

November 19, 1993

RUSSIA AND HER NEIGHBORS: CREATING A U.S. POLICY TOWARD EURASIA

INTRODUCTION

Boris Yeltsin's decision to call new parliamentary elections and the ensuing armed revolt by hard-line communists and ultra-nationalists demonstrates the fragile state of Russian democracy. The rampaging crowds and burning Russian Parliament building reveal how political, social, and ethnic conflicts are endangering democratic and free market reforms in the former Soviet Union. Even though Yeltsin won an important victory over his hard-line opponents, these confrontations threaten to destabilize not only Russia, but many other countries in the region. Today, over one hundred conflicts are raging throughout the former Soviet Union, from Moldova in the west to Tajikistan in the east, from Estonia in the north to the Armenian enclave of Karabakh in the south.

These conflicts are a direct concern to the United States. They could, in fact, threaten any number of American security interests in Eurasia. These interests are to:

- ① Prevent a nuclear attack on the U.S. or its allies, either intentionally or unintentionally, with the weapons from the arsenal of the former Soviet Union;**
- ② Keep weapons of mass destruction out of the hands of terrorists or rogue political factions;**
- ③ Curtail the proliferation of such weapons not only throughout the region but outside it as well; and**
- ④ Prevent the emergence of a Russian hard-line military threat to Europe, Turkey, and the Middle East.**

With interests as important as these, the U.S. must develop a policy for the entire region of the former Soviet Union, and not for Russia alone. In short, the U.S. needs a Eurasian policy—one that recognizes the singular importance of Russia, but which nonetheless does not lose sight of the larger regional context governing such issues as democratization, market reforms, and arms proliferation in the successor states of the former Soviet Union.

In order to help control the many conflicts in the former Soviet Union and to help stabilize the region, the U.S. should:

- ✗ **Exclude the possibility of U.S. troop involvement in U.N. peacemaking operations in Eurasia.** American troops should not be sent to play a U.N. peacemaking role in the Commonwealth of Independent States (CIS).¹ U.N. and U.S. peacekeeping commitments are already mired in crises in Somalia, Haiti, and elsewhere. Peacekeeping or peacemaking operations in Eurasia would be even more difficult than in Somalia or Haiti. The conflicts are bloodier, the politics and geopolitics much more complex, and the region more inaccessible.
- ✗ **Prepare plans for capturing or destroying nuclear weapons that may fall into hostile hands in the former Soviet Union.** The U.S. intelligence community and special forces have to be ready to act if a rogue political player or a terrorist group attempts nuclear blackmail or an unauthorized launch against targets in Eurasia or North America. These plans should be prepared in cooperation with the Yeltsin government and other friendly regimes in the region.
- ✗ **Start negotiations toward a multilateral security framework in Eastern Europe and Eurasia that will enhance the security of Russia and Ukraine.** Such a framework may facilitate their future integration into NATO.
- ✗ **Clarify to the Russian leadership that the U.S. will not endorse a unilateral application of a Russian "Monroe Doctrine," or violations of the sovereignty of other CIS countries.** To restore peace in the CIS, Russia should act in multilateral organizations, such as the U.N. and the Conference on Security and Cooperation in Europe (CSCE),² with full respect for human rights, international law, and the sovereignty of its neighbors.
- ✗ **Encourage democratic and market reforms in the Newly Independent States (NIS) of the former U.S.S.R.** Technical assistance programs aimed at creating a professional class of market specialists should be expanded. Democracy training and institution-building should be further implemented throughout the former Soviet Union, and not merely in Russia.
- ✗ **Facilitate the resolution of disputes between Russia and Ukraine, if requested.** Impartial U.S. mediation could help to avoid disputes between Moscow and Kiev. Washington might also help to settle disagreements over territory, the division of naval fleets, and the ownership of nuclear weapons and other armed forces.

1 The Commonwealth of Independent States (CIS) is a Moscow-centered union of the former Soviet republics, with the exception of the Baltic states. Newly Independent States (NIS) is a term used to identify the former Soviet republics that chose not to join the CIS. But with all the NIS members except for Moldova having joined the CIS, and with Moldova poised to join, the two terms are often used interchangeably.

2 The CSCE includes all of the European states, the U.S. and Canada. It evolved from the 1975 Helsinki process, which united all European countries, U.S., and Canada in an agreement on inviolability of borders and protection of human rights.

- X Support the sovereignty and territorial integrity of Moldova and urge a withdrawal of Russian military forces from the Pridnestrovye region.** The U.S. should encourage President Yeltsin to begin dismantling the anti-reform communist bridgehead in Pridnestrovye, a self-styled republic carved out of Moldovan territory that provided shock troops for the anti-Yeltsin revolt.
- X Link aid to Russia to progress on Russian troop withdrawals from the Baltics.** The Russians completed withdrawal of their military forces from Lithuania on August 30, 1993. However, the pullout of Russian troops from Latvia and Estonia was stopped in June despite a CSCE agreement signed by Russia in 1991. To ensure prompt withdrawal of the Russian troops from Latvia and Estonia, the Clinton Administration should continue supporting congressional legislation requiring the reduction of aid to Russia if the President fails to report on significant progress of the troop pullout. In addition, the U.S. should offer its good offices to the Russians and the Baltic states to expedite the withdrawal. To assure Moscow of U.S. impartiality, Washington should also monitor the plight of Russian speakers in these countries, who claim discrimination.
- X Support the role of the CSCE in settling the conflict between Azerbaijanis and Armenians over the enclave of Karabakh.** The CSCE has proven to be the most effective framework for settling the Karabakh conflict, as it keeps Iran, which is not a CSCE member, out of the negotiations between local and regional players. In a final settlement, the status of Karabakh could be resolved either by creating an autonomous Armenian enclave inside Azerbaijan, a confederation between Karabakh and Armenia, or by transferring Karabakh to Armenia. Whatever the final outcome, the U.S. must balance its long-term interest in good relations with Turkey with recognizing the historical aspirations of the Armenian people.
- X Prevent escalation of the Christian-Muslim war in the Caucasus by maintaining a dialogue and fostering cooperation between all sides, especially with Russia and Turkey.** The U.S. should cooperate with its long-term ally, Turkey, and with Russia as well, to prevent their entanglement in a major military confrontation in the Caucasus over Karabakh.
- X Support a CSCE role in settling ethnic disputes in Georgia and inside the Russian Federation.** Georgia is plagued by separatist movements in Abkhazia and Southern Ossetia. Russia is experiencing similar problems in the Chechen and Ingush republics. While international support will be needed to restore Georgian sovereignty, Russia is capable of coping on her own with separatists inside the Russian Federation. However, U.S. troops should not be committed to any peacekeeping operation in Georgia or in Russia.
- X Propose an international peace conference on Tajikistan, without committing U.S. troops to U.N. peacekeeping operations there.** The U.S. is interested in preventing the destabilization of Central Asia. Washington also is opposed to the spread of Islamic fundamentalism. Therefore, the U.S. should support the Russian initiative to assemble an international peace conference within the next three to six months to end the civil war in Tajikistan.

