone by the Moscow General Staff, with their lines of communication broken down and their supplies terminated, have to care for their enlisted men and solve food and supply problems on their own. This means that they have to strike special deals with local political leaders to do such things as exchange military trucks for food or trade political "non-interference" for an assured electricity supply.

Dangerous Trend. Eventually local units will become more and more self-oriented and self-governed, turning into mercenaries ready to sell their support to those able to pay a good price. They could even try to replace civilian administrations and seize political control in some smaller communities or isolated territories if the situation permits it.

This dangerous trend toward complete disintegration of the armed forces and the emergence of loose units of the 1918-1920 Russian Civil War type is not limited to the Caucasian region. It is seen too in other regions of the former U.S.S.R.

Moldova, with its rebellious Dniester and Gagauz ethnic minorities, is perhaps the most clear case. But Ukraine (in the cases of the Donetsk coal basin and regions on the left bank of Dnieper river with a large Russian population) and Russia (in the case of its autonomous republics of the Northern Caucasus, Tatarstan, Bashkorstan, Tuva, and some other smaller ethnic regions) are not immune to these problems.

Still, the Caucasus, with its immense ethnic, cultural and political diversities, persistent tribal and feudal traditions, and a number of ongoing conflicts, is most likely to face this bleak prospect.

In fact, Caucasian political leaders losing their power or public support might try to maintain their positions by creating "parallel" or "alternative" armed units of their own, outside the regular republican armed forces. And the political orientations of these units and their behavior during crises would be unpredictable, as the national guard established by former Georgian President Zviad Gamsakhurdia demonstrated. In many cases in the Caucasus (Nagorny Karabakh, South Ossetia, Chechnya) para-military units already have engaged in conflicts with regular republican or "Commonwealth" forces, thus contributing to the general chaos and anarchy.

The Caucasus also has been known for many years as a cradle of criminal organizations similar to the Mafia, with their influence spreading far beyond the Caucasus itself. There are powerful Armenian, Chechen, and Azerbaijani mafias competing and fighting each other throughout the former U.S.S.R.

These criminal structures, which recently have accumulated great wealth and power, are in no way interested in stabilizing the situation. These mafias successfully can confront regular republican troops. There have been many reports about criminal groups stealing weapons from military garrisons, killing military personnel, or taking their family members as hostages. It cannot but aggravate the general situation even more.

Armed Citizenry. Finally, the Caucasus has a long-standing tradition of its private citizens having their own arms. This consistently was fought by the Soviet authorities, who prohibited private ownership of arms. However, it outlived the Soviet state and now has received another extremely powerful impetus. Citizens are trying to buy guns to protect themselves against criminals and semi-criminal political groups. These same weapons already have been used in riots, social disorders, and anti-government actions.

In short, the situation with weapons is out of control. The Georgian government, for example, now controls only a portion of the weapons in Georgia. The remaining weapons are in the hands of the Georgian opposition, South Ossetians, Abkhazians, local political leaders, criminal groups of different kinds, and "self-defense" units of private citizens. Low-intensity conflicts of tribal character look practically unavoidable.

For Russia, the problem is not to prevent these conflicts or mediate them. It is too late for the former, while the latter can backfire. Russian diplomacy simply is not mature enough to keep the proper balance between the conflicting sides. It tends to be politically biased and subject to political lobbying from ethnic-centered communities. Mediation by the United Nations or the European Community probably would be a better solution. What Russia can and should do is prevent the spread of these conflicts toward its borders. For this, Russia must stop all arms transfers to the Caucasus and must reach political agreement with its own ethnic regions, such as in the Northern Caucasus. It also must resist any attempts by Georgia or Azerbaijan to interfere politically or militarily in the region north of the Caucasian mountains.

Instead therefore of one "common defense space" on the territory of the former U.S.S.R., there will be at least three different regional strategic theaters: European, Caucasian and Central Asian. The fourth will be the Far Eastern theater with its own rules of the game defined by the character of future Russian-Chinese relations. The Russian Federation will be the only state participating in all these strategic settings.

