

**"BACK IN THE USSR"**

**Russia's Intervention in the Internal Affairs  
Of the Former Soviet Republics and the  
Implications for United States Policy Toward Russia**

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Views expressed by individuals associated with the Project represent their own professional judgements and are not offered on behalf of any governments or other institutions. The authors would welcome comments.

## **ETHNIC CONFLICT PROJECT**

The Ethnic Conflict Project is the successor to the Strengthening Democratic Institutions Project, which was established at Harvard's Kennedy School of Government in 1990 to catalyze support for the political and economic transformations taking place in Russia and the other republics of the former Soviet Union. Until his confirmation as Assistant Secretary of Defense for Policy Planning, this Project was directed by Professor Graham T. Allison. Under his direction, ethnic conflict in the former Soviet Union became a major research strand.

The ethnic conflict strand is now being continued, with the assistance of a grant from the Carnegie Corporation of New York, as an independent project. The aim of the Ethnic Conflict Project is to analyze the phenomenon of ethnic conflict within the former Soviet Union and to determine the impact of these conflicts on the reform process, as well as their implications for Western assistance and US foreign policy.

The Project also provides materials for Western policymakers confronting the issue, including a series of reports providing a comprehensive overview of ethnic conflicts in the former Soviet Union.

Participants in the Project include a network of faculty, experts and researchers drawn from within and outside Harvard university. Professor Ernest May is the Faculty Chairman, Fiona Hill is the Project Director, Pamela Jewett is the Research Associate and Sergei Grigoriev is Project Associate.

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## TABLE OF CONTENTS

SECTION I	INTRODUCTION	1
	Russian Strategic Objectives in the Region	
SECTION II	STATED RUSSIAN POLICY TOWARD THE REPUBLICS OF THE FORMER SOVIET UNION	4
SECTION III	RUSSIAN INTERVENTION IN THE REPUBLICS OF THE FORMER SOVIET UNION	9
	Armenia and Azerbaijan	10
	The Baltic States	18
	Estonia	18
	Latvia	20
	Lithuania	20
	Belarus	23
	Central Asia	29
	Kazakhstan and Uzbekistan	30
	Kazakhstan, Uzbekistan and the Ruble Zone	31
	Kyrgyzstan	39
	Turkmenistan	39
	Tajikistan	40
	Georgia	45
	Moldova	61
	Ukraine	66
SECTION IV	IMPLICATIONS FOR UNITED STATES FOREIGN POLICY TOWARD RUSSIA	86
SECTION V	RECOMMENDATIONS FOR UNITED STATES POLICY TOWARD RUSSIA	88

## SECTION I

### INTRODUCTION

As the United States has watched the wave of violent conflicts evolve and intensify in the republics of the former Soviet Union, the primary concern has been that the region could explode into another Balkan-like conflagration. The presence of nuclear weapons in four former Soviet republics has further complicated this situation.<sup>1</sup> The US and other Western powers clearly recognize the dangers associated with instability in the region. They also realize that there is no easy solution to the problem.

Since the end of the Cold War, the United States and its allies, often under the aegis of the United Nations, have sponsored numerous humanitarian, diplomatic and military initiatives to resolve intra-national conflicts on several continents. In most of these interventions -- from Cambodia to Somalia to the former Yugoslavia -- they have been frustrated in their efforts and have as yet failed to achieve their stated goals: an end to civil conflict and the restoration of political and economic stability in these countries. In the former Yugoslavia, in particular, the European Community and the United States have shown themselves time and again to be utterly powerless to stop the slaughter. The West's impotence in the Balkans is even more striking since, unlike Cambodia and Somalia, the conflict is in Europe's backyard.

Given these recent lessons, attempting to resolve intra-national conflicts in the complex multi-ethnic mosaic of the former Soviet Union can hold no appeal for the United States or other Western powers. Enter Russia with an interesting proposition. Russia has requested that the international community sanction and finance its peacekeeping activities in the former republics of the Soviet Union. Russian President Boris Yeltsin first officially articulated the proposal in an address to a forum of the Civic Union in Moscow in February 1993:

"I believe the time has come for distinguished international organizations, including the UN, to grant Russia special powers as a guarantor of peace and stability in the former regions of the USSR."

Russian Foreign Minister Andrei Kozyrev later restated the demand for international recognition of Russia's peacekeeping efforts at the United Nations in September 1993. He declared that Moscow needed financial and material help from the international community to implement a

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<sup>1</sup> These four states are the Russian Federation, Belarus, Ukraine and Kazakhstan.

Russian peacekeeping "mandate" in the former Soviet Union.

This Russian proposal may initially appear to be reasonable and even generous. In fact, Russian leaders seem to suggest that they will be doing the West a favor by assuming responsibility for restoring order in what Moscow refers to as its "Near Abroad," and consequently its particular problem. Russia contrasts the West's record of failure in resolving conflicts with what it claims is a record of success in the former Soviet republics. Russia's leaders point out that they have been responsible for preserving order and settling conflicts in the region for hundreds of years. And since the collapse of the Soviet Union, they have been using this experience to work constructively towards restoring peace in the "Near Abroad."

Despite the obvious appeal of the Russian offer to assume the role of peacekeeper, there is good reason to doubt that Moscow can be trusted to act as an honest broker in the region. An analysis of the conflicts in the republics of the former Soviet Union since 1992, reveals a disturbing pattern. In each of the conflicts, there is evidence to suggest that Russia has intervened in such a way as to promote their escalation and/or continuation instead of their cessation. This report examines the conflicts and the general lines of Russia's policy toward the former republics of the Soviet Union. It then considers the implications of Russia's policy for the United States.

Specifically, after outlining Russia's strategic objectives in the former Soviet Union, the report will suggest that, since the summer of 1992, Moscow has telegraphed its intention to pursue these strategic objectives. The report will then propose that, in a manner that would seem consistent with stated Russian policy, the sovereignty of each of the republics of the former Soviet Union has been compromised, forcing them into an increasingly dependent relationship with Moscow. It will then comment on the need for United States decision-makers to review the evidence of Russian activity when formulating policy towards Russia. The report will conclude with a series of policy recommendations for the United States.

### *Russia's Strategic Objectives in the Region*

It should be stated at the outset that Russian involvement in conflicts in the republics of the former Soviet Union is not surprising. Historically, Russia has defended its perceived geostrategic objectives in the region and consistently sought to safeguard them by whatever means it has at its disposal. In the past -- from Peter the Great to Stalin -- the annexation of territory or the creation of satellite states have been the preferred options. Russia's geostrategic objectives in the region have also remained essentially constant throughout its modern history, no matter what type of regime or ruler is in power.

### *Introduction*

Russia's current objectives, which closely parallel its historic geostrategic objectives, include:

- guaranteeing its access to warm water ports in the Black and Baltic Seas;
- maintaining a buffer zone between Russia and its traditional rivals Turkey, Iran and China to the south, and the European powers to the west;
- preserving Russian hegemony in the region and preventing other regional powers from emerging;
- retaining control over raw materials in the former republics, including oil, gas and minerals;
- ensuring access to industrial facilities in former republics;
- retaining control over the defense-industrial complex in the former republics, including nuclear power plants and nuclear hardware;
- guaranteeing markets for its products.

The collapse of the Soviet Union has made it enormously difficult, if not impossible, for Russia to protect all of these objectives. Nonetheless, given Russia's history, one would still expect its leaders to do what they could to safeguard them -- primarily through keeping the former Soviet republics in Moscow's political and economic orbit. Judging by its actions, Russia appears to be trying to recreate the former economic and military union it once dominated.

## SECTION II

### STATED RUSSIAN POLICY TOWARD THE REPUBLICS OF THE FORMER SOVIET UNION

Since the summer of 1992, there have been numerous public statements at all levels of the Russian government to suggest that Russia's intervention in the republics of the former Soviet Union is part of a general policy to further Russia's strategic objectives. The statements have been made by deputies of the Russian parliament, presidential advisors, the military elite, Russian Foreign Minister Andrei Kozyrev and Russian President Boris Yeltsin himself. Official Russian foreign policy documents seem to support the fact that the statements are articulations of a policy formulated in Moscow. Furthermore, the new Russian Military Doctrine published in November 1993 confirms all of these prior statements and documents giving the Russian military official sanction to act on this policy. This section will review some of the statements and documents.

In March 1992, Fyodor Shelov-Kovedyaev was appointed by the Russian government to manage Russian relations with former Soviet republics. During the summer of 1992, Shelov-Kovedyaev produced a detailed report *"Russia in the New Abroad: Strategy and Tactics for Safeguarding National Interests."* This comprehensive report clearly argued for an active policy of promoting the integration of the republics through the mechanism of the Commonwealth of Independent States. A second report, *"Strategy and Tactics of Russian Foreign Policy in the New Abroad,"* was also produced but not published. In this report, Shelov-Kovedyaev argued that Russia should seek international recognition as a "leader [in terms] of stability and military security on the entire territory of the former USSR," and that it should be acknowledged "as having quite special interests in the region." Shelov-Kovedyaev was confident that, "Russia will become 'the recognized leader' in the near abroad and will attract the sympathy of the developed countries through its capacity to deal with its domestic problems, for the most part, independently."<sup>2</sup>

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<sup>2</sup> See John Lough, "The Place of the 'Near Abroad' in Russian Foreign Policy, *RFE/RL Research Report*, Vol. 2, No. 11, March 12, 1993, pp. 21-29; and John Lough, "Defining Russia's Relations with Neighboring States," *RFE/RL Research Report*, Vol. 2, No. 20, May 14, 1993, pp. 53-59. In addition, in a recent Op-Ed on the new Russian Military Doctrine, James Sherr, a lecturer at Oxford University, reports that in December 1992 the Russian Foreign Ministry produced a policy document arguing that Russia must be the "leader of stability and security on the entire territory of the USSR." And, that it should pursue a "divide and influence policy," using force where necessary "to achieve firm good neighborliness" on the part of the other former Soviet republics (*Wall Street Journal*, 12-17-93). This document would seem to be both in line with Shelov-Kovedyaev's March report and to take the policy a stage further in advocating force.

Russian leaders began to echo Shelov-Kovedyaev. Addressing the leaders of the former republics of the former Soviet Union in June 1992, Sergei Stankevich, Russia's state councillor for political affairs wrote in *Rossiskaya Gazeta*:

"Your excellencies ... Henceforth, you will not be dealing now with the ruins of an empire but a Power. The Russian Power has a thousand-year history, legitimate interests and serious traditions of protecting these interests."

Statements by President Yeltsin have been in line with Shelov-Kovedyaev's recommendations and Stankevich's assertion of Russian interests. On February 28, 1993, for example, Yeltsin summarized Russia's policy preferences in an address to the forum of the *Civic Union*, then the leading political opposition movement to the Russian government:

"We all favor integration within the framework of the Commonwealth [of Independent States]. Our countries, which until recently constituted one country, perceive especially strongly today how great their mutual interdependence is. It is simply impossible to overlook this in policy-making... Consistently and on many occasions, Russia has spoken in favor of integration within the framework of the commonwealth. We are prepared to engage in open-type confederation relations in certain spheres right now -- with those states that agree to this. *I am sure that their number will grow as time goes on* (emphasis added)."

Yeltsin also asserted that Russia had a unilateral responsibility to serve as a peacekeeper in the region:

"Stopping all armed conflicts on the territory of the former USSR is Russia's vital interest. The world community sees more and more clearly Russia's special responsibility in this difficult undertaking."

Russian Foreign Minister Andrei Kozyrev underscored the key points of Yeltsin's address in his speech before the United Nations General Assembly on September 28, 1993, in an interview with *Izvestiya* and in a series of "Opinion Editorials" in *Moscow News* and *The Washington Post*.

At the United Nations, Foreign Minister Kozyrev announced openly that Russia did not



intend to relinquish its influence in other republics. He asserted that Russia had a "special role and influence over the former Soviet republics, including the Muslim countries in the south" and that "Russia realizes that no international organization or group of states can replace our peacekeeping efforts in this specific post-Soviet space."

In his interview with *Izvestiya* on October 8, 1993, Kozyrev went further, advocating the creation of "effective [Russian] peacekeeping forces" to maintain Russia's prestige and enable it to participate in the international community's peacekeeping efforts. Significantly, the Russian Foreign Minister then stressed the importance of safeguarding Russian strategic interests in the former Soviet Union through peacekeeping activities. Kozyrev said that if Russia did not intervene in conflicts in the 'Near Abroad,' it would be in danger of "losing geographical positions that took centuries to conquer." If Russia did not take effective action "neighbors in Asia" would fill the vacuum, "force Russia out of the region and restrict its influence."

In his *Washington Post* op-ed of October 10, 1993, Kozyrev stated:

"Protection of legitimate rights of the millions of Russian-speaking minorities in the former Soviet Republics, the economic reintegration of the republics and peace-making activities in conflict areas: All of these are an *objective necessity*. Just as a relapse into imperial politics would lead to a repetition of the Yugoslavia scenario in the former Soviet Union, so would renunciation by Russia of its proper role."

In *Moscow News* on October 22, Kozyrev wrote that Russia would pursue its interests, "not through confrontation, which the remnants of old structures in our country and in the West are dreaming about, but through cooperation as it is enacted by Western allies between themselves." But he warned that "it would be a mistake... [to ignore] the special responsibility, which rests with Russia, for protecting the rights of the Russian-speaking minority in the former Soviet republics, *their voluntary reintegration*, and peace-keeping missions in the conflict zones (emphasis added)." While visiting the United Kingdom at the end of October, Kozyrev repeated Russia's request for aid to pay for the "difficult and expensive peacekeeping operations to prevent the Soviet Union from drifting into a Yugoslavia scenario."

Complementing these foreign policy statements is the new Russian Military Doctrine, a key policy document drawn up by the Russian Ministry of Defense and general staff and approved by President Yeltsin on November 1, 1993. It establishes, for the first time, the principles and parameters for the operation of the Russian armed forces in the post-Soviet world. The former

Soviet Union is identified as the arena for Russian military concentration and activity.

The doctrine states that the "main source of military danger to Russia is no longer any single nation or alliance, but *small regional conflicts* ... [and] ... As such Russia will focus what resources it has on rapid-deployment forces rather than huge land armies, which it can no longer afford (emphasis added)."

It also enumerates the following as being sources of external threat which Russia will act upon:

- territorial claims on Russia and its allies;
- current and potential hotbeds of local wars and armed conflicts in the vicinity of Russian borders;
- possible utilization of nuclear and other weapons of mass destruction;
- the suppression of the rights, freedoms and legitimate interests of Russian-speaking citizens in foreign states;
- attacks on Russian armed forces and military facilities in foreign countries.

In response to these perceived threats the new military doctrine goes on to:

- sanction the use of troops within Russia's borders to suppress unrest; beyond Russia's borders to protect national interests; and "in cooperation with other former republics" to quell conflicts. For the last two purposes, Russian troops may continue to be based abroad.
- permit Russian troops to repel aggression and launch an offensive across its borders.
- abolish its "no first use" policy on nuclear weapons, replacing it with a pledge to not use them against states without nuclear weapons that have signed the Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty -- unless they are operating "in an alliance" with nuclear states.

In stating openly that Russia will be directly involved in regional conflicts, the Military Doctrine gives public sanction to the existing reality -- Russia is already embroiled in small regional conflicts. The doctrine also couches this in such a way as to deflect Western attention. It is designed to reassure the West that the Russian army is no longer a threat to European security as it will now be focused and deployed regionally. The new doctrine, however, gives no reassurance to Russia's regional neighbors.

In fact, the doctrine includes a number of very specific threats to former Soviet republics. In sanctioning the use of Russian troops across borders, it facilitates Russian military action in republics such as Georgia, Moldova, Azerbaijan and Tajikistan. In granting permission to the Russian armed forces to launch an offensive across borders to repel aggression, it raises the possibility of sorties into Afghanistan from Tajikistan. And, in only pledging not to use nuclear weapons first against non-nuclear states that have signed the Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty, it leaves open the possibility of a strike against Ukraine which is a nuclear state.

## **SECTION III**

### **RUSSIAN INTERVENTION IN THE REPUBLICS OF THE FORMER SOVIET UNION**

This section outlines how Russian policy toward the former Soviet Union has translated into action in each of the republics of the former Soviet Union since 1992. As the United States and its Western allies have all recognized the independence of the former Soviet republics, however, Russian intervention in the internal affairs of its neighbors must seem "reasonable" to the world community to avoid protest. Russia has thus offered the four following explanations for its interference. These address Western concerns in the region and suggest Russian altruism rather than imperial design:

- 1) It is acting to protect human or minority rights;
- 2) It is acting to prevent a Balkan-like conflagration;
- 3) It is acting to prevent an upsurge of Islamic fundamentalism;
- 4) It is acting to prevent the proliferation of nuclear weapons.

On one or another of these grounds, Russia has exerted political and economic pressure on all the republics that initially refused to join the Commonwealth of Independent States (CIS). As a result Azerbaijan, Georgia and Moldova have come into the CIS and all of the other republics have made significant concessions to Moscow.

## **Armenia and Azerbaijan**

Moscow has had no need to exert pressure on Armenia, as the republic has little option but to ally itself closely with Russia. It is dependent upon Russia for raw materials, energy and food supplies, and defense against historic enemies on its borders such as Azerbaijan and Turkey. Armenia has signed all of the CIS economic and military accords, permitted Russian troops to be stationed on its territory and relinquished all claims to former Soviet assets in Russia's favor. With Armenia firmly in its camp, Russia has concentrated its efforts on Armenia's neighbor and rival Azerbaijan.