- ✘ **Provide economic aid and technical assistance to the private sector and to genuine reformers, not to government structures, in Russia.** Leading reformers in Moscow have complained that Western assistance has been squandered, embezzled, or misused by bureaucrats to undermine Yeltsin's reforms. Emerging private sector enterprises and entrepreneurs, not government-owned structures, should be identified as the key recipients of aid. Such an aid strategy will maximize the effectiveness of Western assistance and will contribute to the success of economic reform. Russia's market and democratic reforms are important guarantees of a more benign policy toward her neighbors.
- ✘ **Propose the negotiation of a free trade treaty with Russia.** Trade, not aid, is the key to solving Russia's economic problems. A prosperous Russia will be less likely to revert to its imperialist past.
- ✘ **Press for economic and political reform in Ukraine.** Only through economic growth can genuine independence and prosperity of Ukraine be reached. The current internal, foreign policy, and economic crises in Ukraine are a result of too little reform and a plummeting standard of living. These crises undermine the Ukrainian commitment to independence, encourage pro-Russian forces in Kiev, and make Ukraine appear easy prey for imperialist forces in Russia.

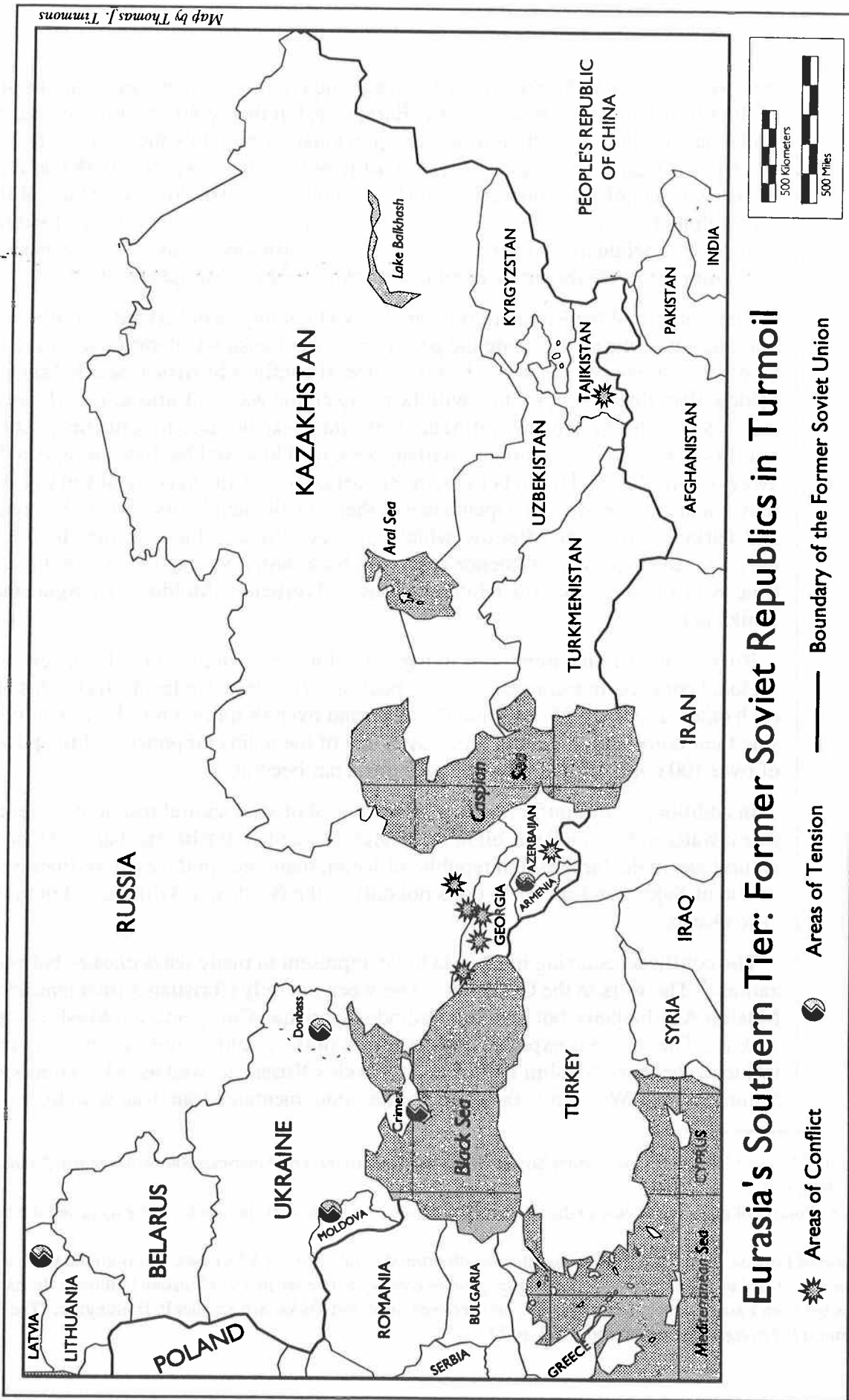
THE RETURN OF HISTORY: THE POST-COLONIAL CRISIS IN EURASIA

After the U.S.S.R. crumbled in December 1991, multiple conflicts erupted between the peoples of the former Soviet empire. Centuries-old animosities flared up in the immense political vacuum that emerged after the failed August 1991 coup. The Communist Party, with its local cells in each village, factory, and office, lost its power. The Soviet military, unable to put an end to ethnic conflicts, started a painful transformation into the separate armies of Russia and other republics. Control over weapons and ammunition became extremely weak, and generals, officers, and soldiers began selling arms to the highest bidder. The Moscow-based central economic planning agency, GOSPLAN, ceased to exist. Republics and regions started to erect prohibitive tariff and customs barriers, keeping local products at home.

By 1991, strong pro-independence movements were springing up in all the republics, with the exception of Central Asia. Independence was regarded as a panacea for all economic and social ills. High hopes were linked to ending Moscow's control, while the importance of economic ties to other republics was largely ignored. By the second half of 1991, the former imperial control mechanisms had disintegrated.

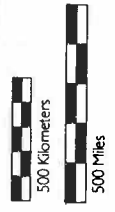
Diverse as they are, all the conflicts in the former Soviet Union can be categorized as fights over land and resources, struggles for independence, or clan warfare.³ Conflicts of this kind are not unusual in world history. After the decline of the British Empire, bloody

3 Emil Payin, "Types of Ethnic Conflicts in Post-Soviet Societies," manuscript, August 1993, p. 2. Payin, President Yeltsin's advisor on ethnic conflict, spoke at the Heritage Foundation on August 23, 1993.



Eurasia's Southern Tier: Former Soviet Republics in Turmoil

- ★ Areas of Conflict
- ⊗ Areas of Tension
- Boundary of the Former Soviet Union



wars were fought in the Middle East, Africa, and the Indian subcontinent in the aftermath of the European withdrawal. After the Europeans left their colonies, inter-ethnic wars broke out as ethnic and religious groups, previously pacified by their former European masters, struggled for dominance. The most famous of these was the 1948 war that led to the partitioning of India into Islamic Pakistan and largely Hindu India. Many of these post-colonial conflicts exist to this day. The threat of war between India and Pakistan is ever present, while many of Africa's wars can be attributed to unsettled business left over from the days when state boundaries were set by the Europeans.