Other actors will be mostly regionally oriented in their foreign and defense policies. The only exception might be Ukraine, whose leaders already have been active in Central Asia, especially in the Caucasus. Ukrainian President Leonid Kravchuk even was asked by former Georgian leader Zviad Gamsakhurdia to mediate in the Georgian civil war. But the practical abilities of Ukraine to make a difference in the strategic balances outside of Europe now seem to be rather limited.

Need for Deft Diplomacy. It is very important for Russia to avoid mutually exclusive obligations in different regions, as well as devoting disproportional attention to any of them at the expense of others. Participating in different multilateral and bilateral alliances and unions, Russia could coordinate the security interests of all the former subjects of the U.S.S.R. to assure both its own security and Eurasian stability in general.

With deftness Russia might erect in five or ten years a stable Slavic political and economic community, a Russian-Muslim defensive military alliance, and a Russian-Northern Caucasian union.

Specific arrangements and conditions of membership as well as Russian responsibilities in each of these blocs may vary quite considerably depending on the security problems in each region, levels of Russian economic involvement there, political relations with the regional centers of power, and other factors.

These overlapping security structures on the territory of the former U.S.S.R. should be supplemented by the participation of Russia and other republics in wider international security-related bodies—such as different NATO institutions, Conference on Security and Cooperation in Europe (CSCE) mechanisms, and new blocs or regional collective security organizations that can emerge in the Southwest Asia or the Asian-Pacific region.

IMPLICATIONS FOR ARMS CONTROL

New political and military relations between emerging nation-states on the territory of the former U.S.S.R. require new approaches to arms control and disarmament both in terms of mechanisms and in terms of basic concepts and goals. This will not be easy; new participants in arms control negotiations lack expert knowledge and experience. Most of the republics have not yet articulated their threat perceptions and their security needs, which makes it practically impossible to forge any consistent arms control policies.

The heritage of the Soviet Union in arms control decision making is of little help to new states. During the 1970s and 1980s, in fact, there were no attempts by the Kremlin to shape a solid constitutional or even a bureaucratic framework for arms control decision making.

Delicate Balance. General political statements usually had very little to do with specific negotiating. Those were primarily the responsibility of the so-called Inter-Agency Commission, which included representatives from the military, defense industries, the Foreign Ministry, the KGB, and the International Department of the CPSU Central Committee, and reported directly to the Politburo. All the participating institutions defended their interests, and the final negotiating position depended on the very delicate balance of power that existed in the top Soviet political establishment at any moment.

The arms control decision making in most former Soviet republics will be an open procedure, involving not just top bureaucrats but also parliaments, leading political parties, media, and lobbying groups. It may, at least in the near future, considerably slow the arms control process and undermine its consistency.

The first problem that the new republics face is what to do with the arms control treaties and agreements signed by the former U.S.S.R. but not ratified by the Supreme Soviet. The way in which new actors treat these obligations will be their first serious test in the arms control sphere.

The most complicated case will be the Conventional Forces in Europe (CFE) agreement.[1] Though all the republican leaders have made formal pledges to work for its ratification by their respective parliaments and abide by its provisions, too many questions remain unanswered.

Baltics' Problem. The treaty cannot be ratified in its present form because new nation-states have emerged on the territory of the U.S.S.R. One possible complication is the status of the Baltic states. The CFE agreement divides all participants into two groups: the signatories to the NATO treaty and the signatories to the Warsaw Treaty Organization (WTO). If the Baltic states ratify the CFE agreement as signatories to the WTO, they will implicitly recognize the "legitimacy" of their absorption by the

1 CFE limited the number of tanks, armored personnel carriers, artillery pieces, combat helicopters, and combat aircraft that the former Soviet Union could station in Europe, from the Atlantic to the Ural Mountains. Since the European territory of the former Soviet Union is divided among Russia and several other states, all these states must agree on how the treaty-limited weapons will be divided and stationed to meet CFE requirements.

U.S.S.R. and their former status as a part of the U.S.S.R.; this, obviously, they definitely do not want to do.

Another problem is the status of military units and equipment deployed on the territory of some former Soviet republics, like the Baltic states or Georgia, but which belongs to other republics, like Russia, or to the Commonwealth in general. It is not clear how these units and equipment fit into the overall CFE framework, especially when disputes over the disposition of the former Soviet armed forces still go on.