Moscow's strategic objectives in this region of the Caucasus now include: keeping Azerbaijan and its Caspian Sea oil fields in the Russian sphere of influence and limiting Turkey's and Iran's influence in the Caucasus. Since the disintegration of the Soviet Union, Moscow has given covert support to the ethnic Armenian majority in the Nagorno-Karabakh oblast of Azerbaijan to enable the territory to secede;<sup>3</sup> and has given assistance to a pragmatic pro-Moscow insurgent who toppled an openly anti-Russian Azeri government. These actions have served to head off threats to Russia's strategic objectives and bring Azerbaijan firmly into the Commonwealth of Independent States.

The pattern of Russian involvement in the conflict over Nagorno-Karabakh has been especially clear since the negotiation of the CIS Mutual Security Pact on May 16, 1992. Unlike Armenia, Azerbaijan refused to sign the Pact which would enable Russian forces to be stationed on its soil. On May 17, one day after the signing of the pact, Karabakh forces launched a successful attack outside the borders of the disputed oblast on the Azeri town of Lachin. This attack resulted in the creation of a land bridge between Armenia and Nagorno-Karabakh and their *de facto* unification. On May 21, 1992 Russia signed a supplementary agreement with Armenia ensuring the continued stationing of the Russian 7th Army in the republic and the patrolling of Armenian borders by Russian troops.

The timing of the Karabakh attack on Azeri territory and Russia's consolidation of its ties

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<sup>3</sup> The recent round of conflict over the Nagorno-Karabakh oblast of Azerbaijan broke out in 1988, when the ethnic Armenian majority demanded that the oblast be transferred to Armenia's jurisdiction. The Presidium of the Supreme Soviet of the USSR ruled in July 1988 that it should remain with Azerbaijan. Nagorno-Karabakh declared itself to be independent from Azerbaijan unilaterally in September 1991.

with Armenia surely can not be merely coincidental. Events surrounding the 1993 coup in Azerbaijan clearly indicate that Russia was involved, and would suggest that nothing is coincidental in the Caucasus.

On June 7, 1992, Abulfaz Elchibey the leader of the nationalist Popular Front of Azerbaijan was elected president on a mandate of turning the tide in the war with Armenia. Elchibey pledged that Nagorno-Karabakh would remain with Azerbaijan and that the republic would seek closer links with Turkey, not with Russia. The new president also made it clear that Azerbaijan would not become a member of the Commonwealth of Independent States, and demanded that all Russian troops withdraw from the republic. On October 7, 1992 the Azerbaijani parliament went further and overwhelmingly opposed the ratification of the CIS agreements, which had been provisionally signed by former President Ayaz Mutalibov in December 1991.

By June 1993, the Elchibey government had collapsed after eight months of unsuccessful counter-offensives against the Karabakh Armenians and the loss of considerable Azerbaijani territory. The collapse was precipitated by a coup led by renegade Azeri military commander Surat Guseinov, with Russian material, if not direct military support.

Guseinov had fostered considerable contacts in Moscow during the Soviet period and after the collapse of the USSR was able to build up his own private army. He also assisted the Azerbaijani government in arms procurements resulting in his appointment as a militia commander. Guseinov had commanded operations in Nagorno-Karabakh since July 1992 and initially enjoyed a series of successes against Armenian forces until the Azerbaijani government refused to join the CIS. In February 1993, having been routed from Nagorno-Karabakh, Guseinov was ordered to resign from his command by the Azerbaijani government. Guseinov refused to step down or disband his forces and retreated to his home base in Gyandzha in Azerbaijan, which was also the base of the 104th Russian Airborne Division. He acquired the former Soviet garrison replete with considerable weaponry when the Russian troops unexpectedly withdrew from Gyandzha on May 24, 1993. He also held meetings with opponents of the Elchibey government. By June 1993, after a failed attempt by government troops to disarm him, he had seized control of Gyandzha and was advocating the return to power of Azerbaijan's former Brezhnev-era KGB and Communist Party chief -- Geidar Aliyev -- a member of the old elite with long experience in dealing with Moscow.

The internal chaos in Azerbaijan was compounded by a perfectly-timed Armenian attack on June 12 on the Azeri city of Agdam beyond the borders of Nagorno-Karabakh. The coup, combined with military defeat at the hands of the Karabakh Armenians, resulted in the resignation of leading members of the Azerbaijani parliament and government, and the return of Geidar Aliyev

to Baku. On June 14, with the Elchibey regime removed, the Karabakh Armenians suggested that a peace settlement brokered by the CSCE might now be possible.

On June 16, 1993 Aliyev was elected chairman of the parliament pending new presidential elections. He was hailed as the one man who could turn Azerbaijan's fortunes around and achieve a settlement with Armenia. Surat Guseinov was appointed as the new Azerbaijani prime minister and head of the defense, security and interior ministries to spearhead the war effort.<sup>4</sup>

In mid-August 1993, an explanation for Russian assistance in the coup was offered by President Elchibey's former Secretary of State, Ali Kerimov. In an interview with *The Washington Times*, Kerimov suggested that the coup in Baku had occurred as a direct result of President Elchibey's refusal to accept Moscow's demands that Russian forces be returned to Azerbaijan under the guise of an international peacekeeping force, (*The Washington Times*, 8-12-93). Kerimov asserted that before the June coup, Armenia and Azerbaijan had been on the verge of signing an agreement for the resolution of the conflict over Nagorno-Karabakh. The basis for the agreement was a plan put forward by Russia, the US and Turkey in early May 1993 which involved the withdrawal of the Karabakh forces from Azeri territory. The trilateral Russian-US-Turkish initiative had in fact come at the suggestion of President Yeltsin as part of an ongoing peace process under the aegis of the CSCE. Azerbaijan announced a unilateral cease-fire on May 24 as a goodwill gesture to support the initiative and on May 25, in a meeting with President Yeltsin, Armenian President Levon Ter-Petrossian indicated his support of the plan. On May 27, Russia, the US and Turkey declared that they had secured a settlement between the two countries.

The agreement fell apart when Karabakh Armenians refused to sign on to the trilateral agreement that was brokered in part by Turkey, thus discounting Turkey as a potential peacemaker in the region. It was then completely shelved when the Elchibey government was ousted in Azerbaijan. Kerimov stated that Russia had precipitated the collapse of the agreement by demanding the exclusive introduction of Russian troops into Azerbaijan as peacekeepers under the plan. Moscow assured Azerbaijan that if this was accepted, the Russian forces would take it upon themselves to remove the Karabakh Armenians from Azeri territory. Given the fact that Azerbaijan had only just secured the withdrawal of the last Russian troops from its territory, Elchibey refused to accept this proposal. Hence, Kerimov suggested, Russian support for Guseinov's coup and

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<sup>4</sup> In a recent article in *Foreign Policy*, Thomas Goltz, a free-lance American reporter in the Caucasus, suggests that Russian support for Guseinov was quite overt and clearly directed towards bringing Aliyev back to power. See Thomas Goltz, "Letter from Eurasia: The Hidden Russian Hand," *Foreign Policy*, Number 92 (Fall 1993) pp.92-116.

ultimately for Aliyev's restoration to power.

The fact that the Karabakh Armenians refused to participate in the agreement in May and then suggested on June 14 -- after the fall of Elchibey's government and simultaneous with Aliyev's return to Azerbaijan -- that a brokered peace settlement might be possible, supports Kerimov's assertion. The timing of these events suggests that the Elchibey government's refusal to acquiesce to Moscow's wishes, not Turkey, was the obstacle to Karabakh's acceptance of the trilateral initiative. It appears that, in addition to giving assistance to insurgents, Russia deliberately undermined an international peace initiative which it professed to co-sponsor to further its own objectives.

A further explanation for the timing of the June coup can also be posited, given Russia's strategic objectives. On July 2, 1993, Elchibey had been due to fly to London to sign a contract with eight leading western oil firms for exploitation rights to three Azerbaijani oil fields in the Caspian Sea. This contract was considered crucial to the republic's economic recovery. The aim of the meeting was also to agree on the route of a proposed pipeline to transport the oil. Three routes had been suggested: via Georgia to the Black Sea port of Poti; via an existing Soviet pipeline through the North Caucasus and Grozny in Chechnya to the Russian Black Sea port of Novorossisk; and a loop through Iran and Nakhichevan to Turkey and the Mediterranean. The Elchibey government and the oil companies had made their preference for the third route clear. Azerbaijan and Turkey concluded a deal on March 9, 1993 to begin the construction.

The signing of the contract with the consortium was thwarted by Elchibey's ouster in June. Aliyev suspended the conclusion of the contract. The new regime proposed the review of its provisions. The Russian government expressed its preference that the pipeline terminate in Novorossisk on Russia's Black Sea coast rather than in Turkey. This issue has remained a tricky one for Azerbaijan.

In early August 1993, Aliyev announced that he intended to conclude the contract with the western oil consortium in late September. After the announcement, Karabakh Armenians seized swathes of Azeri territory and pushed towards the Iranian border. On August 22, the Secret Army for the Liberation of Armenia (ASALA), a terrorist organization based in Beirut, made it clear that it would disrupt the construction of any pipeline across Azerbaijan and Armenia to Turkey and threatened the eight western oil companies involved in the deal with Azerbaijan.

On September 17, 1993 after a visit to Baku by company experts, it was announced that Russia's Lukoil company would join the international consortium in the exploitation of the three offshore oil fields. The agreement with the consortium was eventually initialled by representatives



of the Azerbaijani government on November 1, but the issue of the route of the pipeline has been left open for future negotiation.

His predilection for Moscow notwithstanding, Geidar Aliyev has been forced to forge closer links with Russia by Armenian military pressure. However, he has also attempted to preserve a degree of Azerbaijani independence through the pursuit of closer political ties with Turkey and Iran. These pursuits have been accompanied by an escalation in the war, which has served to remind Azerbaijan that it is Russia who holds the most influence with Armenia and Nagorno-Karabakh.

In the summer, there were a number of high-level visits to Baku by Turkish and Iranian officials who condemned Armenian attacks, offered mediation in the conflict and discussed possible bilateral security treaties. Both countries mobilized troops on their respective borders with Armenia and Azerbaijan in response to the escalation in the war, and the Iranian government set up a series of refugee camps to receive up to 100,000 Azeris displaced by the fighting. Approximately 1,500 Afghan mercenaries from *mujaheddin* camps in Iran were also reported to have been recruited by the Azerbaijani government to engage the Armenians.

In August 1993, Karabakh forces launched a new series of offensives against Azeri territory resulting in the seizure of territory close to the border with Iran. By August 19, an area around the town of Dzhebrail with a population of 200,000 was under direct threat of Armenian capture. On August 20, Boris Kolokolov, Russian Deputy Minister of Foreign Affairs, arrived in Baku to ascertain Azerbaijan's position regarding entry into the CIS. After further Armenian incursions, on September 5, 1993 Geidar Aliyev, flew to Moscow with a mandate from the Azerbaijani parliament for the adoption of a decision to join the CIS. On September 6, the Azerbaijani border village of Goradiz was seized by Karabakh forces.

Aliyev's statements in Moscow and his courting of Russia are suggestive of the pressures on both him and his predecessor. At the end of a two-day visit he stressed that immediate peacetalks mediated by Russia were the only solution to the escalation of the war with Armenia, and that Azerbaijan would apply for membership of the CIS, bringing to an end the "self-imposed" isolation of the Elchibey government from that body.

Aliyev even went so far as to suggest that, in light of Armenian advances towards the border with Iran, Moscow should deploy Russian troops to secure the entire line of the Azerbaijani-Iranian and Azerbaijani-Armenian borders. He stated that Moscow should also station Russian military bases in Azerbaijan which could be directly financed by the Azerbaijani government to further ensure Azerbaijan's security.

This last Azeri proposal is an echo of the Russian proposition to President Elchibey in June

1993 and would seem to support Ali Kerimov's interpretation of the circumstances surrounding Elchibey's ouster. Indeed, *Moscow News* commented on September 10 with regard to Aliyev's visit that "Geidar Aliyev's visit to Moscow has shown that, just as five years ago, everything connected with the Karabakh issue depends on the Kremlin."

On September 20, the Azerbaijani parliament voted 31 to 13, with 1 abstention, to rejoin the CIS. Simultaneous with the announcement of the results of the vote, the Azerbaijani government stressed that entry into the CIS would not impinge on Azerbaijan's sovereignty, and that onerous conditions imposed by the body would be resisted.

By the fall of 1993, Karabakh forces had established control over the southwestern portion of Azerbaijan, a state of emergency had been declared in the republic and a spill-over of the conflict across international borders seemed increasingly likely. The Karabakh Armenians' territorial gains exceeded all reasonable expectations, and frequent Azerbaijani complaints about Russian military support to the Karabakh Armenians would seem justified. Indeed, in August, the Russian Ambassador to Azerbaijan did not deny that 40 Russian tanks manned by Russian personnel were taking part in Armenian offensives. He simply expressed his regret and stressed that the Russian government could take no responsibility for the actions of "mercenaries."<sup>5</sup>

Azerbaijan's decision to join the CIS, however, now seems likely to have an appreciable impact on the course of the war with Armenia. The Karabakh Armenians have been perceived by Russia -- as well as by the UN, the US and Armenians in the Armenian republic proper -- to have overstepped their bounds and become a liability. Recent incidents have shown that they are now beyond the control of both Yerevan and Moscow, and their activities on the Iranian border have threatened the internationalization of the dispute and direct Iranian involvement. Russia will clearly not tolerate the latter.

On November 20, the entourage of the Russian envoy to Nagorno-Karabakh, Vladimir Kazimirov, came under fire in northern Azerbaijan ostensibly from Karabakh Armenian forces. On November 22, 1993, the *Boston Globe* reported that approximately 200 Russian army trainers and soldiers had arrived in northern Azerbaijan to train the Azeri military, presumably for counter-attacks against the Armenians, and undoubtedly with the full knowledge and sanction of Moscow. The forces have been deployed around the former Soviet army base at Gyandzha, which had been

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<sup>5</sup> Thomas Goltz provides evidence in his *Foreign Policy* article to suggest that Russian troops are anything but mercenaries and have been involved throughout to push the conflict beyond "a point of no return," (Goltz, p.101.).

used to launch the coup by Surat Guseinov and still serves as his primary base.<sup>6</sup> On November 22, Russian Foreign Minister Andrei Kozyrev threatened Armenia with "something other than persuasion" if it does not cut off support for the Karabakh forces (*Financial Times*, 11-23-93). He stated that the activities of Karabakh had now "reached a limit beyond which ... lies direct harm to Russia's national and state interests." This was the first direct threat of retaliation against Armenia by the Russian government in the history of the conflict. With regard to the attack on the Russian envoy on November 20, Kozyrev warned that Russia might "take the most serious measures" in response to this "gross violation," (*Boston Globe*, 11-23-93).

On December 1, 1993, Rakman Mustafa-zadeh of the Azerbaijani presidential press service stated that Baku recognized the status of Russia as a great power with special interests in the Transcaucasian region. He went on to acknowledge that Moscow can and must play a more active part in resolving the Armenian-Azerbaijani conflict, and observed that Armenia was the obstruction to the "constructive interaction" of Russia and Azerbaijan in resolving the crisis, (*Interfax*, 12-1-93).

In sending Russian troops to assist Azerbaijan, instead of stepping up the international peace initiative -- as might be expected under such circumstances -- Russia has thrown its commitment to the cessation of the conflict over Nagorno-Karabakh into question. With Azerbaijan now receiving Russian support, it would appear that Moscow prefers the state of war to continue and is opposed to the total victory of one side over the other. The capitulation of Azerbaijan to the Karabakh Armenians, or the involvement of outside forces in the guise of Turkey or Iran, would take the situation out of Moscow's control. Russia's intervention on the side of Azerbaijan, having formerly supported the Armenians, demonstrates that Moscow holds the balance in the conflict. Any resolution of the conflict is now likely to be on Moscow's initiative, and on Moscow's terms, rather than the result of international mediation.

On December 18, 1993, Azerbaijani forces, reinforced with manpower, armored vehicles and helicopters which were not previously at their disposal, launched a full-scale attack on Nagorno-Karabakh to reverse the Armenian gains. This offensive is still underway. On January 4, 1994, *Interfax* reported that the Azerbaijani President, Geidar Aliyev, had met with the Commander of the Russian border troops, Colonel-General Andrei Nikolayev, to discuss stationing Russian forces on Azerbaijan's borders. Aliyev and Nikolayev concluded their meeting with a call for the peaceful settlement of the Armenian-Azerbaijani conflict.

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<sup>6</sup> This further supports the contention that Russia assisted Guseinov in June.

These latest events seem to fit the pattern described above, where alienation from Moscow results in military defeat and political instability and rapprochement brings a change in fortune. The decision to invite Russian troops to patrol Azerbaijan's borders, following the Azerbaijani government's resolution to join the CIS, represents a further step by Azerbaijan toward the kind of close political and economic association with Moscow undertaken by Armenia. Once Azerbaijan has committed to the provisions of the CIS military and economic unions, it does not seem unreasonable to suggest that Russia will indeed promote a peaceful settlement of the conflict over Nagorno-Karabakh.

## **The Baltic States**

In the Baltic States, Russia's specific strategic objectives are: retaining a presence on the strategically important Baltic coastline; maintaining lines of communication with the Kaliningrad oblast of the Russian Federation;<sup>7</sup> preventing the Baltic States from joining NATO; and averting an influx of disenfranchised ethnic Russians into the Russian Federation.