The collapse of the Russian-dominated Soviet Union has unleashed a similar post-colonial crisis in Eurasia. All along the periphery of the Russian Federation are wars fueled by ethnic hatreds and fears. As the post-colonial conflicts in Africa, South Asia, and the Middle East simmer on, so, too, will the many ethnic wars in Eurasia. Hereditary enemies such as the Armenians and Azeri Turks may take decades to settle their scores. The traditionally dominant Georgians will not accept Abkhaz or Ossetian attempts to break away or join Russia. The Uzbeks, who see themselves as the masters of Central Asia, may not acquiesce to the independence of their smaller neighbors such as Kyrgyzstan and Turkmenistan. And Moscow, which dominated Eurasia for over three hundred years, may wish to exercise its influence in its own backyard, invoking its own Monroe Doctrine as justification for armed interventions in Azerbaijan, Moldova, Georgia, and Tajikistan.

Russia, and Russian minorities living in the former Soviet Union, play a key role in the regional conflicts in Eurasia. All of the post-Soviet states have territorial claims against each other. There are 25.4 million Russians and over 18 million non-Russians living outside their home states.⁴ Ethnic disarray is one of the main components of the powder keg of over 100 conflicts that post-Soviet Eurasia has become.

In addition, many conflicts are over the control of vital natural resources. Among them: water in Central Asia, oil in Azerbaijan, Tatarstan, Bashkortostan, and Chechnia, natural gas in the far northern republic of Komi, diamonds in the eastern Siberian region of Yakut-Sakha,⁵ and access to ports not only in the Black and Baltic seas, but in the Pacific Ocean.⁵

The conflicts occurring in Eurasia today represent in many ways clashes between civilizations.⁶ The wars in the Caucasus are between not only Christian Armenians and Muslim Azerbaijanis, but between Orthodox Christian Georgians and Muslim-supported Abkhaz. The region is experiencing the return of the centuries-old struggle for spheres of influence between Muslim Turkey and Orthodox Russia, as well as between modern, Sunni, and pro-Western Turkey and Shi'ite, fundamentalist Iran. Iran is an historic ally of

4 Paul Goble, "Ethnic Conflicts in the Former Soviet Union and Redefinition of American National Interests," manuscript, August 1993, p. 3.

5 *Ibid.*, p. 4. Control of ports and access to the sea is one of the sources of conflicts in Abkhazia, Crimea, and the Baltic states.

6 In the case of Eurasia, these fault lines run north to south, from the Baltics to the Black Sea, and from the west to the east, along the old Christian-Muslim frontier. In Europe, peoples east of the line are mostly Christian Orthodox. In Asia, the border is between Eastern Orthodoxy and Islam, and between Slavs and Turks. See Samuel P. Huntington, "The Clash of Civilizations?" *Foreign Affairs* Summer 1993, p. 22.

Russia and Armenia against Turkey. Russia currently is involved in a shooting war in Tajikistan against many of the same Islamic *mujahideen* who wreaked havoc on the Soviet Army in Afghanistan only five years ago.

THE REGION OF EURASIA: ISSUES AND CONFLICTS

Two large-scale regional wars—between Armenia and Azerbaijan and in Tajikistan—threaten to destabilize the Caucasus and Central Asia, and to involve Russia, Turkey, Iran, Afghanistan, and possibly even Pakistan. Smaller wars have been fought in Moldova, in the Georgian provinces of Abkhazia and South Ossetia, and between the Ossetians and the Ingush in the Northern Caucasus. The flow of refugees into Russia drains the Russian treasury and provides political ammunition for the opponents of Boris Yeltsin, who accuse him of failing to protect Russians abroad.

Russia's fate will be the principal determinant of the region's evolution. But other areas hold great importance for U.S. interests as well. These include:

UKRAINE. Ukrainian relations with Russia go to the root of the CIS's existence, and are central to the fate and character of the Russian state itself.⁷ Many in Russia are still resentful and dismayed about the loss of "Little Russia," as Ukraine was known, reacting to Ukrainian independence with horror and territorial claims.⁸ In January and February of 1992, the now defunct Russian Parliament passed resolutions calling for the re-examination and annulment of the 1954 transfer of the Crimea from the Russian Federation to Ukraine. In June 1992, Russian Foreign Minister Andrey Kozyrev raised the possibility of pressing territorial claims against Ukraine.⁹ In February 1993, presidential advisor Sergei Stankevich protested against close Polish-Ukrainian relations and described Ukraine as a "Russian sphere of influence."¹⁰

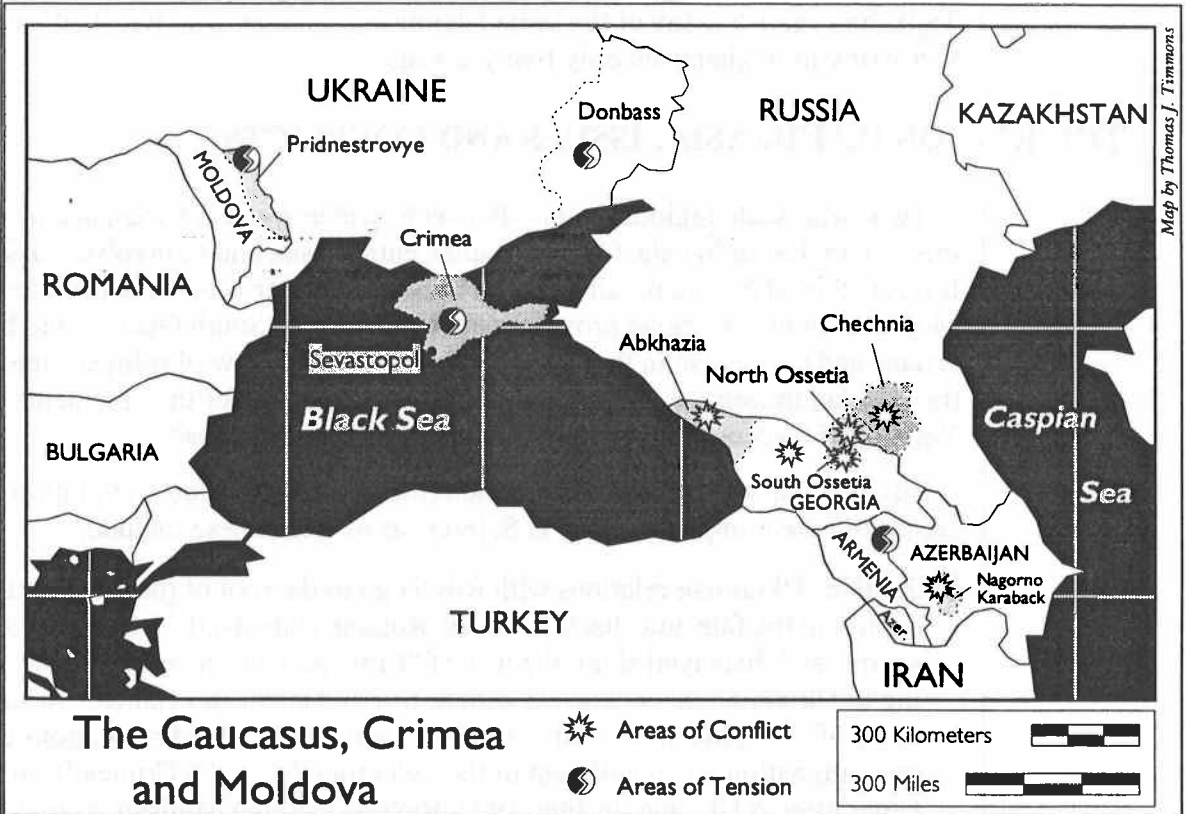
On June 17, 1993, President Yeltsin and Ukrainian President Leonid Kravchuk concluded a deal dividing the Black Sea Fleet and the naval base in Sevastopol. The Russian Parliament adopted a resolution the next month granting Sevastopol the status of a Russian city. This resolution was subsequently condemned by both Yeltsin and Kravchuk, as well as by the United Nations Security Council. On September 3, President Yeltsin announced that Ukraine had agreed to sell its share of the Black Sea Fleet to Russia, lease the Sevastopol naval base, and return all strategic nuclear warheads to Russia in exchange for cancellation of the \$2 billion Ukrainian debt. This agreement, called the Massandra Protocol, was widely denounced in Kiev. President Kravchuk explained that Russia had presented Ukraine with an ultimatum: either repay the debt, or oil and gas supplies would be cut off. As a result of political strife, Ukrainian Prime Minister Leonid Kuchma and Defense Minister Konstantin Morozov resigned