Dividing Forces. The most serious question, of course, is how the republics will divide the Soviet quotas within the European conventional forces balance. Within the CFE agreements there are specific limitations on troops and weapons deployed within a number of geographical zones, such as all the European part of the former U.S.S.R., the so-called "extended Central Europe," the flank zones in the North and in the South, the second echelon zone. All of these zones, with the exception of the second echelon zone, which includes the Russian Moscow military district and Volga-Urals military district, cover territories of several independent states.

This means that Soviet successor states must agree among themselves on the numbers of troops and weapons they will keep in each of the zones as well as on the deployment patterns on multilateral basis. This could be an extremely difficult technical problem, fraught with political implications. Example: to comply with the CFE provisions related to the flank zones, a multilateral agreement should be reached between Russia, Ukraine, Moldova, and the Caucasian states. The extended Central Europe zone levels can be met only if there is an agreement between the Baltic states, Belarus, Ukraine, and Moldova.

Such a set of multilateral security treaties between republics of the former U.S.S.R. could establish greater stability and predictability in the European military balance. But it is doubtful that it can be created in the near future. If only one or two Soviet successor states are not ready to ratify the CFE agreement, all the others will find themselves in a very strange position. Their arms reductions and sub-regional troops and weapons levels will be determined by those who will stay out of the CFE taking no obligations whatsoever. In other words, the sheep will have to pay the toll for the goats. If Russia, for example, ratifies the CFE and Georgia does not, the arms levels in different regions of Russia will depend on the Georgian defense posture, while Georgia itself will be free from any limitations.

The republics, finally, confront a set of problems deriving from the current inability of many republican leaders to control all military units on their territories. Should, for instance, the military formations of Nagorny Karabakh be included into the Armenian quota or the Azerbaijani quota? What will be the status of Gagauz forces? And how can the republican leaders assure adequate international verification and monitoring procedures in the areas where they are simply not recognized as legitimate authorities?

Some of the regions in question, moreover, are now in the midst of war, thus making impossible any meaningful international control over arms reductions.

Declaration of Intent. Because of these problems, the value of pledges by the republican leaders to ratify the CFE agreements should not be overestimated. They seem to be declarations of intent rather than firm promises. Any attempt to impose the provisions of the CFE on the republics now most likely would be counterproductive. They simply cannot live up to their formal obligations.

It probably would be wiser to accept the major principles and the framework of the CFE (overall quota for the Commonwealth and the Balts, confidence-building measures, military transparency, and so forth) leaving specific subregional arrangements for the future, when the Soviet successor states are able to shape their separate security policies.

A special set of arrangements between Russia and other republics of the former U.S.S.R. will be needed to handle the Soviet nuclear legacy and related international agreements. This problem is serious, but it should not be overdramatized.

One, of course, can speculate that the collapse of the central government could trigger political struggles over the nuclear facilities located in non-Russian republics, and that the disintegration of the Commonwealth could nullify the agreements on nuclear issues reached among the "Big Four" of Russia, Ukraine, Belarus, and Kazakhstan, thus opening the way for nuclear proliferation and even a nuclear civil war in Eurasia.

Antinuclear Movement. But this is unlikely. Anti-nuclear sentiments are so strong in the former Soviet Union as a result of the Chernobyl nuclear plant disaster that no local leader is able to proclaim an independent nuclear program without risking political suicide. Even the republics that theoretically could produce their own nuclear arsenal—in particular, Ukraine and Belarus—have announced nuclear-free zones in their territories. For the Russian and the Commonwealth military and political authorities this poses an acute problem: revising the strategic offensive arms and tactical nuclear weapons-basing system and stringently regulating relevant military activities.

During their meeting in Alma-Ata last December 21, the leaders of the nuclear states of the Commonwealth confirmed their adherence to the provisions of the START treaty negotiated between Washington and Moscow. Despite mixed signals from Ukraine and Kazakhstan, neither republic questioned the treaty itself. Since all Soviet submarine-launched ballistic missiles (SLBMs) are based in Russian territory and strategic bombers are not subject to any significant START reductions, the problems that the republics have to solve are mostly limited to land-based intercontinental ballistic missiles (ICBMs). Solutions to these problems will be defined not only by political considerations but also by financial and economic ones. Implementation of the START treaty will cost several billion rubles.