Estonia and Latvia have consistently threatened these objectives since their independence in 1991. Both republics have adopted an aggressively pro-Western stance. They have clashed with Moscow over former territory incorporated into the Russian Federation after annexation in 1939-40, demanded the full withdrawal of Russian troops, and made arrangements to have their own armed forces trained in Sweden and Finland. The former republics have also attempted to make life difficult for Russian "colonists," primarily through the introduction of laws that limit the voting and property rights of ethnic Russians in the hope that they will return to Russia. Russia has used the discriminatory legislation to undertake punitive action, ostensibly to force the amendment of the legislation but also to exact greater political concessions from the republics: it has refused to withdraw the Russian troops from Estonia and Latvia, and cut off crucial fuel supplies.

### *Estonia*

On June 23, 1993, the Estonian government adopted a law on aliens that required those who had not yet applied for Estonian citizenship to do so or apply for a residence permit as a resident alien within a two-year period. Failure to comply would necessitate leaving the country. After a naturalization period, citizenship was to be dependent on the demonstration of command of the Estonian language in an examination. The Russian government argued that non-ethnic Estonians -- in particular Russian settlers in the former republic -- would be at a disadvantage under the law. President Yeltsin denounced the law as being the precursor to "apartheid" and on June 25, the Russian government halted deliveries of natural gas to Estonia -- the republic's primary domestic fuel source. In commentary on the suspension of natural gas supplies, President Yeltsin said that Russia wanted to show Estonia that it "has possibilities to remind [Estonia of] some geopolitical and demographic realities," (*New York Times*, 6-26-93). Faced with this pressure, on June 28

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<sup>7</sup> The Kaliningrad oblast is centered around the former East Prussian city of Königsberg, now Kaliningrad, on the Baltic coast bordering Poland. It is cut off from the rest of the Russian Federation, under whose jurisdiction it falls, by Lithuania and Belarus.

the Estonian President backed down and submitted the law on aliens to review by the Conference on Security and Cooperation in Europe (CSCE) and the Council of Europe to ensure that it complied with international norms on human and minority rights. The Estonian government hoped that by seeking the intervention of these two international bodies, the issue would be taken out of Moscow's hands. Any subsequent amendments made on the basis of an impartial judicial review would have to be accepted by Moscow. Russia was not, however, swayed by Estonia's decision to offer its legislation for international scrutiny. On June 29, Sergei Stankevich, political advisor to the Russian president, stepped up the pressure and raised the possibility of Estonia's territorial dismemberment. He asserted that the law on aliens had created "the pre-conditions for a mono-ethnic, or single-community state" in Estonia and that the Russian minority would be "pushed towards territorial self-determination." On July 1, the Russian parliament threatened "special measures" including further gas and oil stoppages if the law was not repealed.

A modified version of the law was passed by the Estonian parliament in July 12 on the advice of the CSCE. Increased provisions were made to preserve the rights of non-ethnic Estonian civilians but former Soviet servicemen in Estonia were excluded from both residency and citizenship. This was not an unreasonable decision as servicemen stationed abroad are not usually offered residency and citizenship in the host country upon retirement. Moreover, the CSCE High Commissioner on National Minorities found no evidence of persecution against the Russian population. However, Russia was clearly still not satisfied. On July 16-17 residents of the majority Russian towns of Narva and Sillamae on the Estonian-Russian border took part in a referendum on autonomy, threatening the territorial integrity of Estonia. The Russian Parliament expressed its approval of the residents' action.

Since this juncture, Estonia has continued to make significant concessions including granting citizenship to 35 ethnic Russians to permit them to run in municipal elections in the capital Tallinn, and drafting a new law on cultural autonomy for minorities. This has not been sufficient to persuade Russia to move forward with its troop withdrawals. Moscow continues to assert that its forces will not leave until agreements guaranteeing Russian-speaking minority rights are concluded to its satisfaction. In December 1993, for example, the Russian Foreign Ministry announced that Moscow still intended to pursue an issue related to 8,000 Russian officers living in Estonia who retired from active service after August 20, 1991. In accordance with the Estonian government's ruling on the matter, Russian servicemen retiring after this date are not eligible for residency in Estonia and must leave the country. The Russian Foreign Ministry indicated that Russian troops would remain in Estonia until this ruling was overturned, (*Interfax*, 12-3-93).

### *Latvia*

The Estonian pattern is repeated in Latvia, which is of particular importance to Russia because of strategic military facilities on its coast. The republic, for instance, has consistently refused to permit joint maintenance of the facilities as this would allow Russian forces to remain on Latvian soil. Russia linked the plight of ethnic Russians in Latvia to troop withdrawal only in April 1992 after Latvian-Russian talks failed to produce an agreement acceptable to Moscow. Since then, Russia has been unable to disguise the fact that concern over the status of Latvia's Russian population is a facade for the promotion of its strategic objectives. In mid-November 1993, for example, Moscow announced that it will conclude the withdrawal of its troops from Latvia by August 1994 *only* if an agreement can be reached on the maintenance of a strategic radar facility at Skrunda (*Interfax* 11-15-93).

### *Lithuania*

In stark contrast to Estonia and Latvia, Moscow has not accused Lithuania of discrimination against ethnic Russians, and currently holds it up as an example to the other Baltic States. The course of Lithuanian-Russian relations has not, however, been a smooth one and Moscow certainly played a role in the fall of the republic's first post-Soviet president.

Although President Vytuatas Landsbergis was more sympathetic toward ethnic Russians than his Estonian and Latvian counterparts, and offered citizenship to all non-ethnic Lithuanians residing there at independence, he was also anxious to distance the republic from Moscow. His pro-Western stance was met by a prolonged shut-off of Russian oil and gas supplies in the run-up to scheduled parliamentary and presidential elections in October 1992. This compounded a severe economic crisis in the republic. As a result of his perceived failure to manage the economy and conduct negotiations with Moscow over prices of energy imports, Landsbergis was ousted. The Lithuanian electorate brought back someone who could deal with Moscow: former Lithuanian Communist leader, Algirdas Brazauskas.

Since the winter of 1992, and Brazauskas' confirmation as president, Lithuania has consciously oriented itself toward Moscow, tacitly acknowledging Russia's strategic objectives in the region. It has:

- agreed to send its troops for training in Russia and to purchase Russian weapons;

- granted Russia the use of port facilities for troop transportation to and from the Kaliningrad oblast;
- permitted former Soviet army officers to remain in the republic and purchase property;
- signed a number of bilateral economic and political accords with Moscow.

It is no coincidence that in Lithuania, unlike in the other Baltic States, Russian troops have been fully withdrawn.

However, on those recent occasions when Lithuania has not acted in Moscow's interests, the Russian government has been swift to react and exert pressure. In August 1993, before the final troop withdrawal, Lithuania requested compensation for damage inflicted on the republic by Soviet occupation. Russia has made it clear that it will not entertain the idea of compensation and will in fact seek reimbursement itself for military facilities left behind in the Baltic States. On August 22, Moscow announced that the withdrawal would be suspended. On August 30, Russia and Lithuania agreed that negotiations on compensation would be put to one side -- facilitating the withdrawal of the last unit of Russian troops on August 31.

With Brazauskas at the helm, Lithuanian-Russian relations have remained relatively cordial. However, Lithuania's surprise request to join NATO on January 4, 1994, on the recommendation of the Lithuanian Parliament, is likely to have serious repercussions for the former Soviet republic. Russian President Boris Yeltsin's press spokesman, Vyacheslav Kostikov, announced on January 5 that the move could "trigger military-political destabilization in the region," and that if Lithuania and the other Baltic States joined NATO "undesirable moods" could arise among the military and civilian population of the republics, (*New York Times*, 1-6-94).

The issue of ethnic Russians in Estonia and Latvia has also turned their relations with Moscow increasingly sour. In November 1993, in connection with the publication of the new Russian Military Doctrine, Russian Defense Minister Pavel Grachev made an unofficial but unequivocal statement linking the withdrawal of Russian troops from Estonia and Latvia to their granting of "rights" to the Russian minority. "I, as Minister of Defense," Grachev stated, "want to link the pullout of troops to the protection of Russian-speakers."

This linkage by the Minister of Defense is significant given the fact that the new military



doctrine singles out 'the suppression of the rights, freedoms and legitimate interests of Russian-speaking citizens in foreign states' as being a threat to the security of the Russian Federation that will be acted on. The doctrine also permits Russian troops to continue to be based abroad to protect 'national interests' such as this, presumably on the recommendation of the Russian Minister of Defense. As Estonia and Latvia will resist further concessions to Moscow on the status of ethnic Russians and former Russian servicemen residing on their territory, it is clear that the Russian Ministry of Defense will insist that the remaining Russian troops be kept in place until the states concede.

President Yeltsin, himself, raised the issue of ethnic Russians again in a televised New Year's speech, when he vowed to boost Russia's defense of the interests of the 25 million Russians living in the other former Soviet republics. President Lennart Meri of Estonia condemned the speech and expressed concern that Russia would now pursue a new and more aggressive foreign policy in 1994, (*Boston Globe*, 1-3-93).

## Belarus

Belarus illustrates the difficulties faced by former Soviet republics that are traditionally dependent on Russia for raw materials and security, and which need to maintain their close relationship with Moscow. Since the dissolution of the Soviet Union, the Belarusian government has focused on stability, continuity and cooperation with Russia rather than independent state-building. In domestic politics, stability has resulted in the continued domination of the former Communist Party in the Belarusian Parliament and control of all levels of government by the former Communist bureaucracy.

In external relations, Belarus' stability and accord with Russia have come at the price of independence. In spite of the fact that the Belarusian opposition movement, the *Popular Front*, has attempted to rekindle a sense of Belarusian nationhood and advocated more nationalistic policies since independence in 1991, Belarus has made few strides in even formulating a conception of a national identity separate from Russia.

The present Belarusian government, under the premiership of Vyacheslau Kebich, has neither contradicted nor criticized Moscow's policies publicly. Indeed, Kebich has consistently stifled and obstructed opposition factions and rival politicians, such as Chairman of the Belarusian parliament Stanislau Shushkevich, who have favored maintaining Belarusian sovereignty and independent action. The Kebich government believes that economically and politically it cannot afford to defy Moscow on any issue. It has thus joined Armenia in complying fully with Moscow's policies to strengthen the Commonwealth of Independent States, and stands in stark contrast to its immediate neighbors, the Baltic States and Ukraine.

Geopolitically, Belarus is of greatest importance to Russia as a border with Poland, the Baltic States, and the Kaliningrad Oblast of the Russian Federation, which is cut-off from the rest of Russia by Belarus and Lithuania. In an interview with *Moscow News* on November 19, 1993, the head of the Russian border guards, Colonel-General Andrei Nikolayev summed up the Russian attitude toward Belarus, describing the country as Russia's border with the Baltic. Moscow is currently so confident of Belarus' cooperation in patrolling this border that it provides funds for Belarus' border equipment while permitting Belarusian servicemen, instead of Russian forces, to carry out the patrols.

Belarus' close association with Moscow is dictated by economic realities and its failure to implement economic reform. Price controls and production quotas remain in effect and 90 percent of property is state-owned. The country's industrial base is still highly militarized and the military-

industrial complex accounts for 56 percent of the national economy. In addition, Belarus has few raw materials and relies on Russia for 70 percent of its energy supplies. As a result of the after-effects of the Chernobyl disaster, the state can ill-afford world prices for fuel. Seventy percent of the radiation released by Chernobyl fell on Belarus and its farmland is heavily contaminated. The Belarus government estimates that it currently spends 20 percent of its budget on dealing with the consequences of Chernobyl -- a considerable drain on its resources, (*Interfax*, 12-3-93).

Since October 1991, and Gorbachev's attempts to create a New Economic Union for the failing USSR, Belarus has recognized the need to sign economic agreements with Russia to maintain its supply lines and has been a consistent advocate of the economic aspects of the Commonwealth of Independent States.<sup>8</sup> On October 29, 1991 Russian President Boris Yeltsin announced Russia's plans to begin conducting trade at world prices for those who "are aiming at isolation from the economic and political community," and ultimately to introduce Russia's own currency if other former Soviet republics persisted in pushing forward with their own, (*BELTA-TASS*, 10-29-91). This announcement greatly alarmed Belarus and on October 31, Belarusian Prime Minister Vyacheslau Kebich advocated the creation of a single economic space in the former Soviet Union and the maintenance of a single currency, (*Interfax*, 10-31-91). On February 20, 1992, after the dissolution of the Soviet Union and the creation of the Commonwealth of Independent States, Russia and Belarus signed an economic agreement which provided for the conducting of Russia's trade and economic relations with Belarus within the context of a single economic area, using a single monetary unit, the ruble. Belarusian and Russian companies were encouraged to form joint ventures.

Since then Prime Minister Kebich has supported an economic union with Russia that would introduce a common currency, a common banking and credit system, the elimination of tariffs and other trade barriers and even a unified Russian budget, (*Reuters*, 4-9-93). The Belarusian government has thus been in complete accord with Moscow's policies on the creation of a new economic union for the CIS. When Russia introduced an abrupt currency reform in July 1993, Chairman of the Belarusian parliament Stanislau Shushkevich, in stark contrast to the heads of state in other former Soviet republics, announced that Moscow's move had done "no great damage." Belarus agreed to retain the Russian ruble in accordance with stringent conditions established by Moscow -- which include subscribing to common budgetary, financial and monetary policies.

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<sup>8</sup> Soon after the creation of the CIS in December 1991, Speaker of the Parliament Shushkevich told Russian television that in signing the Commonwealth Accords "I personally am convinced that I am acting in the interest of Belarus," (*British Broadcasting Corporation Summary of World Broadcasts*, 11-12-91).

These conditions were rejected by Kazakhstan and Uzbekistan<sup>9</sup> indicating the degree of Belarus' commitment to union with Russia. The economic necessity of this commitment was also apparent. The Belarusian government made it clear that they hoped to obtain a 50 percent subsidy on oil supplies from Russia by complying with Moscow's conditions. By August 1993, Belarus owed Russia approximately 340 billion rubles for oil and 100 billion for natural gas, and had accrued a \$500 million balance of payments deficit for 1993, (*Financial Times*, 8-9-93).

On September 7, 1993 Belarus signed a treaty on currency union with Russia and three central Asian republics. On September 24, it signed a treaty on economic union pact with other CIS states: under both agreements, Belarus would transfer decisions on monetary, tax, trade and banking policies to Moscow. In October, Russian Vice Premier for External Economic Relations, Alexander Shokin and Belarusian Vice Premier Vladimir Zalomai met to "eliminate certain differences in that part of the Belarusian legislation which relates to fiscal matters." In other words, Belarus was prepared to amend economic policies that Moscow found objectionable, (*Interfax*, 10-22-93).

On November 18, 1993, the Belarus Parliament ratified the treaty creating the CIS economic union, (*Interfax*, 11-18-93). In December 1993, Vyacheslau Kebich announced that Belarus had settled its debt for supplies of Russian oil at a meeting with Russian Prime Minister Viktor Chernomyrdin. The two premiers discussed trade, economic and financial cooperation, and the conversion of the Belarusian debt into assets or shares of companies. They agreed that Russian businesses should be allowed to buy shares of Belarusian firms and businesses, (*Interfax*, 11-12-93), and announced that "full understanding" had been reached on Belarus' entry into a new ruble zone.

Politically, Belarus has also been quick to respond to Russian concerns. In contrast to Kazakhstan, Ukraine and the Baltic States, it has not seriously challenged Moscow on either the issues of nuclear weapons left on its soil or citizenship for ethnic Russians. At the end of September 1991, even before the final dissolution of the Soviet Union, Belarus announced that it would become a non-nuclear state. It undertook to examine immediately the issue of the nuclear weapons on its territory and asserted that control over the former USSR's nuclear arsenal should be exercised from a single center, i.e. from Moscow.

On February 3, 1993, the Belarusian parliament ratified the Nuclear Non-proliferation Treaty, the START-1 Treaty and the accompanying Lisbon Protocol. It also approved an agreement

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<sup>9</sup> See section on Central Asia for a more detailed discussion on the economic union and the Russian ruble zone.

first formulated with Russia in July 1992, recognizing that the 30,000 strategic forces in charge of the weapons on Belarusian territory fell under Russian control. The agreement also stipulated that the Russian forces would be stationed in the former republic for a seven-year period. In addition, it was acknowledged that the technical and production facilities attached to the forces would continue to be owned by Moscow. Under the terms of the agreement 72 single warhead SS-25 missiles were scheduled to be withdrawn to Russia for destruction, (*New York Times*, 2-5-93).

In addition, the new state's Draft Citizenship Law in 1991 granted citizenship to all individuals permanently residing on its territory on the day the law was passed. It also provided for dual citizenship on the basis of international agreements, implying that citizens of Belarus could also hold Russian citizenship.

The only challenge to Moscow's authority has come in the form of the assertion of strict military neutrality. The pledge formed the cornerstone of the former Soviet republic's declaration of sovereignty in 1991 and accompanied its undertaking to become a nuclear-free state. The abandonment of this principle in the spring of 1993 is indicative of the pressure exerted on the republic by Moscow and its own dependence upon Russia.