7 Zbigniew Brzezinski has argued that co-existence with an independent Ukraine is the litmus test of the Russian future, *The Washington Post*, March 1, 1992.

8 Roman Solchanyk, "Ukraine: A Year of Transition," *RFE-RL Research Report*, Vol. 2, No. 1, 1 January 1993, p. 61.

9 *Ibid.*, quoting interview in *Le Monde*.

10 *Ibid.*



under pressure, leaving Kravchuk alone to face a hostile parliament protesting an alleged sellout of Ukrainian national interests.

Dominated by the former communist political machine, Ukraine so far has made only very modest achievements in the area of economic reforms. Ukrainian sovereignty, however, remains a crucial Western interest, as Ukraine could serve as a geopolitical balance should Russia develop a more anti-Western foreign policy.

MOLDOVA. Populated by Romanian-speaking Moldovans, Russians, and Ukrainians, Moldova was torn apart by the war fought during 1991-1992 in the Trans-Dniester Pridnestrovye region, on the left bank of the Dniester River. The battle raged between Russian separatists, supported by the Russian Fourteenth Army stationed in the area, and Moldovan forces. Only a third of the Moldovan Russians support the Soviet-style Russian-speaking republic.¹¹ General Alexander Lebed, Commander of the Fourteenth Army, has called repeatedly for restoration of the Soviet Union. Lebed apparently enjoys the support of Yeltsin and Defense Minister Pavel Grachev, even though he is known to be hostile to democratic reforms. Lebed, like Grachev, is a paratrooper with Afghan experience, and a popular figure in the Army, whose support Yeltsin badly needs.

¹¹ Another ethnic minority in Moldova, the Christian Turkish-speaking Gagauz, also gained support of the Russian Federation. They claim independence from Moldova and expressed willingness to join the Russian Federation.

In a drive to overthrow Russian reformers, the so-called Dniester Republic, as the Russian speaking enclave is called, already has played a crucial and grim role as a hard-line stronghold. Hundreds of fighters from this region converged on Moscow in support of the uprising in October. If not disbanded, the enclave could play the role of a reactionary bridgehead to Eastern Europe and Ukraine.

The current trilateral peacekeeping force of 1,500 in Pridnestrovye is administered by Russia, Moldova, and Pridnestrovye at a cost of about \$40 million a year. Moldova has requested that the U.N. and the CSCE play a role in resolving the conflict, as Russia refuses to commit to a timetable to withdraw her forces.

THE BALTIC STATES. The U.S. has supported independence for the Baltic states for fifty years. For the Balts, withdrawal of the Russian forces is a nerve-wracking affair. Russia withdrew all its forces from Lithuania, as promised, on August 31, 1993. However, the pullout of Russian troops from Latvia and Estonia was stopped in June, despite a CSCE agreement signed by Russia in 1991. The presence of the Russian military in Latvia and Estonia is linked by President Yeltsin, Foreign Minister Kozyrev, and Defense Minister Grachev to the situation of the Russian-speaking immigrants in the Baltic states. Russian officials allege that the Russian-speakers do not enjoy the same rights as the native Balts.

Baltic officials are worried by the statements of Russian spokesmen that the troops will not be withdrawn "because the Russian state has spent its resources in the Baltics for hundreds of years."¹² Military maneuvers, in which Russian troops practiced the capture of government buildings, airports, and communications centers as recently as last June, do not help to allay Baltic fears.¹³ Baltic officials believe that the movements of Russian troops, ships, and planes without permission or prior notification is a violation of their sovereignty.

TRANSCAUCASUS. For centuries this area was a chaotic frontier between Europe and Asia, and between Islam and Christianity. Populated by dozens of peoples and ethnic groups, such as Georgians, Chechens, Armenians, Abkhaz, and Adjarians, the Transcaucasus has been a hotbed of ethnic warfare. Currently, three large-scale wars are raging in the area: 1) between the Armenians and Azerbaijani Turks, 2) between the Georgians and the Abkhaz, and 3) a civil war in Georgia. The result of these wars has been close to a million refugees. The Abkhaz, Ossetians, and the Karabakh Armenians are fighting for their independence. Western Georgians support former President Zviad Gamsakhurdia against the current President Eduard Shevardnadze.

Karabakh. Populated by Armenians, Karabakh was put under Azerbaijan's jurisdiction in 1921, after Josef Stalin negotiated a treaty in the Transcaucasus between Communist Russia and Turkey. The strife between Christian Armenians and Muslim Azerbaijanis escalated in 1988, and full-scale war broke out in 1992. Today Karabakh is a self-proclaimed Armenian republic fighting for independence from Azerbaijan, which is populated by Shi'ite Muslim Turks. The battles are fought by independent

¹² Vyacheslav Kostikov, press secretary to President Yeltsin, quoted in *RFE-RL Daily Report*, August 24, 1993, p. 3.

¹³ Steven Woehrel, "Russians in the Baltic States," *CRS Report for Congress*, August 3, 1993, p. 9.

Karabakh forces, rather than by the Armenian army. Thus far, Azerbaijani political and military leadership has been poor. Baku, the capital of Azerbaijan, has seen three changes of regime and had six defense ministers, losing one-fifth of its territory since the collapse of the U.S.S.R.