The core of the Soviet nuclear arsenal, including facilities for design and production of nuclear weapons as well as those for plutonium production and uranium enrichment, are located in the Russian Federation. Parts of the nuclear infrastructure, however, are in Ukraine, Belarus, and Kazakhstan.

Ukraine is the most important in terms of its nuclear facilities: it has two major industrial complexes for the production of ICBMs. This does not mean, however, that Ukraine independently can produce these systems without spare parts, navigation equipment, launching pads, and other hardware produced by Russia. It is relevant, meanwhile, that Ukraine has assumed an obligation to join the Nuclear Proliferation Treaty (NPT) as a non-nuclear state.

It is likely that physical control over nuclear weapons and related structures will be centered in Russia with or even without Commonwealth arrangements. Most of the strategic air bases outside Russia are also nuclear storage sites, and it is likely that the populations in the republics will demand their withdrawal. These bases could be trans-

ferred to the territory of the Russian Federation. Denuclearizing the non-Russian naval bases will probably not present a serious challenge to Russian national security.

The problem of test sites could be more serious. Several are located in Kazakhstan. Even before the August 1991 coup attempt, the nuclear test site near Semipalatinsk, Kazakhstan, created a major political problem for the Moscow leadership and resulted in a lengthy undeclared unilateral moratorium on nuclear tests in the U.S.S.R. Environmental problems, fear of accidents, and lack of trust in Moscow created the influential antinuclear movement "Nevada-Semipalatinsk" in Kazakhstan. Relocating nuclear tests to Novaya Zemlya, an island in the Arctic Ocean, would be difficult for the Russian leaders due to internal and external opposition. Yet, complete termination of all nuclear tests by Russia eventually might cast doubt about the reliability of the Russian deterrent.

Russian defense planners also will take into account the need for adjustments to counter the loss of some strategic infrastructure of the former U.S.S.R., especially air-defense and early warning installations located in other republics.

Proliferation Concerns. The possibility of nuclear and missile technology proliferation as a result of the Soviet collapse could create another problem. It is possible, for instance, that some of the former republics would desire their own bombs. Under all conceivable scenarios this hardly could be expected from republics traumatized by the Chernobyl tragedy or by nuclear testing; these republics—Ukraine, Belarus, the Baltic states, or Kazakhstan—already have powerful antinuclear movements and no apparent reason to develop nuclear weapons.

If some of the republics become strategically isolated in an insecure international environment, however, they could see themselves as nations threatened by extinction. They could try to develop a bomb as a deterrent, possibly in cooperation with countries able to assist them technically or financially. To avoid this danger, the potential nuclear proliferators should be "anchored" to regional security systems and/or provided with adequate Russian guarantees.

The second proliferation concern is that pressing economic problems and need for hard currency could prompt the republics to export nuclear materials and sensitive technologies, including missile technology, to the Third World or elsewhere. Since real conversion from military to civilian production on the territory of the U.S.S.R. has not started, while radical cuts in military procurement programs are reality, with Russia and Ukraine cutting major programs by 50 percent to 70 percent for fiscal 1992, the military-industrial complex has to look for survival strategies. These could include marketing its facilities, products, and technologies.

Some nuclear and nuclear-related enterprises are ready to sell anything they have to get hard currency. For example, a nuclear warhead production complex, the CHETEK Corporation, advertises facilities for "peaceful nuclear explosions" for elimination of toxic waste and chemical weapons. Another newly formed corporation is ready to take orders for plutonium and enriched uranium.

Effective ways to halt these dangerous trends could include: special agreements with Russia, strengthening the Non-Proliferation Treaty regime worldwide and linkage of Western economic aid to guarantees by the republics of proper export controls.

As for the Soviet-American agreement on chemical weapons, the complications are of mostly technical nature. The agreement implies that America and the U.S.S.R. are to start dismantling their chemical munitions before the end of this year. Though the agreement was signed by Bush and Gorbachev in June 1990, it has never been ratified by the Supreme Soviet.

The major reason for the delay was the absence of adequate elimination facilities for chemical weapons in the U.S.S.R. The Soviet leadership built a special complex in Chapaevsk in the Samara region to meet these needs, but were unable to use it because of the local environmentalist movement. A number of attempts to find a new location for the facility were unsuccessful: no region wanted to host it and nobody wanted to pay for it.