The pledge of neutrality resulted in the former republic's refusal to sign the CIS collective security agreement in Tashkent on May 16, 1992 on the basis that the agreement contradicted Belarus' constitution. The Belarusian Declaration of State Sovereignty, which is enshrined in the existing constitution, asserts that the new state will strive towards neutrality, non-participation in military blocs and non-nuclear status.

Stanislau Shushkevich, the Chairman of the Belarusian parliament has been a consistent advocate of these principles of neutrality and non-alignment, asserting that these are the only insurance of Belarusian independence. He has advocated the creation of "a belt of neutral states" in Europe comprising Belarus, Romania, Moldova, Hungary, Lithuania, Latvia and Ukraine as "a security guarantee for member states and ... a model for the world," (*ITAR-TASS*, 4-9-93). In promoting neutrality Shushkevich, however, has stressed that it is predicated on cooperation with Moscow and that there is no alternative to economic union within the CIS for Belarus: "political sovereignty, military sovereignty, and the independence of Belarus do not contradict our aim of having close relations with Russia," (*Belarusian Radio*, 3-19-93).

In contrast, Vyacheslau Kebich, the conservative Belarusian Prime Minister, favors full military union with Moscow as the only guarantee of independence. In March 1993, Kebich and his supporters, including high-level officials in the Belarusian Ministry of Defense and the defense industry, asserted that in withdrawing its battlefield nuclear weapons, implementing the agreement

on Conventional Forces in Europe, and faced by instability in Europe and other CIS countries Belarus could not maintain a national army strong enough to ensure its own security. Nor could it afford the economic costs of an army. According to sources in the Belarusian Defense Ministry the expenses of the Belarusian armed forces at present levels account for 45 percent of the state budget (*Ostankino Television*, 4-1-93). Starved of former state orders from Moscow for military equipment, the Belarusian defense industry is also on the brink of collapse. In addition, the Belarusian Defense Minister, Pavel Kazlouski, reported that Moscow was insisting that CIS states that are not signatories to the collective security agreement would be forced to pay \$1,000 for each military officer trained in the Russian Federation.

On April 9, 1993, Kebich's policies prevailed. The Belarusian Parliament voted in favor of the signing and the ratification of the CIS collective security agreement. Belarusian Prime Minister Kebich linked the military alignment with Russia explicitly to the idea of maintaining a "common economic space" in the CIS and gave the impression, according to the Belarusian press, that Moscow was refusing to separate economic from military issues in its relations with the CIS, (*Zvyazda*, 3-25-93).

Since then, Belarus has appeared to join Russia in exerting pressure on other republics, in particular Ukraine on the issue of nuclear weapons. On November 3, 1993, Valery Tsepkalov, an advisor to the Chairman of the Belarus Parliament told *Interfax* that "Belarus understands Russia's concerns related to the approach of Ukraine to nuclear weapons." Tsepkalov went on to suggest that if Ukraine persisted in holding on to its nuclear weapons, a chain reaction would ensue with other countries claiming nuclear status. In addition, he echoed Russian concerns that Ukraine's storage of nuclear ammunition was unsafe. On December 3, after Ukraine had announced its intention to continue the operation of the Chernobyl nuclear reactor to address its energy crisis and consequent dependence on Russia, Belarus also officially appealed to the Ukrainian government to review their decision.

Belarus' ready capitulation to Moscow has not, however, been welcomed by all of the former republic's politicians. In September 1993, then leader of the opposition *Popular Front*, Vladimir Zablotsky, protested the economic union of Russia, Belarus, and Ukraine within the CIS as spelling "a return to the empire disguised as an economic union ... A confederation with Russia would reduce Belarus to a poor Russian province suffering from Moscow's power crisis, unpredictability, and imperial ambitions which led to bloodshed." Popular Front leaders stressed that "the prospect for stabilizing the economies of former Soviet republics lies in the unconditional safeguarding of economic independence, getting rid of military dependence on Russia, and above

all, in democratic market reforms," (*Interfax*, 9/13/93). On October 15, 1993, the new leader of the *Popular Front*, Zenon Pozdnyak, in an interview with *Interfax* called for the resignation of the Kebich government whose policies, he asserted, "pose a threat to [Belarusian] sovereignty."

On December 10, 1993 Stanislau Shushkevich made his first overt public criticism of Moscow's policies toward the CIS in an interview with *Interfax*. Shushkevich stated that relations within the CIS were now "only those with Russia," and called for a new system of relations between CIS countries. He protested Russia's attempts to create a new ruble zone and its treatment of Kazakhstan and Uzbekistan in this regard. The Chairman of the Parliament went on to denounce the Belarusian government for incompetence and pointed out that he had not been kept informed of the Belarusian government's negotiations with the Russian government. The reasons for Kebich's reluctance to inform his political opponent of his negotiations with Moscow became apparent in January 1994. On January 7, 1994 the *Financial Times* revealed that his government had signed a declaration of intent with the Russian government to unify the economies of the two countries. The agreement would permit Belarus to retain and print Russian rubles, and exchange rubles for hard currency in the Moscow currency exchange. Belarus would also gain access to Russian gold and hard currency reserves through a merger of the respective state reserves. Andrei Illarionov, Deputy Head of the Russian Center for Economic Reforms, suggested that the agreement would result in a net payment from Moscow to Belarus of 1,600 billion rubles which would exacerbate inflation in Russia. Moscow clearly considers this a small price to pay. In return the economy of Belarus will come under the control of the Russian government and the Russian Central Bank. Illarionov, described the agreement as part of Russia's attempt to "create an economic union of the former Soviet states step by step."

It seems unlikely that Shushkevich will protest this decision. On January 3, 1994, *Interfax* reported that the Chairman of the Belarus Parliament had personally signed the CIS Treaty on Collective Security, to overcome any "ambiguous interpretations" which might have arisen as a result of his reluctance to sanction the Parliament's decision to join the Treaty in April 1993. The timing of Shushkevich's signature, simultaneous with the agreement on economic unification, suggests that the military and economic provisions of the CIS are an inseparable unit in Moscow's conception of the body. In agreeing to both provisions, Belarus' has effectively transferred sovereignty to Russia.

## Central Asia

In Central Asia, Russia has tailored its policies to further its strategic objectives in the region. These objectives include: keeping Central Asia within its sphere of influence and out of the influence of Islamic states to the south; maintaining access to strategic raw materials and energy supplies; retaining control of key military and technical facilities such as the Semipalatinsk nuclear test site and the Baikonur rocket launch facilities in Kazakhstan; and inducing Kazakhstan to relinquish its nuclear arsenal.

Russia has not concealed its pursuit of its strategic objectives. It has made it particularly clear, for example, that it will not tolerate the creation of rival zones of political or economic cooperation in Central Asia. In July 1993, after observing political and economic ties develop between Central Asia, Turkey, Iran, Pakistan and Afghanistan, Moscow demanded that the Central Asian republics choose between Russia and these Muslim countries. In addition, Moscow has indicated that it expects to continue to patrol Central Asia's international borders with China, Afghanistan and Iran, and requires the republics to assume part of the costs for these patrols. It justifies its presence on Central Asian borders by reference to persistent territorial claims from outside powers. With regard to Kazakhstan in particular, the commander of the Russian border troops and Deputy Minister of Security, Colonel-General Andrei Nikolayev, in a November 1993 interview with *Moscow News* stressed that only Russia could guarantee Kazakhstan's borders and successfully head off territorial claims from China. He also urged Kazakhstan "jointly to protect its external borders with troops staffed and financed by Kazakhstan and Russia" in "recognition of [Russia's] strategic interests in the region."

This singling out of Kazakhstan is significant as not all of the Central Asian republics are of equal importance to Moscow. A clear distinction can be made between Russia's policies toward Kazakhstan, Uzbekistan and Tajikistan, on the one hand, and Kyrgyzstan and Turkmenistan, on the other. This distinction is also reflective of the degree of independence from Moscow that the republics have tried to exercise. Kazakhstan and Uzbekistan which have tried to assert themselves as independent Asian actors have been subjected to Russian economic pressure, and in November 1993 the two republics were forced out of the ruble zone. Tajikistan's first post-Communist coalition government was overthrown and replaced by a reactionary pro-Moscow regime as a result of direct Russian military intervention in the Tajik civil war in the winter of 1992. In contrast, Kyrgyzstan and Turkmenistan have been largely left to their own devices, but neither of the two has thus far made any attempt to forge a divergent path from Moscow.



### *Kazakhstan and Uzbekistan*

Kazakhstan and Uzbekistan are of particular economic importance to Russia as sources of strategic raw materials. Kazakhstan, for example, provides Russia with grain, petroleum, ore, metals and carbon. Russian industrial plants, such as the giant Magnitogorsk Metallurgical Combine, operate solely on Kazakh raw materials, while electric power stations in the Ural region utilize Kazakh carbon. Uzbekistan provides Russia with gold, petroleum, gas and cotton. It thus seems detrimental to the Russian economy to force these two republics from the ruble zone and encourage them to forge supplementary economic ties with regional neighbors such as Turkey, Iran, and Pakistan.

Moscow, however, is attempting to marry two conflicting policy imperatives in its policies toward Kazakhstan and Uzbekistan. The first, on the part of economic reformers such as Boris Fyodorov, Yegor Gaidar and Alexander Shokin, presupposes that the under-developed, unreformed Central Asian economies with their subsidy-dependent industries are a drain on Russian coffers. This burden must be divested.<sup>10</sup> The second, on the part of the Russian military elite, is based on the need to ensure Russia's security objectives in Central Asia, maintain its bases and guard the USSR's former international borders.

Russia wants to cut-off the supply of Russian rubles to the Central Asian states that has helped to fuel the inflationary spiral in the Russian Federation. At the same time, it wants to retain economic and political influence over the countries. These dual imperatives have resulted in an extremely complicated and risky policy. The republics have been encouraged to introduce their own currencies and abandon the Russian ruble. They have also been asked to peg their new currencies to the ruble, coordinate their economic and monetary policies with Russia, and desist from any actions that either lead to the creation of alternative economic zones or impinge on Russia's access to strategic raw materials. In the case of Kazakhstan and Uzbekistan, Moscow is using their ethnic-Russian and Russian-speaking populations as an instrument to coerce them into playing by its rules. The end goal is a Russian-dominated economic union within the CIS and the option of creating a new Russian ruble zone once economic stability has been achieved.

Since mid-November 1993, both Kazakhstan and Uzbekistan have received clear warning

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<sup>10</sup> Russia spends more than \$15 billion annually in cheap credits and subsidized energy supplies to the former Soviet republics, including Central Asia.

that seeking independence from Russia, now they are no longer in the ruble zone, will mean instability and possible territorial dismemberment through the Moscow-sponsored secession of ethnic Russians. Kazakhstan is particularly susceptible to Russian manipulation and as a result has been the most anxious to retain good relations with Moscow. Ethnic Russians, who account for 38 percent of the republic's population, are territorially concentrated in the fertile steppe region of northern and eastern Kazakhstan. These lands were cultivated and settled under Khrushchev's "Virgin Lands" policy of the 1950s. In December 1992, in the run-up to the adoption of a new Kazakh constitution, President Nursultan Nazarbayev and his government were afforded a glimpse of the problems they faced if inter-ethnic relations in the republic were not managed carefully. Ethnic Russians in eastern Kazakhstan held a demonstration demanding that Russian be recognized in the constitution as a second state language along with Kazakh and that Russian residents of the republic be granted dual Kazakh-Russian citizenship. The demonstrators also demanded that the political and economic integrity of the Commonwealth of Independent States be maintained. The leaders of the demonstration indicated that they would encourage the formation of an eastern Kazakhstan republic if Kazakhstan severed its ties with the CIS.

Although a poll conducted by the Group for Sociological Analysis and Prognosis of the Kazakhstan Information Center showed that approximately 80 percent of the population of the eastern region still favored Kazakhstan's territorial integrity, these Russian grievances were open to exploitation. In spite of the demonstrations, when the new Kazakh constitution was adopted in early 1993, Russian was not afforded the status of a state language. Instead, it was designated the language of "inter-ethnic communication." Kazakhstan has also consistently refused to permit dual citizenship. The Kazakh government's refusal to acquiesce to the demands of the state's ethnic Russian population provides Moscow with a pretext for intervention.

#### *Kazakhstan, Uzbekistan and the Ruble Zone*

Moscow's new policy toward Central Asia began in May 1993, when Boris Fyodorov, Russia's Finance Minister resolved to regain control of the money supply within the ruble zone to combat hyper-inflation. He encouraged the initiation of a negotiated process whereby former Soviet republics within the ruble zone would convert their ruble supplies into their own interim currencies. Once this stage was completed, Russia would introduce a new 1993 Russian ruble and all pre-1993 rubles would be returned to Russia by the republics and destroyed. Fyodorov then announced that CIS states would have to pay off all debts to Russia and agree to abide by foreign

currency trade restrictions if they wanted to receive supplies of the new 1993 rubles instead of introducing their own currencies. The process began with Kyrgyzstan which introduced its own currency, the *som*, in May.

In July, the Russian Central Bank went a stage further and abruptly and unilaterally announced that all pre-1993 Russian rubles were to be demonetized immediately. A brief grace period was given for the old rubles to be traded in for new by Russian citizens and states still in the ruble zone. This action by the Central Bank was coordinated neither with the Russian government nor with the governments of other CIS states. It contributed to serious economic difficulties for Kazakhstan and Uzbekistan in particular. Kazakhstan's economy became a "cemetery" for pre-1993 Russian rubles flooding in from Russia and other former Soviet republics that had introduced their own currencies. This induced the Kazakh government to introduce a moratorium on old rubles until January 1994 and to instruct Kazakh savings banks not to accept rubles from non-Kazakh citizens.

After a summer of economic chaos, on September 7, 1993, Tajikistan, Kazakhstan and Uzbekistan joined Russia, Armenia and Belarus in signing a treaty to create the preconditions for a new economic union of CIS member states. The treaty transferred significant economic authority to Russia and provided the basis for the coordination of monetary, fiscal, banking and customs policies. The desires of the signatories were not, however, in complete accord. Kazakhstan and Uzbekistan anticipated the regulation of the existing ruble zone and the delivery of 1993 Russian rubles as a result of the treaty. Moscow, however, fully intended that the other former republics should introduce their *own* rubles based on 1993 Russian banknotes rather than simply using the Russian notes. Furthermore, Moscow expected its partners to initiate economic reforms in conjunction with Russia, and anticipated the full unification of all CIS banknotes as the prelude to complete economic union. Alexander Shokin, Russia's minister for external economic relations, envisaged the process to economic union as being "a fairly long road with several stop-overs;" the treaty in September was merely the first.

Russia's economic policy for the CIS immediately foundered in Central Asia. In October, Kazakhstan and Russia failed to agree on a protocol to unite their monetary systems in line with the September treaty. Kazakhstan had found itself unable to exchange the old Russian rubles flooding into the country for 1993 Russian rubles and was less than pleased at this development. The Kazakh government had no desire to introduce a new currency in accordance with Moscow's plan and insisted that it be provided with new banknotes immediately. The Russian government was equally insistent that any exchange could only come at the end of a transition period during which

all relevant principles and mechanisms had been worked out. Alexander Shokin made it clear that Russia wanted firm guarantees that those former republics that wished to join a new 1993 Russian ruble zone were willing to unite their monetary systems with Russia's and give Moscow control over their economies. Shokin stressed that the introduction of a temporary or national currency would accelerate the unification of the monetary systems in the interim.

When Kazakhstan and Uzbekistan still resisted the introduction of interim currencies -- pointing to the attendant financial costs, technical difficulties and their current economic crises -- and balked at the idea of Russian control of their economies, Moscow stepped up the pressure. In late October, it demanded \$650 million in hard currency deposits and gold reserves as collateral from Kazakhstan in return for Russian banknotes. The Russian government asserted that this collateral would offset any potential Russian losses as a result of issuing new banknotes to the republic. It also demanded that Kazakhstan realign its economic indicators with those of Russia within 6 months as a step toward the rapid unification of the two monetary systems. The Russian government warned that it would consider Kazakhstan to be indebted to Moscow if the state did not offer these concessions in advance of the banknote issue.

As it was apparent that Kazakhstan was unlikely to agree to these demands, Moscow's intention was to force the former Soviet republic to introduce its own currency. Indeed, the Russian government informed its Kazakh counterpart that the alternative to compliance was the introduction of a permanent or interim currency, after which a single ruble zone could be formed with Russia. On October 29, Kazakhstan announced that it could not afford to offer its gold and foreign exchange reserves as collateral for Russian banknotes, nor could it afford to obtain them on credit, thus it was obliged to break off the negotiations with Moscow on monetary union. The Kazakh government stated that it considered the possibilities of monetary union to be lost.

In spite of this gloomy pronouncement, Russian officials remained optimistic about the possibility of recreating the ruble zone with Kazakhstan as a participant. Minister Fyodorov stated that "economic integration continues and the interests of Russia have been observed," (*Interfax*, 11-4-93). On November 10, Russian First Vice Premier Oleg Soskovets said that Russia attached special importance to the preservation of economic ties with Kazakhstan and he was certain that "Russia and Kazakhstan would be able to find mutually acceptable ways of cooperation in future," (*Interfax*, 11-10-93).

The same tactics were also used to force Uzbekistan from the ruble zone in October. Moscow informed the Uzbek government that it should regard the supply of Russian banknotes as a form of inter-state credit. Gold reserves and US dollars must thus be offered as collateral for at

least 50 percent of the cash and non-cash money supply. Old Russian rubles would only be exchanged for 1993 rubles at a ratio of three to one. Like Kazakhstan, Uzbekistan rejected these conditions and announced that it would pursue the development of its own currency. The Uzbek Prime Minister Bakhtior Khamidov was sharply critical of Russia's policies: "They want to turn the central banks of all republics into branches of the Russian bank and to dictate our crediting and emission policies. And for every ruble in cash we would have to pay gold."