Russia has intermittently supported the Armenians, despite reports of large-scale weapons supplies to Azerbaijan. Moscow has suggested that it should become a guarantor of peace in the region, but the idea of *Pax Russica* has been resisted by such other CSCE countries as Georgia, Poland, Turkey, and Ukraine.¹⁴ Azerbaijan joined the CIS in October after democratically elected President Abulfaz Elchibey had been overthrown by the former KGB General and Politburo member Geydar Aliev, who will likely press for a greater Russian role.

International diplomatic initiatives on Karabakh have been unsuccessful because of the intransigence on both sides. Mediation attempts on the part of Iran and Russia have failed. Thus far, the CSCE has sent a fact-finding mission to the area. A proposal by the CSCE "Minsk Group," which includes eleven countries, calls for the creation of an observer force that would be 300 to 2,000 strong, and would cost \$40 million to \$200 million. This proposal has not yet been approved. On July 29, 1993, the U.N. Security Council unanimously condemned Armenian territorial gains of up to one-fifth of Azeri territory, and demanded an immediate cease-fire and troop withdrawal.

As hundreds of thousands of Azeri refugees fled toward Iran, troop buildups were reported on Iran's northern border. Russia has threatened to attack the Turkish army if it attacks Armenia, and Turkish and Russian troops exchanged fire on the Turkish-Armenian border in the summer of 1993. The increasing struggle for control of Azerbaijan's oil reserves, the growing destabilization of the Transcaucasus, and the active involvement of Iran are definitely not in Western or American interests.

The Freedom Support Act, which provides \$2.5 billion of U.S. assistance to the Newly Independent States,¹⁵ prohibits sending aid to Azerbaijan. Senators Richard Lugar (R-IN), Nancy Kassebaum (R-KS), and Mitch McConnell (R-KY) have expressed concern that this ban on Azerbaijan sets a bad precedent whereby the U.S. is choosing sides in an intractable conflict with deep historic roots. House Resolution 86, introduced by Representative David Bonior (D-MI), unilaterally condemns Azerbaijan and recognizes Karabakh's independence. In this respect, Congressman Bonior goes further than even the government of Armenia, which does not recognize Karabakh.

Georgia and Abkhazia. Georgia is in the midst of a bloody civil war between supporters of current President Eduard Shevardnadze and ousted President Zviad Gamsakhurdia. Political violence has become chronic since the conflict began in 1991. Eduard Shevardnadze's authority is challenged by warlords and militias, despite his victory in the October 1992 parliamentary elections. Shevardnadze has suffered severe setbacks in recent weeks, culminating in the fall of the provincial capital Sukhumi to the rebel

14 "Ethnic Violence in Transcaucasia," Hearing before the Commission on Security and Cooperation in Europe, 103 Congress, March 8, 1993, p. 8. Testimony of Ambassador John J. Maresca, U.S. Department of State.

15 Freedom Support Act, Sec. 5 (c), P.L. 102-511.

forces on September 27, 1993. Gamsakhurdia's successes prompted Shevardnadze to ask for Russian help and to join the CIS. As a result, on October 28, Russia sent a 2,000-strong paratroop brigade to control the strategic Poti-Kutaisi-Tbilisi railroad, which is the vital transportation link between Russia and the Transcaucasus. A trilateral observer force in Abkhazia, the autonomous republic inside Georgia, is sponsored by Russia, Georgia, and the Abkhaz rebels. The current cost of the some 500 Russian, Georgian, and Abkhazian soldiers is around \$30 million a year.

The bitter year-long war in the Georgian autonomous republic of Abkhazia has claimed over 15,000 lives. The cease-fire agreed to in August 1993 and guaranteed by Russia was breached by the Abkhaz separatists and their supporters. Some 120,000 Georgian and Abkhaz refugees have been forced from their to wander in the snowy Caucasus Mountains. Before the mass exodus of these refugees, the population of Abkhazia was only 17.3 percent ethnic Abkhaz, while over 40 percent of the population was Georgian.

The leaders of Abkhazia wish to join Russia. The Caucasus Muslim Confederation, rogue Russian military elements, the Cossacks, and the Pridnestrovye government in Moldova support the Abkhaz separatists. This support, coming from so many different sides, is a result of the widespread hatred of Shevardnadze, who is viewed as one of the main culprits in the collapse of the U.S.S.R.

Other conflicts in the Caucasus. There is yet another conflict in Georgia between the Georgian government and Ossetian separatists. The battle between Georgia and Ossetian separatists has been stalemated since the cease-fire of spring 1992. The residents of South Ossetia, which is part of Georgia, want to unite with their co-ethnics in the North Ossetian autonomous republic, which is part of the Russian Federation. The South Ossetians were supported by local Russian military commanders, who bear a grudge against the Georgians. Currently, the cease-fire is administered by a Russian-Georgian-Ossetian peacekeeping force of about 500 troops. The estimated cost of the force is \$15 million a year. Negotiations are under way to place this force under the authority of the CSCE.

In the Russian Federation, an indigenous Caucasus mountaineer people known as the Ingush claims a tract of land called Prigorodny Rayon. This territory was transferred from the Checheno-Ingush autonomous republic to North Ossetia in 1944. The anti-Russian feelings among the Ingush people have been running very high, as Russia is seen as responsible for the dispute. Russian Deputy Premier Viktor Polyanichko and a Russian general were murdered in the area in late July 1993.

Neighboring Chechnia, located in the North Caucasus, is in turmoil as a result of clan, criminal, and social conflicts. Chechnia is rich in oil and gas, and it is fervently Moslem. It, too, is seeking full independence from Russia.

TAJIKISTAN. Tajikistan is a Persian-speaking Sunni Muslim former Soviet republic that is broken into feuding clans. When civil war in this mountainous region broke out in June of 1992, Uzbekistan and former Soviet troops supported communist hard-liners against a coalition of pro-democracy and Islamic forces. Russia had supported the communists, preferring them to others with unknown political affiliations. Great atrocities were committed by both sides. Close to half a million refugees have fled over the former Soviet border into Afghanistan.¹⁶

Today, Russia is advocating a diplomatic solution to this war. Russia, Afghanistan, Uzbekistan, the Islamic guerrillas, and Pakistan are willing to participate in the peace talks. But Tajik hard-liners in the capital, Dushanbe, led by Parliament Chairman Imomali Rakhmonov, refuse to negotiate.

Russia has requested that a 2,000-strong joint CIS peacekeeping force be dispatched to the area at a cost of \$200 million a year. Moscow also has proposed that the U.N. cover the costs. The U.N. sent an envoy to the area in June 1993 to mediate the conflict. So far, the U.N.'s efforts have been futile.

TWO SCENARIOS

How these various regional conflicts in Russia play out depend in large part on what happens inside Russia. The conflicts inside Russia can lead to two potential scenarios, either of which not only would destabilize the entire region, but also endanger Western security interests.

Scenario #1: The Empire Strikes Back. By far most ominous would be an attempt to restore the Russian empire. Even though Yeltsin has won a victory over Parliament, his communist and nationalist opponents have not been entirely destroyed. If these hard-line opponents ever were to overthrow Yeltsin, they would surely return Russia to her traditional imperial posture. Despite Yeltsin's recent success, there is still a danger that internal Russian discord may lead to the abandonment of free market and democratic reforms, resulting in the establishment of an imperialist, centralizing regime in Moscow. Under such circumstances, the political future, freedom, and even the lives of pro-Western reformers may be in danger.