This problem now seems to be limited to Russia only since no other republic has admitted that it possesses chemical weapons. Given the current situation, Russia clearly is unable to meet the Soviet obligations in this field if not helped by its partner to negotiations. America could provide technical and financial assistance in building an ecologically safe chemical weapons destruction facility. An additional protocol probably will be needed to specify the elimination procedures and change the timetable of actual elimination.

WHAT IS TO BE DONE WITH ETHNIC CONFLICTS?

Another problem directly linked to security matters is the need to solve or at least to defuse the numerous ethnic conflicts existing between the republics or within them. The world by now has grown used to the national-ethnic conflicts in the former Soviet Union, just as it grew accustomed to the chronic civil war in Lebanon, the armed sallies of separatists in India, or the exchanges of fire in Ulster.

But now, after all the republics have proclaimed their independence, the ethnic conflicts on the territory of the former U.S.S.R. acquire a different meaning. They can no longer be referred to as internal affairs of a decaying empire, but should be treated as international, inter-state conflicts with all their implications. Though in the final analysis only the peoples of the former U.S.S.R. can come to terms with their future relationships, the international community now has rights and responsibilities in this matter.

Three different scenarios can be envisaged:

1) A revision of inter-republican borders in keeping with the population's ethnic composition.

This would create long-term security problems in relations between republics that would divide winners and losers. It would also mean a sizeable headache for the West —not only because it hardly would be possible amicably to redefine borders without recourse to armed force, as Yugoslavia has discovered, but also because most likely it would be impossible to confine the desire to revise borders to the territory of the former Union. Almost inevitably it would sweep over into Central Europe, where practically all the nations, from Poles to Bulgarians, may present claims to neighbors.

It also probably would affect the Near and Middle East. The borders between Azerbaijan and Iran or between Tajikistan and Afghanistan are dubious from the stand-

point of national-ethnic demarcation. In short, the revision of borders is fraught with a real threat of destabilizing the whole Eurasian continent.

2) Massive internal migrations and mutual exchange of ethnic minorities between the republics while keeping the existing borders intact.

This could undermine international security. First, it will again be impossible to keep migrational flows within the confines of the former U.S.S.R. The wave of refugees will sweep the whole of Europe and will possibly reach even more remote regions of the world.

Second, the masses of repatriates, as history has shown, are favorable breeding grounds for revanchist and even extremist political movements. The Sudeten Germans or the Algerian French, after all, by no means amounted to tens of millions. This second scenario sharply increases the likelihood of a reactionary dictatorship in Russia, which would be dangerous to the West.

3) Mutual guarantees by the republics protecting the rights of ethnic minorities, including the right to cultural and territorial autonomy.

This solution of national-ethnic problems undoubtedly is optimal for the West and the republics themselves: it not only will make it possible to avoid many socio-political cataclysms, but it also is consistent with the fundamental principles of modern Western policy. But how feasible is this solution?

Recent developments in Tbilisi, Dushanbe, Kazan, and Lvov again demonstrate that democracy is not necessarily inevitable in a post-communist society. For a long time, nationalism will be the determining political force in many republics, whereas democracy will still remain too fragile to resist it successfully. This means that the realization of the third scenario of settling national-ethnic conflicts, considering that it will be impossible to bypass completely the first and second scenarios, is probable only when powerful pressure is brought to bear from the outside.

In the short term, the West may pressure the new states by making the expansion of political and economic ties conditional on the normalization of relations between the new states. An indispensable preliminary condition of the establishment of full-scale diplomatic relations should be mutual recognition by the former Soviet Republics, with the attendant settlement of territorial disputes.

Next, the new states must assume all the U.S.S.R.'s obligations in the field of human rights. The republics also must fulfill unconditionally the U.S.S.R.'s commitments in the area of arms control.

In the long run, the West could take advantage of the principle of the "differentiated approach" towards the new states by making the development of political, economic, and humanitarian relations with them contingent on how they tackled the problems of their ethnic minorities. Inasmuch as the former Soviet Republics inevitably will vie with one another for access to Western aid, technology and investments, this lever of influence may prove to be highly effective.

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