With Kazakhstan and Uzbekistan out of the ruble zone, Moscow felt that everything was going according to plan. Alexander Shokin pointed out on November 3, that of the five CIS states which had signed the agreement to create a new ruble zone on September 6, 1993: Kazakhstan and Uzbekistan had decided to introduce their own currencies; Belarus had already introduced a transitional currency; and Armenia and Tajikistan had opted to retain the old Russian rubles as their interim currency. On November 5, Uzbekistan announced that indeed its currency, the som, would be temporary and that the country would continue to work towards monetary union with Russia. Kazakhstan agreed that it would coordinate the introduction of its currency with Uzbekistan on November 15.

In a November 19, 1993 interview with *Moscow News* Shokin explained the new Russian economic policy:

"The ideology was as follows: the unification of monetary systems is the final accord in a long piece in the course of which the economies of all countries had to be stabilized. For this it was necessary: first, to unify legislation; second, to secure a similar state of definite parameters which had to mirror the similar mechanism of the economies' functioning. All the countries hoped, beginning with November 1, at worse with January 1, Russia would grant them cash. Moreover, the countries promised, and at the highest level, to complete after that all work in unifying systems. We decided that cash could be provided even earlier, but under one condition: Russia must be insured against ... an inflationary explosion: suppose we give them the cash of 1993 denomination but the countries introduce national currencies nevertheless. Then Russia would again have to change its banknotes ... Therefore, there was no ousting anyone from the ruble zone, there was only an attempt to create a single monetary system in a civilized manner. The introduction of national currencies can take off the touch of fraternally infantile relations which have existed hithertofore," (*Moscow News*, 11-19-93).

As the creation of the new single monetary system will take some time, Russia must prevent economic and political ties from weakening with Kazakhstan and Uzbekistan. On November 7, *Moscow News* expressed concern that Kazakhstan would ally itself economically with other countries, having left the ruble zone: "After exchanging the ruble for the tenge, Kazakhstan inevitably will change many priorities not only in the economy, but also in politics. According to the 'rule of the pendulum' it will swing from the great northern neighbor to the south, and leaving the Russian monetary system it will pass under the financial influence of the IMF and the World Bank." Moscow's July warning to Central Asia that it should choose between Russia and its Muslim neighbors indicated that this would not be permitted to happen. Russia is now employing a tactic tried and tested in the Baltic states, to remind Kazakhstan and Uzbekistan of some "demographic and geopolitical realities," should they take it upon themselves to stray.

Moscow is using ethnic Russians for economic as well as political ends in Kazakhstan and Uzbekistan. This was made apparent by the fact that it was Alexander Shokin, the Russian Minister for External Economic Relations, who first made the explicit connection between Russia's economic policies in Central Asia and the ethnic-Russian and Russian-speaking minorities in the former republics. On November 16, Shokin wrote an article for *Izvestiya* entitled: "We have adequate responses to the threats to make Russians hostages in the Near Abroad." In the article he openly accused Kazakhstan and Uzbekistan of attempting to blackmail Russia into continuing to give financial support by threatening the well-being of ethnic Russians living in the republics. Shokin warned the two former republics that they would regret playing with "ethnic diplomacy" as Russia was well able "to protect her current interests." Kazakhstan and Uzbekistan's economic and monetary policies were severely criticized. Shokin condemned them for their unwillingness to conform to Russia's vision of a new economic union and to agree to the introduction of interim currencies until the coordination and ultimate unification of the monetary systems could be achieved.

Shokin concluded his article by saying that: "good sense demands that we rise above emotions and it is clear that within the framework of an economic union the creation of mechanisms for economic integration will continue. One of these may be a single monetary system, based on the Russian ruble, or an effective payments union on the basis of stable national currencies."

Minister Shokin went further in a November 19 interview with *Moscow News*. He stated that if the Central Asian states attempted to reorient their economies towards Turkey, China or Iran,

or raise prices on strategic resources sold to Russia, this might "lead to the destruction of part of our and their economies." He asserted that from now on the issue of the Russian-speaking population of the states would be present in "all economic talks with CIS countries" -- not just those with Central Asia. And he went on to clarify Russia's own position on "ethnic diplomacy" as a tool for furthering national interests:

"Moreover we shall negotiate the extension of credits solely with those states, which will first conclude with Russia agreements on migration with rigid obligations, including that on material compensation for migrants, and second, conclude an agreement on dual citizenship ... We tie politics with economics ... The same is true of the condition of the Russian-speaking people in the 'near abroad.' Whenever some benefits are requested from us, we are entitled to pose a question about the balance of interests ... I believe that with time we will all become accustomed to the thought that this does not amount to some imperial ambitions, but a normal negotiating process."

Shokin's comments were followed by a visit by Russian Foreign Minister Andrei Kozyrev to the Central Asian republics in the second and third weeks of November. At the top of Kozyrev's agenda was the discussion of the protection of the former republics' Russian-speaking population. Kozyrev declared that "Russia is ready to defend its citizens and in this purpose will use all its power, including economic sanctions and credit and financial policy," (*Izvestiya*, 11-20-93). His statements were greeted with alarm in Kazakhstan and Uzbekistan.

The Russian daily *Nezavisimaya Gazeta* reported that President Nursultan Nazarbayev was stricken by a bout of "diplomatic sickness" on the very day of Kozyrev's visit to the country. Kozyrev was not, however, deterred by the unexpected indisposition of the Kazakh President and met instead with Kazakh Prime Minister Sergei Tereshchenko. The Russian Foreign Minister demanded that Kazakhstan sign a mutual agreement with Russia "on the legal security of citizens," which would encompass the issue of dual citizenship and bind northern and eastern Kazakhstan firmly to Russia. Kozyrev went on to assert that "it would be expedient to conclude agreements with all republics [sic] whose legislation provides for dual citizenship." Tereshchenko countered Kozyrev's move by suggesting that Kazakhstan would also seek protection of ethnic-Kazakhs living in the Russian Federation, of which there are some 636,000 (0.4 percent of the total population) according to the 1989 Soviet census. *Nezavisimaya Gazeta* speculated that if Kazakhstan decided

to pursue the same policy as Russia and "defend not only [ethnic Kazakhs], but all the Turkic-speaking population in Russia ... the Kremlin will soon realize how dangerous all Russian-Kazakh differences are, not only for Kazakh statehood but also for Russia." Neither the Kazakh government nor one of Russia's leading independent newspapers had any illusions about the real purpose of Kozyrev's visit to Central Asia.

The government of Uzbekistan also responded angrily to the Russian Foreign Minister's attempts to play ethnic politics. President Islam Karimov, who has prided himself on the enforced stability of his country, "was perplexed by the fact that Kozyrev had raised the issue on conditions for the Russian speaking population in Uzbekistan. It is wrong to speak of any discrimination with respect to them at the state level," (*Interfax*, 11-16-93). Uzbekistan protested the dictatorial tone assumed by the Russian envoy on such a "delicate matter as the rights of people of a different nationality," and demanded that Moscow pursue a dialogue on an equal footing, (*Izvestiya*, 11-20-93).

On November 18, on his return from Central Asia, Andrei Kozyrev announced that a semi-governmental agency would be established in Russia to deal with the problems faced by the Russian-speaking population in Kazakhstan and Uzbekistan. He asserted that attempts had been made in these states to dismiss Russian-speaking directors of factories and Russian government officials. He stressed, however, that he was confident that the problem could be alleviated through appropriate treaties with the Central Asian states, which would make it possible to resolve "delicate humanitarian problems," (*Interfax*, 11-18-93).

President Nazarbayev of Kazakhstan erupted at Kozyrev's statements. He said that, "The constitution of Kazakhstan does not infringe on anyone's rights on the basis of ethnic origin ... The touching concern unexpectedly expressed by some Russian politicians about ethnic Russians in other states -- stable states -- has hardly been motivated by lofty moral considerations. In actual fact, having destroyed the ruble zone and disappointed the people, particularly ethnic Russians, and having lost their trust [these politicians] switched over to populist election games." Nazarbayev went so far as to wonder if he were witnessing the emergence of another "Sudetenland" crisis in Russia: "Whenever one starts talking about the protection of Russians in Kazakhstan, not Russia, I recall Hitler who began to 'support' the Sudeten Germans at one time. I start feeling deep anxiety for Russians who live outside Russia. Really, they did not ask to be defended did they? They are citizens of Kazakhstan." As for dual citizenship for ethnic Russians in Kazakhstan, Nazarbayev rejected the idea as being "contradictory and destabilizing," (*Interfax*, 11-24-93). On December 3, Nazarbayev warned that he would not permit Russia to continue to issue Kazakhstan with



ultimatums or to play "the Russian card basing [sic] on momentary political reasons rather than the interests of people and, moreover, those of the development of our two states," (*Interfax* 12-3-93).

Nazarbayev and President Karimov of Uzbekistan have good reason to be concerned. Ethnic Russians in the region have also not perceived Moscow's logic in dismantling the old ruble zone and instead see the introduction of interim national currencies as the beginning of a break with Russia. In early November 1993, in a poll conducted by *Interfax* among ethnic Russians in the Uzbek capital, Tashkent, for example, 86 percent of respondents felt that they had been abandoned by Moscow and 83 percent predicted that the introduction of a new currency would worsen the economic situation in Uzbekistan and provoke a backlash against ethnic-Russians. All of the respondents were certain that as a result there would be a new emigration of Russians from Central Asia, (*Interfax*, 11-3-93).

Sentiments such as these and the knowledge that Russia will demand compensation for Russian emigrants (see Shokin's November 19 interview with *Moscow News* above) from the former Soviet republics create a double bind for Kazakhstan and Uzbekistan. If they request aid from Russia on the basis of the need to avert an economic crisis and its repercussions for their ethnic Russian population they will be accused of ethnic blackmail, as Shokin accused them in his article. If they choose to forego Russian aid and pursue their own path to economic reform they face the economic crisis they fear and renewed Russian pressure. Both republics seem destined to capitulate to Russia's demands to coordinate their monetary policies with Russia and ultimately replace their interim national currencies with new Russian rubles on Russia's terms. Indeed Uzbekistan made the first step in this direction on December 1, when it announced that 1993 Russian banknotes would also be legal tender in the republic alongside the Uzbek som from December 6.

Kazakhstan, however, is at present resisting Russian demands, which has serious implications given the republic's nuclear arsenal and Russia's continuing interest in the strategic facilities at Semipalatinsk and Baikonur. *Izvestiya* attested to the importance of these facilities to Russia in an article on November 20, 1993. On November 24, Kazakhstan announced that it would sell grain to CIS member states only for hard currency as a result of its transition to a national currency. This action was singled out in Shokin's November 19 interview as particularly intolerable, impinging as it does on Russia's access to strategic raw materials.

On December 24, Kazakhstan was also instrumental, along with Ukraine, in rejecting a proposal by Russian President Yeltsin at a summit meeting of the CIS in Turkmenistan to grant "special status" to ethnic Russians living within the borders of the former Soviet republics, offer

potential dual citizenship to citizens of CIS countries, and guarantee the rights of "national minorities." Kazakh President Nazarbayev once again rejected the concept of dual citizenship and urged that the proposal be removed from the summit's agenda, (*New York Times*, 12-25-93). Continued Kazakh-Russian confrontation over this issue seems likely.

### *Kyrgyzstan*

Russia's policies toward Kyrgyzstan, Turkmenistan and Tajikistan provide a sharp contrast to the treatment of Kazakhstan and Uzbekistan described above. Kyrgyzstan has played by Moscow's rules with regard to the creation of the new ruble zone and the forthcoming economic union. Indeed, on November 18, a senior Kyrgyz official, Vice Premier Esengul Omuraliyev stressed that the disintegration of the ruble zone should not be over-dramatized. He asserted that "the real ruble zone is just in the making and will emerge as soon as each CIS state introduces its own currency." He went on to express his confidence that an agreement on an interim payments union for the conversion of the new currencies would be signed in January 1994. Kyrgyzstan said it was ready to work towards achieving convertibility between the Kyrgyz som and the Russian ruble as soon as possible, (*Interfax*, 11-18-93).

### *Turkmenistan*

As far as Turkmenistan is concerned, the former Soviet republic has distanced itself from the Commonwealth of Independent States but has not been singled out for Russian pressure. Turkmen president, Saparmurad Niyazov has established an authoritarian and conservative regime with the stress on stability and what he refers to as "positive neutrality." Although, Turkmenistan has signed economic cooperation agreements with neighboring Iran, Niyazov has been careful not to antagonize Moscow or imply that the new state will threaten any of Russia's strategic objectives in the region. In fact, during a recent CIS summit in the Turkmen capital, Ashgabat, Turkmenistan was the only former Soviet republic to sign an accord with Russia on dual citizenship. The former republic also agreed on December 23, 1993 that Russian troops would patrol Turkmenistan's borders with Iran and Afghanistan and made provisions for the creation of a special operational group of Russian border troops, (*Reuters*, 12-23-93).

Moscow's currently benign policy toward the former republic, however, may change if Turkmenistan's substantial oil and gas fields are developed in the future with Western assistance.

Turkmenistan is currently the world's fourth largest producer of gas with large untapped reserves. The existing gas pipelines run through Kazakhstan, Russia and Ukraine and Russia is unlikely to allow the route to be changed.

### *Tajikistan*

The position of Tajikistan vis a vis Moscow is unusual, as the Russian government itself has made clear. On November 18, 1993 the Tajik government announced that, unlike Kazakhstan and Uzbekistan, it was ready to enter the ruble zone on Russia's terms. On November 23, Alexander Shokin announced that Moscow would provide Dushanbe with a 100 billion ruble credit to enable it to exchange old Russian rubles for new. Shokin stressed that this agreement was "unique" and that Tajikistan was not being required to introduce a full or interim national currency before joining the CIS economic union. He stated that Dushanbe had also agreed to set aside collateral to obtain Russian cash. For his part, the Tajik Prime Minister Abdulmalik Abdullojanov, asserted that he did "not think Tajikistan has made a mistake by joining the ruble zone. Sooner or later, the other CIS states will follow," (*Interfax*, 11-23-93).

The size of the Russian government credit to Tajikistan is startling given Moscow's avowed intention to cut off subsidies to the former Soviet republics. But as Alexander Shokin made abundantly clear in his November 19 interview with *Moscow News*, it would be "politically naive" for Russia not to use its status of a donor to its own advantage. Russia is not politically naive and it has a definite interest in Tajikistan. The Tajik government may be wholly dependent upon Russia, but Tajikistan is equally important to Russia as a strategic border with Afghanistan. Having, intervened directly in the Tajik civil war to restore a pro-communist, pro-Moscow regime, Russia is now protecting its investment. It intends to keep full control over the Tajik economy and the direction of Tajik politics.

Russia has not even attempted to conceal the fact that its main strategic interest in the region is Afghanistan, and not the Tajik republic itself. In an interview with the *Washington Post* in February 1993, Russian journalist Oleg Panfilov stated that "Russia does not need Tajikistan as a state. It needs it as a border zone with Afghanistan. That is why the Russian military is helping the Communists remain in power," (*Washington Post*, 2-5-93). Russian Defense Minister Pavel Grachev echoed this in February 1993 when he told Tajik leaders that their region was "strategically important for both the security of your state and of ours." (*Boston Sunday Globe*, 2-14-1993)

With 4 million ethnic Tajiks across the border in Afghanistan and only 3 million Tajiks in

Tajikistan itself, it is clear why Tajikistan is such a crucial border zone. Two senior *mujaheddin* commanders are ethnic Tajiks, including Ahmad Shah Masood who was engaged in the struggle for control of Kabul in the spring of 1992. Any union of Afghan Tajiks with Tajikistan would transform it into a large and influential state that would be hostile to Russian objectives. It is thus a strategic imperative for Moscow to head off any Tajik alliance across the Afghan border.

Moscow's intervention in Tajikistan to keep Afghanistan out was the most blatant of its interventions in regional conflicts. Its actions removed a weak coalition government that had threatened to carve out a more independent path of reform for the new state. Russia explained the move as necessary to: stabilize the situation, prevent the infiltration of Islamic fundamentalism, assist ethnic minorities and protect Tajikistan's international borders with Afghanistan. While the republic's stability was definitely at stake and the flow of refugees across the border to Afghanistan was a serious problem, the other two reasons were at best flimsy pretexts. The coalition Tajik government did not profess to seek the creation of an Islamic state in the Iranian model, and Russian and other minorities in the republic were not targeted in the conflict.

In May 1992, a coalition of purported Islamic and democratic opposition forces overthrew the ex-Communist Tajik government of Rakhman Nabiyeu. Nabiyeu had been elected president of Tajikistan in November 1991. In late March 1992 a vociferous opposition movement began to agitate for new elections. On May 5, Nabiyeu tried to break up the opposition and was met with force. He was induced to back down and accept a coalition government under his presidency with key ministerial positions going to opposition figures. However, Nabiyeu's concessions to the opposition were rejected and resisted by regionally based pro-communist governments in the Leninabad and Kolab regions of Tajikistan. Their resistance sparked off a protracted civil war. In September 1992, Nabiyeu resigned in the face of an escalation in the conflict. He was replaced by Akbarsha Iskandarov whose government was unable to reach an accommodation with the pro-communist forces. The former communists seized Dushanbe in December 1992 and installed their own government under Emamali Rakhmanov.