Notwithstanding the fact that many Russians want a continuation of reform, many of them also are uncomfortable with the loss of empire. Two-thirds of the Russians questioned in a recent poll answered that Russia should be larger than the Russian Federation and equivalent to the former Soviet Union.¹⁶ Until recently, the leading political opposition figures—former Vice President Alexander Rutskoy and former Speaker of the Supreme Soviet Ruslan Khasbulatov, were calling for restoration of the former Soviet Union.¹⁷ Meanwhile, the Russian ultra-nationalists, including the ones in the former Parliament, were planning to raise the specter of a Bosnia-style ethnic uprising in non-Russian republics in order to annex Russian-populated territories.¹⁸

As a result of such pressures, Russia has embarked upon the formulation of a new "Monroe Doctrine" in Eurasia. Such a doctrine would allow Russia the freedom to establish a sphere of influence in the former Soviet empire, with Moscow alone defining what

¹⁶ Goble, *op. cit.*, p. 2.

¹⁷ Rutskoy's battle cry was revival of the Soviet Union. He has predicted that "The U.S.S.R. will be resurrected and will again become a superpower which can guarantee peace on Earth." "Rutskoy wants to resurrect the U.S.S.R.," *RFE-RL Daily Report*, August 6, 1993, p. 2. Even prior to that, he boasted to visiting U.S. congressmen that the U.S.S.R. would stand again.

¹⁸ Ethnic nationalist organizations, such as the Union of Russian Communities, have been created in these areas, with former KGB, military, and police officers playing prominent roles in them.

her vital interests are, and when, where, and how many soldiers are to be sent to protect these interests. Reflective of this view, Yeltsin has called upon the world community to recognize and pay for a "U.N.-like mission" for Russia in the former Soviet Union. In an October 1993 U.N. General Assembly speech, Foreign Minister Kozyrev argued that Russia should play a dominant role in the former Soviet Union, and later called for the preservation of the Russian "geopolitical assets it took hundreds of years for Russia to conquer."¹⁹

While these moves by Yeltsin do not by themselves constitute an attempt to re-create the Russian empire, they and other developments could lay the groundwork for a restoration by a post-Yeltsin regime. After intensive pressure from Russia throughout the spring and summer of 1993, the Newly Independent States of the former Soviet Union were persuaded to join an economic and monetary union led by Moscow. On September 24, 1993, they signed an agreement to this effect in the Kremlin.²⁰ Even the states that had formerly resisted joining the Commonwealth of Independent States, such as Georgia, Moldova and Azerbaijan, were brought back into the fold in October 1993. A variety of causes—including the desperate military condition of Georgia and Azerbaijan, control of energy and monetary supplies by Russia, and common fears of an Islamic threat to unpopular or unstable regimes in Central Asia—contributed to the consolidation of the Russian-led union.

Scenario #2: The Disintegration of Russia. While a new Russian empire is clearly not in the U.S. interest, neither is the disintegration of the Russian Federation. Yeltsin's bold step on October 10, 1993, to disband the local Soviets might finally uproot the communist bureaucracy. But it may also precipitate Russia's disintegration and even lead to a civil war if any of the local military commanders throw their allegiance behind local hardliners.

There are many regions of Russia that are very unhappy with the central government in Moscow. Mineral-rich Tatarstan and Yakut-Sakha in Eastern Siberia are seriously considering independence. Ethnically Russian regions (*oblasts*) are demanding that their status be equal to that of sovereign republics such as Tatarstan, Bashkortan, or Chechnia. They want more control over their natural resources and to be permitted to collect their own taxes. The Sverdlovsk *oblast* in the Urals, the pro-communist Novosibirsk region, and territories in the agricultural Russian hinterland, in Siberia and the Far East have already proclaimed themselves "sovereign republics."

WHY AMERICA SHOULD CARE: U.S. INTERESTS IN EURASIA

While far away and seemingly removed from the issues of the day, the many conflicts in Eurasia have a direct bearing on the security of the United States.

¹⁹ *Izvestiya*, October 8, 1993, p. 3.

²⁰ "CIS States Agree to form Economic Union," *Russia and Commonwealth Business Law Report*, Vol. 4, No.11, p. 34, Participating states were Russia, Armenia, Azerbaijan, Belarus, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Moldova, Tajikistan, and Uzbekistan. Georgia joined later. Mineral-rich Turkmenistan and Ukraine signed some of the agreements.

The Security Interests

U.S. security interests in Eurasia are to:

- ✓ Prevent a nuclear attack against the U.S. and its allies;
- ✓ Prevent an unauthorized nuclear attack by a rogue political faction or terrorist group;
- ✓ Ensure peaceful resolution of conflicts in Eurasia;
- ✓ Prevent the re-emergence of military threats to Western Europe, Turkey, and the Middle East from a hard-line regime in Moscow;
- ✓ Curtail and contain the proliferation of weapons and technologies of mass destruction from the states of the former U.S.S.R.

Political Interests

U.S. political interests in the area are to:

- ✓ Support only negotiated border changes between states;
- ✓ Broaden the European security and cooperation framework to include the new states of the CIS, primarily democratic Russia and Ukraine;
- ✓ Prevent the spread of Islamic fundamentalism;
- ✓ Maintain and nurture democracy in Russia and the NIS;

Economic Interests

U.S. economic interests in Eurasia are to:

- ✓ Establish and expand a free market economy with the lowest trade barriers possible;
- ✓ Create a favorable climate for Western investment, including property rights and favorable conditions for the repatriation of profits;
- ✓ Eliminate the dependency and the need of CIS countries for continued economic assistance;
- ✓ Ensure competitive access to and free trade in energy and mineral resources.

As long as Russia is embarked on democratic and free market reforms, and continues a cooperative foreign policy, it does not represent a major threat to the U.S. But if the Yeltsin government collapses, and Russia re-emerges as an empire, the Russian nuclear threat could become very grave. In this event, Russia also might threaten Europe, a step which would clearly be against vital U.S. national security interests.²¹

Rogue Nukes. The possibility of a civil war or collapse in Russia or other nuclear-armed states in the former Soviet Union also exists. In such a scenario, terrorists or reb-

21 *Ibid.*, pp. 9-10.

els could take control of nuclear devices capable of reaching U.S. or allied territory. Fears of such scenarios are not idle. The President of the autonomous republic of Chechnia, General Jokhar Dudayev, threatened in 1991 to blow up Russian nuclear power stations, or to explode nuclear devices in Moscow. In view of the collapse of post-Soviet security structures, such warnings should be taken seriously.