The success of the pro-communist forces was ensured by Russian military support. In the summer of 1992 it was reported that the forces were receiving heavy artillery from the Russian army stationed in the region, supposedly through thefts from ammunition stores. But Russian forces went further than this, and in conjunction with the Uzbek army, they participated in the assault on Dushanbe, ostensibly to avert Iranian and Afghan infiltration into Tajikistan. There is no evidence to support the contention that the government of Akbarsha Iskandarov was backed by either Iran or Afghanistan or that either of these two powers were planning intervention at this juncture.

However, in this manner Russia made its strategic objectives in the region very clear. Afghanistan must be kept out of internal Tajik politics.

On September 8, 1993, after the ouster of Rakhman Nabiyev, the Russian and Uzbek governments issued a joint warning to the effect that Central Asian security had been jeopardized by the Tajik civil war. The two governments asserted that: "Central Asia must not be allowed to be a new seat of tension and a target of geopolitical gambles ... Outside forces wish to sow and nurture seeds of national strife and political and civil confrontation," (*Washington Post*, 9-9-92). Russian Foreign Ministry spokesman, Sergei Yastrzhembsky, stated that Russia would not tolerate outside intervention in Tajikistan and "such a development would threaten the security not only of the Central Asian States but also of Russia." Reassurances by the Tajik coalition government that they neither intended to create an Islamic state nor turn away from Russia were ignored.

For its part, Uzbekistan justified intervention by the need to protect the 24 percent ethnic Uzbek population concentrated in eastern Tajikistan. Again, there was no evidence to suggest that ethnic Uzbeks were directly threatened by the Tajik civil war, although Uzbek and ethnic Russian refugees were reported to be fleeing from the fighting. Russian Journalist Oleg Panfilov, a former resident of Dushanbe, suggested that Uzbek President Islam Karimov's reasons for participation in the Tajik civil war were more fundamental than this. He asserted that "this is the beginning of a war for the future of Central Asia. That is why Karimov is cracking down on the opposition. He regards the Tajik opposition as an ideological threat to himself," (*Washington Post*, 2-5-93). Uzbek anxieties and Russian strategic objectives coincided in Tajikistan.

In late September 1993, Russian officials reported that Afghan smugglers were bringing weapons across the border to Tajikistan; that Tajik militants were being trained in Afghanistan by Muslim fundamentalist groups led by *mujaheddin* leader, Gulbuddin Hekmatyar; and that supporters of the coalition government were raiding Russian military bases responsible for guarding the Afghan-Tajik border. By September 30, Moscow had sent substantial troop reinforcements into Tajikistan and Russian forces seized control of Dushanbe airport. In December 1992, Russian troops were deployed at the behest of President Iskandarov to defend Dushanbe from pro-communist attack. In spite of this Russian protection, or perhaps because of it, the pro-Communist forces were able to capture the city on December 11. The new government immediately launched a campaign to suppress its opposition and establish control of the country. It has since adopted overtly pro-Moscow policies.

Incidents since the installation of the pro-Communist Tajik government and Russia's reassertion of its influence in Tajikistan suggest that, having been routed in Afghanistan once,

Russia is now bent on teaching the Afghans a lesson using Tajikistan as a springboard. In contrast with 1979, Moscow does not anticipate significant protest from the West. If Russia undertakes punitive strikes against Afghan targets, by dint of its propaganda, Moscow will now be seen as protecting Tajikistan's borders and combatting Islamic fundamentalism rather than violating the sovereignty of a neighboring country. As Russian First Deputy Foreign Minister, Anatoly Adamshin, stated in a June 13, 1993 article in *Moscow News*, "there is a second point distinguishing this war [in Tajikistan] from Afghanistan, for there the Russians and the Americans stood on different 'sides of the barricades.' Now the Americans want to help us to resolve this conflict, and the same is true of many other countries."

Since July 1993, there have been repeated reports of Russian-Afghan clashes across the Afghan border, and Afghan assaults on Russian border posts. Moscow has increased the Russian troop levels in the region in response, with the support of the Tajik government. In July 1993, Grachev warned Afghan guerilla forces that attacks on the Tajik border are tantamount to "an undeclared war by militant groups -- I'm not saying from where ... against Russia." He stated that Moscow would ensure that "the jackals are punished as they deserve." The Tajik civil war and these incidents on the border with Afghanistan clearly come under the rubric of the "current and potential hotbeds of local wars and armed conflicts in the vicinity of Russian borders," and "attacks on Russian armed forces and military facilities in foreign countries," outlined in the new Russian Military Doctrine. And, as stressed above, the doctrine sanctions the use of Russian forces beyond Russia's borders to protect its national objectives. In July 1993, General Vladimir Bondarenko the Russian Security Minister's Chief of Staff asserted that Russia has "the moral right to invade [Afghan] territory," (*Financial Times*, 7-21-93). On July 23, Russian troops shelled Afghanistan to repel a reported attack on the border.

On September 24, the CIS heads of state, at Russia's urging, adopted a decision to deploy coalition peacekeeping forces in Tajikistan to support Russian activities on the border. The first combined CIS troops were deployed in October. This is in line with that section of the Russian military doctrine which sanctions the use of Russian troops beyond its borders "in cooperation with other former republics" to quell conflicts. This further disguises Russia's activities by couching them within the framework of Commonwealth collective security.

Having previously chosen not to assume the role of mediator in the Tajik civil war, Moscow is now encouraging a dialogue between the government and the opposition to stabilize the country. With the pro-communist, pro-Moscow government ensconced in Dushanbe it has offered its services as both mediator and guarantor. Russia recognizes that an unstable Tajikistan with a weak

government propped up by Moscow and in the Russian ruble zone -- Tajik collateral notwithstanding -- is not the best guarantee for the success of its new economic union. As Alexander Shokin put it in his November 19 article in *Moscow News*:

"This is a kind of protectorate. But for Russia this is a burden economically ... and to take them under financial protectorate means to assume political responsibility for whatever is going on there. This means wasting money on military operations on financing, say, the Tajik government's reluctance or inability to negotiate with the opposition ... There is a need for some compromises, and first and foremost, financial support on Russia's part must be made contingent upon demands for political negotiations and a settlement of conflicts."

An unstable government under attack by rebel forces loyal to the former coalition government is also a security liability -- especially when these forces comprise Tajik refugees in Afghanistan who are receiving training and assistance from the *mujaheddin* and are not likely to simply disappear without a fight. If Moscow is not able to resolve the differences between the two factions and co-opt the Tajik opposition into the pro-Moscow government it will become increasingly bogged down in a prolonged conflict where it is the only guarantor of the Dushanbe government's existence. Commentators in Russia have already begun to refer to Tajikistan as Russia's Vietnam. The political crisis that Vietnam caused in the United States does not bode well for the Russian Federation.

## Georgia

Russia points to the Caucasus as its own version of Yugoslavia. Georgia's inability in the post-Soviet era to form a viable and stable government, compounded by civil wars with three of its constituent administrative regions have undermined the country's independence and international standing.

Friction between Georgia's ethnic minorities arose when former dissident Zviad Gamsakhurdia was elected Chairman of the Georgian Supreme Soviet in October, 1990. The language and citizenship policies of Gamsakhurdia's government prompted complaints from non-ethnic Georgians that the country was becoming increasingly chauvinistic. Indeed, Gamsakhurdia's nationalistic declarations could easily have been interpreted as threatening to minorities. As a result, South Ossetians and Abkhazians, who had been lobbying for independence from Georgia since their subordination to the republic in the 1920s and 1930s respectively, sought secession and incorporation in the Russian Federation. Heightened tension eventually led to warfare between the Georgian center and both republics: with South Ossetia in December 1990 and with Abkhazia in August 1992.

In addition to its problems with its minorities, Georgia has suffered from an internal civil war leading to the overthrow of then President Gamsakhurdia in late December 1991 and the return of Eduard Shevardnadze, the former Communist-era Georgian leader and erstwhile Soviet Foreign Minister. Despite high western expectations that Shevardnadze would quell the violence within the newly-independent state and institute economic reforms, he has been unable to halt the economic downturn, end the conflicts with ethnic minorities, or control the Georgian mafia which holds significant power in the country and the military.

As the West expresses its frustration over the anarchy in Georgia, Russia has presented itself as peacekeeper, willing to mediate in the region in the absence of United Nations and Conference on Security and Cooperation in Europe (CSCE) interest and ability. Rather than serving as an honest broker and securing a lasting resolution however, Russia has appeared to exploit the chaos in Georgia to the point where the independence-seeking Georgian state has been forced into the CIS and Moscow has assured Russia's continued military presence in the country.

After pledging neutrality in the conflict between secessionist Abkhazia and Georgian government troops, Russian military forces provided the Abkhazians with military equipment, training and personnel which was instrumental in defeating President Eduard Shevardnadze's forces. When Shevardnadze's troops had been driven from Abkhazia, and a simultaneous attempt by Gamsakhurdia to regain power nearly toppled Shevardnadze's government, Russia exacted



concessions including a mandate for indefinite Russian military presence, the free use of Black Sea bases, and Georgia's commitment to join the CIS. Only after receiving these concessions, did Russia provide assistance to Shevardnadze. As a result, Russia has ensured a compliant government in the most staunchly anti-Russian republic of the former Soviet Union.

Russia seized the opportunity to manipulate the conflicts in Georgia to protect its strategic objectives which include: maintaining access to the Black Sea and retaining the naval ports along Georgia's coast; preserving control over key military installations and bases, including Eshera<sup>11</sup> and Bombora in Abkhazia; protecting railroads and pipelines through Georgia to pro-Russian Armenia, which is cut-off from Russia by Georgia and Azerbaijan; preventing the unstable Muslim republics of the Russian Federation which border Georgia from pursuing their own agendas in the region, and securing Georgia's border with Turkey.

In addition, Moscow had two other, more expedient motives for intervention. First, as discussed in above in the Sections I and II, Russia, began lobbying for a United Nations mandate and funding for its peace-keeping efforts in its "Near Abroad." When the UN failed to agree to Russian Foreign Minister Kozyrev's proposition, Russia allowed Eduard Shevardnadze, the United States' ally in ending the cold war, to suffer a well- publicized defeat. In such a manner, Russia presented the justification for its role as a peacekeeper and recipient of UN funds. Secondly, the former Red Army, suffering an identity crisis, due in part to Shevardnadze's actions while Soviet Foreign Minister, held him responsible for the collapse of the Soviet Union and the subsequent demise of their status. They sought to humiliate him.

Since 1990, Georgia had consistently rebuffed Russia's attempts to maintain military and political ties, thereby threatening Russia's objectives in the region. Declaring independence in April 1991, long before the collapse of the Soviet Union, and refusing to sign the Union Treaty, Georgia demonstrated early on that it had no intention of participating in any sort of Russian-led cooperative arrangement. While all of the former republics except the Baltic States initially joined the Commonwealth of Independent States, Georgia abstained, asserting that such a proposal was nothing more than a revived Soviet empire. The Georgian Parliament also pushed Russia for the early withdrawal of its troops, thus rejecting the concept of a CIS military union. Eduard Shevardnadze's return to Georgia in March 1992 did not change things for the better as far as

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<sup>11</sup> The Russian Military installation in Eshera, near Sukhumi the Abkhazian capital, is said to house a "several million dollar" tectonic laboratory designed to study the possibility of using directed underground explosions for military purposes. The location of this laboratory within Abkhazia provides a partial explanation for Russia's interest in the republic. See "Shevardnadze Notes Problems, Secret Lab," *FBIS-SOV-93-039*, p. 68.

Moscow was concerned. Like Gamsakhurdia, Shevardnadze refused to follow Moscow's dictate, adhered to the concept of independence, refused to join the CIS and called for troop withdrawals.

Seeking to preserve its leverage in the region, Russia initially responded to Georgia's efforts for independence by denying Georgia the credits it provided to other former republics, and launching an economic blockade. Trade between the two countries ground to a halt and telephone service and gas pipelines were repeatedly severed. Russia also imposed an embargo on key medical supplies including insulin. As a result, the country's GNP declined, inflation soared and consumer goods and medication became scarce. Georgia remained resilient, however, affirming its conviction to remain free of Russian domination.

Russia therefore increased its pressure on Georgia by refusing to remove the 18,000 Soviet troops from its territory. In early February 1993, Georgia and Russia had negotiated the removal of Russian troops from the Turkish border by the end of 1994 and of all troops by 1995. However, on February 22, 1993, Russian Defense Minister Pavel Grachev announced that the removal of troops from Georgia would result in the loss of Russian control of the Black Sea and as such "every measure to ensure that our troops remain there," should be taken, (*Izvestiya*, February 23, 1993). Three days later, he toured the Caucasus and discussed plans to reinforce the Russian Federation's North Caucasian Military District with troops withdrawn from East Germany and the Baltics.

When Russia's economic blockade failed to overcome Georgia's intransigence, it began supporting the Abkhazian secessionist movement. Moscow also capitalized on Georgia's conflict with the South Ossetian Autonomous Oblast, confirming that there are actors in Moscow eager to conduct the same divide-and-rule policy that Russian and Soviet governments have pursued in the Caucasus for more than two centuries. The result of these tactics has been the dismemberment of Georgia, as the South Ossetian and Abkhazian Autonomous Republics have attained de facto independence.

In Georgia's first conflict in its post-independence era -- with South Ossetia -- the extent of Russia's role is not entirely clear. Fighting began in January 1991 as a result of President Gamsakhurdia's attempt to crush the South Ossetian secession movement. The South Ossetian government adamantly insisted that it would reunify with North Ossetia, a republic within the Russian Federation. The Georgian government contended that the territorial integrity of the country must be maintained. The situation was exacerbated by thousands of South Ossetian refugees who fled across the border into North Ossetia fueling a violent territorial dispute between North Ossetia and Ingushetia in the Russian Federation.

Georgia maintains that Russia supported South Ossetia in an effort to thwart the nascent

state's efforts to break with Moscow, and as a pretext for sending additional troops into the region. Evidence for these charges is minimal. However, in June 1992, after over a year of fighting, the then Speaker of the Russian Parliament Ruslan Khasbulatov indicated that the Parliament saw the conflict as obstructing the "state interests" of Russia. As such, he warned Shevardnadze that if he did not immediately comply with Russia's demands for a cease-fire, Russia "may find itself forced to immediately consider the question of annexing Ossetia to Russia," (*Washington Post*, 6-16-92).

Moreover, despite Russian denials of intervention, the outcome that Georgia feared is now reality. Russian troops moved into the region as peacekeepers in July 1992, effectively giving Russia license to occupy the republic. Furthermore, Russia has placed considerable pressure on Georgia to acquiesce to South Ossetia's demands for autonomy or face further economic ruin. Through September, 1993 Russia linked the cancellation of economic sanctions against Georgia and military assistance in its civil war with Abkhazia to the resolution of the conflict with South Ossetia. Russia further demanded that Georgia pay for two-thirds of South Ossetia's economic reconstruction and the cost of resettling of refugees. In the meantime, Georgia has little control over the autonomous republic, which is now essentially dominated by the Russian military command.

This case is important, not as a demonstration of Russia's malicious intent; indeed, Russia did not initiate the Georgian-South Ossetian conflict, and had some justification for attempting to solve it, given the ramifications across the border in North Ossetia. However, Russia has benefitted from the conflict in that the deployment of Russian peacekeepers gave it its first permanent foothold in Georgia and initiated the first stage of the country's dismemberment.

In Abkhazia, the evidence of Russian covert intervention against Georgia is much stronger. While steadfastly professing neutrality, Russian troops remaining in Georgia and in the Transcaucasian Military District played a crucial role in the victory of 93,000 Abkhazians over 3.8 million Georgians. Moreover, Abkhazia's only access to weapons was from Russian military bases in the area, or through its northern border with the Russian Federation, a boundary which Russia claimed to monitor. Despite assurances that Russian troops controlled the border, several thousand "volunteers" of the Caucasian Mountain People managed to slip through to provide equipment and troop assistance to the small Abkhazian army. The Russian army also controls the sole airfield in Abkhazia from which SU-type aircraft, used in numerous bombing raids against Georgian positions, can take off and land.

The Abkhazia leadership itself did not deny that Abkhaz fighters had received arms and other forms of material support from Russian military sources. And, as Thomas Goltz writes in a

recent article in *Foreign Policy*:

"Indeed, a few may believe the pious fiction that Armenia, with a population of 3 million, is not actively helping the 150,000 Armenian residents of Karabakh to humble 7 million Azeris, but the idea that the Abkhaz fighters, drawn from a population of just 90,000 [sic] could hold off forces drawn from 4 million [sic] Georgians without outside aid is surely incredible. With the greatest respect to the scrappy fighters in Karabakh and Abkhazia, who may well be the best trained, battle-hardened, and highly motivated forces in the former USSR, there are limits beyond which reason cannot leap."<sup>12</sup>

Russian Foreign Minister Kozyrev himself admitted during an interview in late November, 1993, that the "Abkhaz demanded military aid from Russia," and when confronted with specific facts, did not deny that the military had provided it to them, (*Nezavisimaya Gazeta*, 11-24-93).