To counter this problem, the Clinton Administration plans to become more involved in brokering peace agreements in the NIS. According to Ambassador Strobe Talbott, who is Clinton's Ambassador-at-Large for Russia and the NIS, the Administration "would consider any U.N. request for peacekeeping in this region under the same guidelines that it applies to other requests of this nature."²² This means that Clinton could consider sending U.S. troops into the former Soviet Union, possibly under non-U.S. command.²³ The Administration is also considering the possibility of joint U.S.-Russian or a unilateral Russian peacekeeping under the U.N. banner. The agreement on joint exercises and training for peacekeeping of American and Russian heavy infantry divisions signed in September should be considered in this light.²⁴ The overall projected U.N. involvement in the CIS, according to U.S. government estimates, may require up to 14,500 soldiers, and might cost over \$1.3 billion. Since the U.S. is responsible for one-third of the U.N. budget, the American contribution could be over \$375 million. The conflicts in which the U.N. could become involved include Tajikistan, Karabakh, Moldova, South Ossetia, and Abkhazia.

While the State Department is anxious to offer its good offices for arbitrating and policing regional disputes, many experts advocate caution. "The U.S. should not rush in offering its services," says RAND Corporation analyst Paul Henze. "If we step in, the sides will take the most irredentist positions, expecting us to put pressure on the other party. We should wait till the sides come to us and beg us to mediate."

Adding to the debate are suggestions for new security arrangements for Eurasia. Republican Senator Richard Lugar of Indiana,²⁵ for example, argues for including the emerging Eastern European democracies in NATO. Lugar and others suggest that NATO should be open for Russia to join, so long as it remains democratic and nonthreatening to its neighbors.

CREATING A NEW U.S. POLICY TOWARD EURASIA

The U.S. must adopt a comprehensive policy package aimed at assisting regional stabilization and supporting democratic reformers in all the former Soviet Union. Thus the Clinton Administration should:

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- 22 Questions for the Record by Senator Helms submitted to Ambassador-at-Large Talbott. Senate Foreign Relations Committee, September 7, 1993.
 - 23 Barton Gellman, "Wider UN Police Role Supported," *The Washington Post*, August 5, 1993, p. 1.
 - 24 Barton Gellman, "Brothers in Arms. Now GI Joe and Ivan to Train Together," *The Washington Post*, September 9, 1993, p. A1.
 - 25 Richard G. Lugar, "NATO: Out of Area or Out of Business, A Call for U.S. Leadership to Revive and Redefine the Alliance," Remarks delivered to the Open Forum of the U.S. State Department, August 2, 1993.

- X Exclude the possibility of U.S. troop involvement in U.N. peacemaking operations in Eurasia.** U.S. troops should not be sent to play a peacemaking role in the CIS under the command of U.N. officers. The widespread opposition to placing American soldiers under foreign command, plus the unworkability of such missions, makes a high-profile U.S. military involvement in Eurasia unadvisable. However, small contingents of CSCE observers, including Americans, could be stationed in the conflict zones if all the major parties agree. America already is mired in military crises from Somalia to Haiti, and objections are growing in Congress to the mounting costs and dangers of peacekeeping.
- X Prepare plans for capturing or destroying nuclear weapons that may fall into hostile hands in the former Soviet Union.** U.S. special forces and the intelligence services have to be ready to act if a warlord, a terrorist group, or an extremist political party attempts nuclear blackmail or an unauthorized launch of nuclear weapons. Russian communists and fascists or Muslim fundamentalists may already have sufficient technical skills and military capabilities to use nuclear weapons. So far, however, they do not control them. They could attempt to capture nuclear devices or power stations in order to gain a monetary or political advantage over their adversaries.
- X Start negotiations toward a multilateral security framework in Eastern Europe and Eurasia that will enhance the security of Russia and Ukraine.** Kiev feels threatened by Russia. Moscow's claims to the Black Sea Fleet, Sevastopol naval base, and the Crimean peninsula have exacerbated these fears of Russia. Washington, together with its allies, can alleviate these fears by enhancing multilateral security cooperation between Ukraine and her neighbors. Whether through the CSCE or any other regional security framework, the U.S. should offer its good offices to reduce tensions between Moscow and Kiev.
- X Clarify to the Russian leadership that the U.S. will not endorse the unilateral application of a Russian "Monroe Doctrine," or violation of the sovereignty of other NIS countries.** On July 15, Senate Minority Leader Robert Dole sent a letter to Secretary of State Warren Christopher strongly objecting to the indefinite presence of Russian military bases in the CIS. "Russia must support democracy at home and abroad," Dole wrote. If Russia attempts to "re-establish the Soviet Empire with a new common state ideology based on Russian traditions," as Ruslan Khasbulatov recently promised,²⁶ the U.S. should deny her any further aid. The Clinton Administration agrees, as Ambassador Talbott said, testifying in the Senate Foreign Relations Committee in September 1993:

...Russia should neither assert nor exercise any special role or prerogatives that would be inconsistent with the independence, sovereignty, and territorial integrity of any other state. We have made our position on this question clear in dialogue at all levels with Russia, as well as with the other Newly Independent States... If Russia conducts a policy in violation of CSCE

²⁶ "Khasbulatov on CIS Reintegration," *RFE-RL Daily Report*, September 14, 1993, p. 2. Khasbulatov also claimed to be the highest ranking CIS official, as he is the head of its Interparliamentary Assembly.

principles, the UN Charter, and international law, we would re-evaluate our assistance program for Russia.²⁷

This is an adequate assessment. The Clinton Administration should be held to its promise. The re-emergence of imperialism in Moscow will be highly detrimental for the future of economic and political freedom in Russia and her neighbors.

- X **Encourage democratic and market reforms in the NIS.** Technical assistance programs aimed at creating a professional class of market specialists should be expanded. Democracy training and institution building should be further implemented. While the process of democratic and market institution-building is lengthy and painful, millions of Russians, Ukrainians, Kazakhs and others have already started their own businesses and are eagerly learning market-oriented skills.

The West should expand its invaluable assistance in educating the next generation of NIS managers, businessmen, accountants, and lawyers, so that NIS integration into the global markets will be both speedy and smooth. Equally important is education of the Russian political class in the fundamentals of the democratic process, lawmaking, and participatory politics. So far, Western technical assistance programs have only scratched the surface. Technical assistance and educational programs have not focused enough on long-term objectives. They have been too general and not concentrated enough on developing specific technical and business skills.

- X **Facilitate the resolution of disputes between Russia and Ukraine, if requested.** The U.S. would prefer that the two Slavic giants worked out their own disputes. However, the relations between Moscow and Kiev currently are not smooth, and may deteriorate further. If requested by one of the parties, impartial U.S. mediation might aid greatly in resolving disagreements between Moscow and Kiev on such matters as transfer of Black Sea Fleet to Russia, the dismantling of strategic nuclear missiles, and the dispute over the Crimea.
- X **Support the sovereignty and territorial integrity of Moldova and urge a withdrawal of the Russian military forces from the Pridnestrovye region.** The self-styled Pridnestrovye republic carved out of Moldova violates Moldovan sovereignty and provides a haven for the worst Russian chauvinist and communist elements, including former KGB and military officers in opposition to Yeltsin. Paramilitary units from Pridnestrovye took part in attacks in Moscow on October 3-4, 1993. They also participated in the war against Eduard Shevardnadze in Abkhazia. The U.S. should urge President Yeltsin to begin dismantling the anti-reform communist bridgehead in Pridnestrovye. Events in Moscow, as well as the war in Abkhazia, have demonstrated that such communist strongholds may provide armed units for future strife and establish a precedent for border changes through force and not through negotiations. Doing this is in the interest of Yeltsin and his reform program.