Although this conflict too, must be traced to Gamsakhurdia's menacing brand of nationalism, the British-based human rights group International Alert submits that "the problem could never have reached its present magnitude without real or promised support from the Russians."<sup>13</sup>

Initially, Moscow did not pursue a unified and coherent policy to capitalize on the Georgian-Abkhazian conflict. Rather, there is considerable evidence that the Russian government and President Yeltsin were disturbed by the conflict and were completely unprepared to confront the issue.<sup>14</sup> In fact, Yeltsin himself seemed to have made a good-faith effort to negotiate a cease-fire on September 3, 1992,<sup>15</sup> but was bedeviled by Georgian and Abkhazian lack of resolve to reach an accord.

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<sup>12</sup> Goltz, "The Hidden Russian Hand," p. 104-05.

<sup>13</sup> *International Alert*, "Georgia on the Path to Democracy and The Abkhaz Issue, Mission Report, November 22-December 4, 1992," p. 1. International Alert traveled to Georgia and Abkhazia at the request of the Deputy Foreign Minister of Georgia Tedo Japaridze, acting on the behalf of Eduard Shevardnadze, to investigate ways of developing a framework for peaceful relations in the region.

<sup>14</sup> See Catherine Dale, "Turmoil in Abkhazia: Russian Responses," *RFE/RL Research Report*, Vol. 2, No. 34, August 27, 1993, pp. 48-55.

<sup>15</sup> See Dmitry Lonyagin, "Russia, Georgia and Abkhazia Reach Peace Accord," *Commerzant*, September 8, 1992, p. 5.

Conservatives opposed to Yeltsin made it known that they wished to respond to Abkhazian leaders' calls to intervene "actively." The well-known conservative weekly newspaper *Den'* suggested that the conflict could be used as a method for reestablishing the empire. Further, "a number of authors used the opportunity to castigate Shevardnadze for his role in the disintegration of the Soviet Union, to accuse him of being a US agent and to assert that it was Shevardnadze who still held the strings of Russian politics."<sup>16</sup> In addition, elements of the military establishment, "fundamentally challenged Yeltsin's approach, asserting that many members of the Russian Armed Forces in fact sympathized with the plight of the Abkhaz and that Russian troops could successfully defend Russians in Abkhazia if allowed to do so."<sup>17</sup>

Georgian troops strengthened these interventionist arguments by launching a series of raids on Russian military units stationed in the region and by engaging in well-documented acts of human rights abuses against Abkhazian civilians in September and October.<sup>18</sup> The Russian Defense Ministry, therefore, sanctioned the use of force and permitted troops to return fire without warning, (*ITAR-TASS*, 10-27-92). In spite of the new military decree, however, "neutrality" remained the official Russian policy.

In the absence of a more explicit Russian policy, it appears that elements with an interest in the region filled the vacuum, abandoned Yeltsin's official pledge of "neutrality,"<sup>19</sup> and escalated the conflict. The evidence for the involvement of the Russian troops stationed in the Caucasus is strong. Initially, however, the troops' participation may in part be attributed to economic adventurism. International Alert suggested that "major portions of the stores of military equipment and supplies the Red Army once maintained in Georgia are no longer under military Russian control, having been sold or turned over to various Georgian forces, transferred to Nagorno-

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<sup>16</sup> *Den'*, Nos. 30, 34, 36, and 39, 1992, as cited in Catherine Dale, "Turmoil in Abkhazia," p. 52.

<sup>17</sup> *Krasnaya Zvezda*, September 15, October 7 and 16, 1992, as cited in Catherine Dale, "Turmoil in Abkhazia," p. 53.

<sup>18</sup> See *UNPO*, "Report of an *Unrepresented Nations and Peoples Organization* (UNPO) Mission to Abkhazia, Georgia and the Northern Caucasus," November, 1992, p. 16.

<sup>19</sup> See "Yeltsin Assures No Direct Involvement in CIS Conflicts," *FBIS-SOV-92-195*, p. 1. Yeltsin admitted that Russia retained its troops in the region because "it is necessary to exercise control over the railway passing through Abkhazian territory. Yes there is shooting there, but we are not involved in any direct hostilities."

Karabakh, permitted to fall into Ossetian or Abkhaz hands, sold or stolen."<sup>20</sup> It was their contention that while Russia was indeed "encouraging [Abkhazia] opportunistically," the situation was inflamed by the fact that many Russian troops stationed in the area were profiting from the conflict by selling their weapons to the highest bidder, or by serving as paid mercenaries.

But while Yeltsin's government may not have originally intended to become involved in Georgia's conflict, a new policy seems to have emerged in the spring of 1993. The priorities of the Russian military began to play a more significant role in Moscow's policy toward the former republics. Yeltsin appeared to acquiesce to military demands to exert greater influence in the Georgian conflict. On February 28, Yeltsin made a speech to the Civic Union suggesting that the UN should recognize Russia's special ability to guarantee peace and stability in the former Soviet Union. Prior to this, Russian Defense Minister Grachev had announced that Russian troops would not be removed from strategically important Georgia, and in fact, that the Russian North Caucasian military region would be fortified. Grachev had also paid an unofficial visit to the Adzharia Autonomous Republic in Georgia where he hinted that the region fell within the sphere of Russia's geopolitical interest, thus igniting fears that Russia would try to open a second front against Georgia, (*ITAR-TASS*, 2-15-93).

With these new policy statements, Grachev and the military seemed poised to capitalize on Georgia's instability and thus to assert themselves as a major force in Russian politics. Indeed, evidence of the Russian military's participation in the conflict began to mount. On February 20, a Russian SU-25 jet, having taken off from the Bombora airfield, bombed a residential area in Sukhumi. Minister Grachev traveled to Abkhazia on February 26 and to Adzharia on February 27, in what *ITAR-TASS* called a mission to "Support the Troops." His trip did not include a stopover in Tbilisi or discussions with Shevardnadze, as protocol dictated, lending credence to the assertion

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<sup>20</sup> *International Alert*, "Georgia on the Path to Democracy and the Abkhaz Issue: Report of the International Alert Mission to Georgia," December 29, 1992, p. 9. In each of the republics where there has been reported intervention by Russian troops, and where Russian weapons have been flaunted by secessionist or insurgent forces the Russian authorities have asserted that these weapons have been stolen by the irregulars from Russian arms stores. This has been the case in Azerbaijan, Moldova and Tajikistan. If it is true, then Russian weapons must be the most poorly guarded in the world and Russian troops must be easily intimidated by local militias. Even within its own borders the Russian army seems incapable of holding on to its equipment. In a celebrated incident during the Ingush-North Ossetian conflict in the Russian North Caucasus, 38 Russian paratroopers were held and disarmed on a mountain path by 27 unidentified "militants" who seized 27 AK sub-machine guns, 2 sniper rifles, 7 grenade launchers, 1 machine gun, 4 radio stations and assorted ammunition, (*ITAR-TASS*, 7-26-93).

that Grachev supported the raids in Abkhazia. Furthermore, Minister Grachev's visit to the troops in Abkhazia did not result in their strict observation of the neutrality pledge. In fact, bombings on Sukhumi increased following his visit. After one specific instance on March 14, when two SU-25 jets bombed Sukhumi residential areas, Shevardnadze pointed out that "the bombing was carried out by aircraft of the Russian Army -- let's put it this way -- because there are no other aircraft there." He also added that the Russian position during ongoing negotiations for a cease-fire "had become noticeably tougher," (*Moscow Mayak Radio Network*, 3-15-93).

Grachev denied the allegations, and suggested that the raids were being conducted by Georgian planes painted with Russian insignia because "A real war is being waged in Georgia by the government against its own people. When large losses began to emerge, there began a search for an enemy to whom they could be attributed," (*ITAR-TASS*, 3-18-93).

The following day, March 19, a Russian SU-27 fighter plane crashed, killing the Russian Air Force pilot, Major Vazlav A. Shipko thus repudiating Grachev's allegations that Georgian were bombing their own targets, (*Interfax*, 3-19-93). The event also provided proof that Russian troops were assisting the Abkhazians.

Even the Russian press noticed that Yeltsin had seemingly turned over Moscow's management of the conflict to the military. On March 20, *Nezavisimaya Gazeta* commented on the growing tension between Georgia and Russia: "Bewilderment is growing in Tbilisi over Russian President Boris Yeltsin's silence with respect to the Abkhaz conflict, but despite the difficult situation Russian-Georgian talks continue in Moscow. Still, the question of whether Yeltsin is going to leave Shevardnadze one on one with the Russian military or will choose to interfere in the events remains open."

Bombings continued throughout the month of March, and Shevardnadze repeated his appeal for negotiations with President Yeltsin to normalize relations between the two countries. That Yeltsin had turned over Russian involvement of the Georgian-Abkhazian conflict to Grachev was confirmed when the Russian Ambassador Zemsky informed Shevardnadze that Grachev would lead the negotiations in Sochi, (*FBIS-SOV-93-064*). Shevardnadze expressed dissatisfaction after the meeting, which resulted in an announcement that Russian troops would remain in Georgia until 1995.

As a consequence of the deteriorating Russian-Georgian relations, on April 12, Shevardnadze traveled to Ukraine where he met with President Kravchuk. He explained that Georgia and Ukraine had a mutual interest in containing a "third force." He said, "I believe Ukraine understands full well this third force is interested in destabilizing not only Georgia," (*Financial*

*Times*, 4-13-93) The two men signed a friendship treaty and over 200 other documents pledging mutual assistance. This move can only have antagonized Moscow further. In its wake, the bombings of Sukhumi and fighting escalated.

In May Yeltsin and Shevardnadze managed to meet and a cease fire agreement was signed in Moscow on May 14. The agreement was to be enforced by the United Nations and CSCE, with volunteers from Ukraine, (*Los Angeles Times*, 5-15-93). The cease-fire held for less than a week. As a result, both Abkhazia and Georgia issued stronger appeals for intervention by the UN, NATO or the CSCE to resolve the conflict.

Russia, however, was not interested in international negotiations and peacekeeping efforts. A letter from Murrack Goulding, the Under-Secretary General for Political Affairs of the United Nations on July 2, 1993 provides insight into Russia's true intentions. The letter was written in response to both Georgia and Abkhazia's repeated requests for international mediation and to Georgia's request for the deployment of UN military observers. Goulding wrote the following to Abkhazian leader, Vladislav Ardzinba:

"At a meeting in Vienna on 15 June, Foreign Minister Kozyrev told [the Secretary General] that the Russian Government, at this stage, had serious reservations about a United Nations peace conference and stressed that it preferred to pursue regional efforts under the Agreement of 3 September, 1992. It is hoped that the Russian authorities will reconsider this position, which is the only obstacle to the convening of a convergence. The Secretary General would value your support in this."

Having tasked itself with solving the conflict, Russia made a pretense of seeking a resolution. Following the collapse of the May 14 cease-fire, Foreign Minister Kozyrev warned Georgia and Abkhazia that if they failed to sign a cease-fire Russia would take harsh measures, (*Financial Times*, 7-6-93).

Russia appointed special envoy Boris Pastukhov to mediate a new cease-fire. Pastukhov did not uphold any semblance of neutrality, however. When asked to comment on Georgia's shooting down of a Russian helicopter evacuating Russian refugees in December 1992, Pastukhov told the Russian military journal *Krasnaya Zvezda* that the act was an intentional act of barbarism and indicated that Georgia's actions would have a detrimental effect on any Russian-Georgian agreements. He also informed the Georgian government that, "We [Russia] will not let you win the war with Abkhazia," (*Moscow News*, 9-3-93).



Pastukhov's statements and another visit to the region by Grachev, stepped up the pressure on Georgia. As a result, on July 28, Georgia was induced to sign an agreement with Abkhazia in the Russian Black Sea resort of Sochi. The accord was intended to be a prelude to further negotiations on the resolution of the conflict. According to Shevardnadze, Georgia made substantial concessions, including the restoration of the Abkhazian government and the withdrawal of Georgian troops and equipment from the conflict zone.

As a result of the treaty, negotiations between Georgia and Russia resumed. After five rounds, however, definitive agreements remained elusive due in part to Georgia's resistance to Russia's retention of five military bases on its territory: Batumi, Poti, Akhalkalaki, Tbilisi and Gudauta.<sup>21</sup> Tensions between the two increased when 123 Georgian parliament members sent an appeal to UN Secretary General Boutros Ghali calling for UN peacekeepers to be deployed in the region as they distrusted the Russian forces, (*Moscow News*, 9-3-93).

In the midst of the mounting Georgian-Russian friction, Abkhazia broke the July 28 cease-fire. On September 16 it launched a well-organized offensive to drive Shevardnadze's troops out of the republic. Abkhazian troops were armed with heavy artillery and multiple-rocket launchers. The soldiers were also conveniently in possession of the breechblocks for their heavy weapons which, according to the Sochi agreement, should have been turned over to the Russian military. In fact, the transfer of the breechblocks had been confirmed by international observers, (*Nezavisimaya Gazeta*, 11-24-93). The assumption can only be that the Russian military restored the equipment to the

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<sup>21</sup> Russia has made the importance of its bases in Georgia and the Caucasus very clear and one can surmise that Georgia's refusal to recognize Moscow's strategic interests in the region was a major factor behind the subsequent Abkhazian offensive. This is supported by the fact that in September 1993, Moscow requested that the leaders of the United States, Germany, France, Great Britain and other treaty partners release it from its obligations under the Conventional Armed Forces in Europe (CFE) treaty and permit Russia to deploy additional tanks and heavy weapons in the Caucasus. Moscow claimed that the region's security was severely impaired by the currently permissible tank levels. On November 18, First Russian Deputy Chief of Staff, Vladimir Zhurbenko, stated that Russia would not bargain with its security and would "handle the treaty on conventional forces in Europe guided by its national interests." He urged NATO to eliminate Chapter 5 of the treaty on flank limitations which would then permit the basing of a military grouping in the North Caucasus. Zhurbenko stated that according to Russia's new military doctrine, troops could be used to ensure stability in a number of Russia's regions. The North Caucasus was one of those regions. In addition, he suggested that the troops might also be used across the Russian border in Transcaucasia (Georgia, Armenia and Azerbaijan), (*Interfax*, 11-18-93).

Abkhazian forces before the offensive. With this heavy weaponry, Abkhazia was successful in defeating the disorganized Georgian troops and tanks that remained after their partial withdrawal under the July agreement.

That Russian military units in the region provided the Abkhazians with their weaponry, either outright, or by selling it to them, is clear. There is also evidence that elements in Moscow encouraged or even ordered the Abkhazian offensive. With thousands of Russian troops in the region, in addition to sophisticated intelligence, Russia must have known of Abkhazia's intention to launch an offensive. Nevertheless, during a stormy meeting with Georgian Defense Minister Giorgi Karkarashvili on September 15 hours before the offensive, Russian Defense Minister Grachev pressed him to prepare a treaty confirming the legal status of Russian troops in Georgia and linked the resolution of the issue to the signing of any treaty of friendship and cooperation, *as well as the restoration of lasting peace in Abkhazia* (emphasis added), (*ITAR-TASS*, 9-25-93). He also demanded that Georgia solve its problems with South Ossetia. These reports indicate that Grachev intended to exact the concessions from Georgia which Russia had thus far failed to obtain, or else he would facilitate Georgia's military defeat. On September 16, after Abkhazian forces had launched their attack, Russian Vice Premier Alexander Shokhin reiterated Grachev's demand that Georgia solve its conflicts with both South Ossetia and Abkhazia, as well as pay substantial reparations to the regions before Russia would resume any cooperation with Georgia. Shokin's remarks made it clear that Moscow had no intention of attempting to enforce the cease-fire or of aiding Georgia against the Abkhazian onslaught, (*Interfax*, 9-17-93).

A report in *Moscow News* seems to confirm that Russia intended to use the Abkhazian conflict to further some purpose of its own. The article reported that hours after the attack on Sukhumi, Boris Pastukhov and Valery Shuikov, a member of the Russian Parliament, arrived in Tbilisi. After listening to the men speak for "a long time," Shevardnadze lost his temper and exclaimed, "I don't understand what you are talking about! A war has broken out. What does Russia want? If you want to see someone else instead of me, tell me straight away. I shall help you myself, but don't shed the blood of my people," (*Moscow News*, 9-24-93). On October 6, the Georgian newspaper *Svobodnaya Gruzija* provided evidence that Russian Vice President Alexander Rutskoi had issued the order to Abkhazia to launch the offensive. The paper reported that a Russian soldier, Mikhail Demidov, taken prisoner for fighting with the Abkhazians, had stated on September 17 that "it was former Russian Vice President Alexander Rutskoi who gave permission to V. Ardzinba to launch the offensive against Sukhumi on September 16."

Although it is plausible that such an order occurred, the fact that it was revealed by a

Russian soldier under interrogation and published in a Georgian newspaper, undermines the credibility of the charge. The article does however demonstrate how Shevardnadze persisted in attempts to court Yeltsin. From the beginning of the conflict, Shevardnadze consistently accused Moscow of involvement, but was careful to avoid naming Yeltsin as the force behind the intervention. Rather, Shevardnadze placed the blame on the Russian Parliament and other conservative groups including Red Army officers. He also maintained throughout the conflict that the "key to peace lies in Russian hands," (*Izvestiya*, 4-1-93). Shevardnadze frequently made statements in support of Yeltsin in his struggles with the Parliament. Indeed, the *Svobodnaya Gruzziya* article names Rutskoi as the perpetrator, as opposed to Yeltsin. On the date of publication, Rutskoi was conveniently in Lefortovo prison under heavy guard after losing his power struggle with the Yeltsin regime. Shevardnadze thus gave Yeltsin the opportunity to change Russia's policy toward Georgia by blaming the previous months of support for Abkhazia on the conservative Parliament and former Vice President. As a consequence of this imagined compact with Yeltsin, Shevardnadze turned immediately to the Russian President when Abkhazia launched its offensive, and asked for Russian intervention, (*Interfax*, 9-16-93).