27 Questions for the Record by Senator Helms, Senate Foreign Relations Committee, September 7, 1993.

- X Link aid to Russia to progress on Russian troop withdrawals from the Baltics.** The pullout of Russian troops from Latvia and Estonia was stopped in June 1993, despite CSCE agreement to the contrary. They should be resumed. The Baltic governments, while wishing to maintain good relations with Russia, want a complete troop withdrawal; the Russian government is stalling the pullout. Russian claims that the Baltics are of "geostrategic importance" should not be accepted or condoned by the U.S. At the same time, the U.S. should monitor charges of human rights abuses against ethnic Russians in the Baltics. Washington should try its best to appear as an objective outside mediator, avoiding the appearance of taking sides in ethnic disputes.
- X Support the role of the CSCE in settling the conflict between Azerbaijanis and Armenians over the enclave of Karabakh.** The CSCE has proven to be the most effective framework for the Karabakh conflict. The reason: it keeps Iran, a non-CSCE member, out of the region. However, the involvement of U.S. or U.N. peacekeeping troops should be avoided. The conflicts are too deep and would be unmanageable by outside forces such as the U.N. In a final settlement, control of heavy weapons should pass into the hands of the CSCE. The status of Karabakh should be resolved in one of three ways: 1) creating an Armenian autonomous enclave of Karabakh in Azerbaijan, 2) a confederation between Karabakh and Azerbaijan, or 3) transfer of Karabakh to Armenia. After an agreement on the final status of Karabakh, the return of the rest of captured Azerbaijani territory should begin.
- X Prevent escalation of the Christian-Muslim war in the Caucasus by maintaining a dialogue and fostering cooperation between all sides, especially with Russia and Turkey.** The U.S. should cooperate with its long-term ally Turkey, as well as Russia, to prevent their entanglement in a major military confrontation over Karabakh. Russia is a traditional ally of Armenia, while Turkey has close ties with the ethnically similar Azerbaijanis. Cooperative relations with both countries are important to the U.S. in the long term and can be fostered through the CSCE and other multilateral fora. Because of Armenian advances, Russia, Iran, and Turkey have strengthened their military presence in the region, which may lead to their involvement in local hostilities. A reasonable compromise could be an Armenian-Azerbaijani accord on Karabakh's status that is endorsed by Russia and Turkey and approved by the CSCE.
- X Support a CSCE role in settling ethnic disputes in Georgia and inside the Russian Federation.** While international efforts to preserve Georgian territorial integrity are necessary, Russia alone is capable of dealing with separatist movements and ethnic conflicts inside her territory. American involvement in these sensitive matters could provoke a defensive reaction from Moscow and give the hard-liners political ammunition to use against Yeltsin. While supporting Georgian sovereignty and territorial integrity, the U.S. has no significant national security interests at stake in Georgia. Traditional American cooperation with Georgian President Shevardnadze, while desirable, cannot justify U.S. military involvement in this conflict. However, Washington should not endorse forcible border changes in Georgia.

- X Propose an international peace conference on Tajikistan, without committing U.S. troops to U.N. peacekeeping operations there.** The U.S. has an interest in preventing the destabilization of Central Asia. Moreover, Washington should oppose the spread of Islamic fundamentalism in the region. This is why the U.S. should support the Russian diplomatic initiative to reach a negotiated settlement in Tajikistan. Russia, Afghanistan, Uzbekistan, and representatives of the Tajik opposition should take part in an international peace conference on Tajikistan. However, the U.S. should neither send in its own troops nor ask for U.N. troops to be sent into the area for purposes of peacekeeping. There is now, in fact, no peace to keep. It must be created by careful negotiations between all parties in the region. Russia, however, should persuade the Dushanbe government that if it does not negotiate, Russian troops will be pulled out. A long-term commitment of Russian troops to an open-ended bloody conflict in faraway Central Asia might weaken the Yeltsin administration, cause an unsupportable level of casualties, and become a sequel to the Afghan fiasco for the Russian military.
- X Provide economic aid and technical assistance to the private sector, not to government structures, in Russia.** Leading reformers in Moscow have complained that Western assistance has been squandered, embezzled, or even utilized to undermine the Yeltsin regime. They have asked that U.S. and other Western assistance instead be provided as loans to private Russian banks. Guided by their own economic interests, Russian private banks could loan money to Russian entrepreneurs, not to the inefficient, state-owned, industrial enterprises. Moreover, private enterprises should be allowed to receive Western loans in a competitive bidding process. Western donors, such as the International Monetary Fund, World Bank, and the G-7 governments, should also make a greater effort to prevent fraud and abuse. There should be more frequent audits by Western donors and their representatives and improved accounting procedures. Such an aid strategy will maximize the effectiveness of Western assistance and will contribute to the success of economic reform.
- X Propose the negotiation of a free trade treaty with Russia.** Trade, not aid, is the key to solving Russia's economic problems. With its abundant mineral resources and highly skilled work force, Russia could increase its trade volume with the U.S. from a current \$6 billion to \$15 billion in three years. A free trade treaty could also double the size of Russian exports. The U.S. could gain nearly 100,000 new export jobs for every one percent of growth in the Russian gross national product.
- X Press for economic and political reform in Ukraine.** Only through economic growth can genuine independence and prosperity be reached in Ukraine. The foreign policy crisis between Ukraine and Russia is exacerbated by the economic crisis in Ukraine. The cause of this crisis is too little economic reform. Ukrainian President Kravchuk, a former secretary for ideological affairs of the Ukrainian Communist Party, has difficulty adopting reforms as wholeheartedly as Boris Yeltsin. He has failed to retain economic reformers in his cabinet, and in September, fired moderate Prime Minister Leonid Kuchma. Many more Ukrainian specialists should be educated, both at home and in the West, in the ways of democracy and the market. Ukrainians need to learn how to build political parties, orga-

nize a democratic legislature, and represent constituent interests in that legislature. Ukrainian specialists and student should be invited to Western schools and firms for studies and internships in Western economic, managerial, and political techniques.

CONCLUSION

The national interest of the U.S. requires the stabilization of Eurasia. Chaos in Russia and the CIS could endanger control over the massive nuclear arsenals left over from the Cold War, sweep away pro-reform governments, and lead to the establishment of nationalist, anti-Western regimes.

The West, in fact, is facing its greatest challenge since the beginning of the Cold War. To deal with the Eurasian crises, the U.S. and its allies must devise a policy that differentiates between regions and crises according to Western security and geopolitical interests. New frameworks and associations, such as a U.S.-Russia free trade pact, must be created, and existing ones, such as the CSCE, should be expanded to include emerging Eurasian democracies, among them Russia and Ukraine. If successful, this approach could lead to a gradual reduction in violence and to the creation of a more prosperous and peaceful Eurasia. Such an achievement would surely be a great triumph for liberty and the free markets. But if the West fails, decades of tyranny and a renewed arms race may ensue over the wide expanses of Eurasia.

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