Yeltsin, however, suggesting that perhaps the existing policy toward Georgia was satisfactory, refused to respond to Shevardnadze's appeals. *Moscow News* on September 24, 1993, reported that in response to Shevardnadze's repeated phone calls to Yeltsin, he received the message, "The President is not available." Yeltsin demonstrated that Moscow's assistance would not come without a price.

When his pleas to Yeltsin were ignored, Shevardnadze appealed to Defense Minister Grachev to stop the Abkhazian offensive during a meeting in Sochi on September 17. Grachev, after criticizing Shevardnadze for the resumption of fighting, responded by offering to deploy two divisions and one brigade in the region, (*New York Times*, 9-19-93). These troops were in addition to the 18,000 still stationed in Georgia. Faced with fighting alone, or suffering what was tantamount to a Russian invasion, Shevardnadze declined Grachev's offer and flew to Sukhumi to provide moral support for his troops. Meanwhile, UN observers described military trucks with Russian markings transporting Abkhazian forces, and three Russian tanks and six armored personnel carriers moving toward Sukhumi. By mid-day, the city was surrounded on three sides.

As Abkhazian troops entered Sukhumi on September 20, Shevardnadze reconsidered and asked Grachev to deploy the Russian troops. Despite the thousands of troops in the area, and Russia's overwhelming fire-power, Grachev declined, noting, "Now I can't send these forces to Abkhazia no matter how strong my wish to do so might be, because over the past two days, the

situation in the region of Sukhumi has changed." Grachev claimed the situation had now become too dangerous for the deployment of Russian forces, (*Interfax*, 9-20-93).

Yet while Grachev was unwilling to send in peacekeepers to guarantee the peace, he showed that he was willing to help Shevardnadze's forces to surrender. The Russian Defense Minister suggested that Georgia continue its evacuation of Sukhumi as mandated by the Sochi agreement and added that he had convinced Abkhazian leader Ardzinba to stop shelling Sukhumi and not to send troops in the city so that Shevardnadze could evacuate. Grachev would also facilitate the withdrawal of Georgian troops from Abkhazia: "I also asked [Ardzinba] to open a corridor for the Georgian troops' unrestricted withdrawal," (*Interfax*, 9-20-93).

Shevardnadze refused Grachev's offer of assistance in surrendering and continued to fight in Sukhumi. Meanwhile, deposed Georgian President Zviad Gamsakhurdia returned from exile on September 24 to lead his supporters in their simultaneous attack on the western Georgian region of Mingrelia. Gamsakhurdia capitalized on the rout in Abkhazia for what appears to be his own political ends.

Facing challenges on two fronts, Shevardnadze's troops were unable to withstand the assault on Sukhumi. Russia's only reaction was to turn off the electricity and phone service in Abkhazia and issue a reprimand to Abkhazia for breaking the Sochi agreement. Sukhumi fell on September 27. The following day, *Interfax* printed Shevardnadze's statement to the Georgian public. The statement reflected both Russian pressure and Shevardnadze's desperate attempts to appeal to Moscow:

"Sukhumi could have been saved yesterday and this could have been done by Russia alone. We asked Moscow for help. I sent a telegram to Russia saying that I agreed that Georgia would join the CIS even though I was opposed to it until recently. I also agreed with the Russian Defense Minister's proposal of additional troops to enter Georgia due to the Abkhazian conflict. Georgia was virtually forced to its knees, but even this was not enough."

After losing the war with Abkhazian separatists, Shevardnadze's difficulties continued. Gamsakhurdia's forces, inspired by the return of their leader, pressed on with their offensive. They seized the majority of western Georgia and severed the only supply routes to Tbilisi as well as to Armenia. Shevardnadze reiterated his offer to join the CIS and begged Grachev to help defeat Gamsakhurdia's forces before they toppled his government.

Russia remained disinterested. Finally, on October 8, Shevardnadze traveled to Moscow where he agreed to join the CIS on behalf of the Georgian government, leased the Black Sea Port of Poti to Russia and permitted Russian troops to remain in Georgia indefinitely. In return, Shevardnadze exacted an agreement from Armenia, Azerbaijan and Russia to send troops to gain control of key railway lines between Poti and Tbilisi.

Shevardnadze told *Interfax* on October 18 that Georgia had no alternative. "We turned for assistance to almost every other country and we did receive a lot of help," he said, "But, for quite objective reasons, we did not achieve our main goal, which was to guarantee our country's independence and autonomy." He stated that membership in the CIS was necessary for Georgia to repair relations with Russia. "If there is not peace in Abkhazia, then there will not be peace in Georgia, and we will not regain Abkhazia unless we improve our relations with Russia." The alternative was "full dismemberment." Russia responded positively to Shevardnadze's concessions. On October 10, the *Moscow News* reported that Russia would lend the necessary support to Tbilisi, and that it would send troops to the conflict zone.

In spite of this report and Shevardnadze's statement of intent to join the CIS, however, Russia continued to remain aloof -- ostensibly until the CIS accords were signed and ratified by the Georgian Government and Parliament. Foreign Minister Kozyrev ruled out unilateral Russian involvement and military deployment arguing that it would constitute "interference in the internal affairs of a sovereign state." Grachev insisted that when and if Russian troops became involved, they would merely guard the supply lines and would not engage in fighting, or supply weapons to Shevardnadze's troops, because "Georgia is an independent state with which Russia does not have any agreement on mutual military cooperation. Georgia is not a CIS country and is not thus part of a collective security agreement," (*Interfax*, 10-20-93).

The Russian negotiator in the Sochi cease-fire, Pastukhov, shed further light on Russia's stalling in the deployment of forces. He asserted that "Russia would like to get some opportunities on the Black Sea Coast [sic]." At this juncture the issue of Russia's leasing of the Georgian ports had not yet been resolved completely, only "in principle," (*Interfax*, 10-13-93).

It was only on October 23, the day after Shevardnadze signed the CIS agreement that Yeltsin ordered the deployment of troops, (*Associated Press*, 10-23-93). At this point, it appeared that the whole of Georgia might fall under Gamsakhurdia's onslaught. Officially, the agreement with Russia did not result in assistance to Tbilisi against Gamsakhurdia. Moscow stated that it was simply the guarding the railways which were of strategic importance to Russian military installations in the area. However, "neutral" Russia's guarding of railways was a remarkably

effective device. Russia's "neutrality" helped Shevardnadze's troops immediately reverse Gamsakhurdia's offensive and launch successful counter-attacks. Gamsakhurdia's forces began their retreat.

In spite of the remarkable victories achieved suddenly by disorganized and exhausted Georgian troops, Russia continued to feign neutrality. On October 25, Colonel Gennady Dolgachyov, Chief of the Press Center of the Transcaucasia Military District, told *Interfax* that since Sept 1992, Russia had not supplied Georgia with any military machinery. Russia had even failed to fulfil quotas set by the Tashkent agreement, whereby Russia would divide Soviet Military equipment among the all the former republics. A Russian general in Tbilisi insisted that the Russian servicemen reported to be operating the T-72 tanks were perhaps, "civilian volunteers," but were not active-duty Russian troops. Major General Vasily Belchenko, Deputy Commander of Russia's Transcaucasus Military District also denied that Russia had transferred weapons to Georgia, (*Washington Post*, 10-27-93).

The Georgian forces testify to the contrary. Even before the official signing of the CIS agreements on October 22, Russia was reported to have begun to assist the Georgian government. Shevardnadze told *Interfax* on October 13, that the situation was "more than severe," but that after his decision to join the CIS, the government forces had received "a certain portion of most advanced military equipment" making him confident that his troops would be able to defeat Gamsakhurdia's forces.

After Shevardnadze signed the CIS agreement, Russia's role was more pronounced. According to Georgian Deputy Interior Minister Gela Lanchava, the 35th Military Corps based in Kutaisi gave five computerized T-72 tanks and 14 armored personnel carriers filled with cannon to the Georgian troops. He added that Russians, Ukrainians and one Armenian manned the tanks in battle and briefed Georgians on how to coordinate maneuvers. Captain Levan Iordanishvili, a Georgian fighting in Samtredia where he saw the Russian tankmen said, "That's why we are overwhelming them now - because of the technology, not our people," (*Washington Post*, 10-27-93).

Russian ships from the Black Sea Fleet in Sevastopol were also moved in to guard the railways and ports, against Ukraine's wishes. On November 4, nine vessels of the Black Sea Fleet positioned themselves off the coast of Poti. Marines seized control of the city and guarded installations and supply routes. With the arrival of the Black Sea Fleet, all of Gamsakhurdia's forces disbanded and he withdrew, ending the conflict. On November 12, Shevardnadze told *Interfax* that he would welcome the Black Sea Fleet's permanent presence in Poti.

Russia ultimately assisted Georgia, not out of sympathy for Shevardnadze, or for a desire for peace, but because Russia had exacted the necessary concessions from Georgia and the victory of Gamsakhurdia would have meant another anti-Russian government in the republic. By propping up Shevardnadze, Russia has essentially produced a compliant government in the most anti-Russian region of the former Soviet Union. It was a clever manoeuvre in the longer term effort to secure Georgia's commitment to reintegration with Russia.

It may of course be argued that Russia acted correctly in refusing to assist Shevardnadze's forces against Abkhazia and Gamsakhurdia. Maintaining neutrality in conflicts between other parties is a wise policy. However, Russia was not a neutral party, but rather an orchestrator. Had Russia chosen to end the conflict, it most certainly had the means to do so. With 18,000 well-trained and well-armed troops in Georgia, Russia could have separated the disorganized and beleaguered forces of Abkhazia and Georgia and guaranteed the July 28 cease fire. Furthermore, in the unlikely event that Russia had sincere doubts in its ability to exact a lasting peace, it could have agreed to the Secretary General's suggestion in June for UN peace talks. It did neither.

Russia's motives are easily explained. A lasting peace in Shevardnadze's Georgia was not in Russia's interest. Russia needed to ensure its continued presence on the Georgian Black Sea Coast. When Moscow's economic sanctions and its refusal to withdraw its troops failed to achieve these ends, Russia provided Abkhazia with enough firepower to force Shevardnadze to turn to Moscow for assistance. Gamsakhurdia's personal power crusade only assisted Moscow in its efforts. Thus, Russia quietly watched as Gamsakhurdia marched toward Tbilisi. However, when Gamsakhurdia threatened to defeat Shevardnadze, who had just granted Moscow the concessions it desired, "neutral" Russia provided Shevardnadze with the means to reassert himself.

Finally, Russia used Georgia for even larger purposes. It's feigned inability to stop the violence was for Western consumption. During this period, Andrei Kozyrev made repeated statements before the UN and in editorials in the west, emphasizing the fact that Russia desperately needed monetary assistance in order to keep peace in the area. He pointed to Georgia as an example of the types of conflicts Russia was facing. Allowing America's favorite Soviet, Eduard Shevardnadze, to be humiliated as the world watched, was the perfect argument for Foreign Minister Kozyrev's appeals. The implication was: 'see, we'd like to help Shevardnadze, but we can't ... without your financial support.'

## **Moldova**

Moldova has been under pressure from Moscow from the moment of its secession from the USSR in August 1991 when its government announced that independence was merely an intermediary step on the way to eventual reunification with Romania. The Moldovan government crossed Moscow again in December 1992 when it refused to ratify the accords on the creation of the Commonwealth of Independent States and called for the complete withdrawal of the Russian 14th Army from the republic. Since then Russia has used military intervention on behalf of "persecuted" ethnic Russians, territorial dismemberment, and economic blackmail to dissuade Moldova from pursuing unification with Romania, to force it to ratify the CIS accords and to convince it of the need to maintain close economic and political relations with Moscow.

Moscow's tactics in Moldova have ensured the protection of a number of Russian geostrategic objectives in the former Soviet republic including: preventing the reunification of Moldova with Romania; keeping Moldova within Russia's sphere of influence as a strategic crossroads between the Black Sea and the Balkans; and maintaining the considerable infra-structure of military bases, arms and ammunition stores, and communications facilities in Moldova's Trans-Dniester region.

In addition, Moscow is anxious to keep the Russian 14th Army stationed on its bases in the Trans-Dniester region. Not only does Russia not have sufficient military housing available for the relocation of the 14th Army to the Russian Federation, but approximately fifty percent of the commissioned officers and the majority of the non-commissioned officers in the force are native to the region and do not want to be withdrawn. Russian strategic objectives and the personal interests of the officers of the 14th Army coincide in Trans-Dniester. This has made it extremely easy for Moscow to exploit the secession of the region to its best advantage. Russia has used Trans-Dniester and the 14th Army as levers to wrest concessions from the Moldovan government in Chisinau.

The heavily-industrialized and predominantly Russian-speaking region of Trans-Dniester, on the left-bank of the Dniester River, seceded from Moldova in September 1991 in protest of the Moldovan government's proposal to reunify with Romania. With Moscow's support, Russian Cossack forces from all over the Russian Federation flooded into the region to assist the secessionists. Armed clashes between the Moldovan government and the Trans-Dniester separatists escalated in the summer of 1992 at which point Moscow intervened directly in the conflict. The Russian government declared that a "genocide" was being perpetrated by Romanian-speakers in Trans-Dniester and that Moscow could not stand idly by as Russians were killed. Moscow instructed the 14th Army stationed to protect "peaceful citizens" from Moldovan "bandit" attacks in the region.



Although ethnic-Russians were indeed being killed in clashes, the flimsiness of the pretext to intervene was apparent. Forty percent of Trans-Dniester's population are in fact ethnic Moldovans; ethnic Ukrainians, not ethnic Russians, are the largest minority group; and two-thirds of Moldova's Russian population live outside the region on the right bank of the Dniester River in the Moldovan heartland. Moreover, the Russian population of the right-bank of the Dniester River has not supported Trans-Dniester's secession. In fact, since the secession, ethnic Moldovans have been discriminated against in Trans-Dniester. Moldovan schools and newspapers have been closed and Romanian-language textbooks banned in the region. Furthermore, International human rights agencies have not accused the Moldovan government of passing restrictive citizenship or language laws, nor have ethnic Russians in Moldova proper protested violations of human rights. As President Mircea Snegur of Moldova remarked in June 1992: "The question arises, aren't Russian authorities provoking these conflicts in order to preserve their control over the newly independent states?" (*New York Times*, 6-22-93)

During the clashes in Trans-Dniester the Russian 14th Army openly handed weapons over to separatist forces via the "Dniester Women's Defense Committee" which collected them from soldiers at Russian army barracks. As a result, by July 1992 the Moldovan government was outgunned by the secessionists, who carried the fighting across the Dniester River, and was forced to appeal to Moscow to intercede. On July 7, 1992 a cease-fire was brokered between representatives from Trans-Dniester, Moldova, a Russian military commission and the Russian 14th Army. The composition of the negotiating body, with the inclusion of the 14th Army, reflected the distribution of power in the region. On July 21, the Moldovan and Russian governments signed an agreement on the neutrality of the 14th Army. In August 1992, a contingent of 3,000 extra Russian troops was sent into Trans-Dniester to assist units of the 14th Army in keeping peace. Their activities have not, however, resulted in the resolution of the conflict. Tensions in the region are still high, and Trans-Dniester remains separate from Moldova.

Since August 1992, the Russian 14th Army has been anything but neutral in Moldovan politics. In fact, the Army's commander General Alexander Lebed was elected as a deputy to Trans-Dniester Parliament in September 1993. The 14th Army has ignored Moldovan offers to construct housing for it in Russia if it will withdraw, and is instead constructing its own housing in Trans-Dniester. It has created its own Television broadcasting station and its own newspaper, "Soldier of the Fatherland," established a military academy to train officers, and engaged in a recruitment campaign. It is also training and maintaining the Trans-Dniester republican guard. For its part, the Trans-Dniester republic has assumed responsibility for the supply and upkeep of the

14th Army and offers high salaries and benefits to servicemen transferring from the Russian Federation. All of this would not be possible without assistance from Russia. In the first nine months of 1993, Trans-Dniester received \$30 million of subsidized energy and raw materials from Moscow.

Moldova has protested these developments and persistently called for the 14th Army and the "peacekeepers" to be withdrawn. Each protest has been met by a show of force. For example, in late 1992, President Mircea Snegur of Moldova made it clear that the country would not join the CIS, would not permit Russian troops to remain on its soil, and was determined to follow an independent policy from Russia. Economic pressure was first exerted on Moldova as a non-CIS member. Punitive tariffs were imposed on Moldovan goods exported to Russia and other CIS countries. The Russian government then began to refer to Trans-Dniester as the "Trans-Dniester Republic" according it a *de facto* independent status. Moscow went on to threaten to strengthen the republic militarily by proposing that the 14th Army be disbanded locally instead of being withdrawn. The implication of this was that the Army's bases, equipment and personnel would simply be handed over to the Trans-Dniester republican forces and local authorities and become an official Trans-Dniester army instead of a Russian force. In February 1993, Moldovan parliamentary discussions on a new constitution and the Russian troops issue were accompanied by Russian military exercises in a majority Moldovan district in Trans-Dniester.

Russia no longer tries to maintain that it is a peacekeeper in the region and recent statements have made it clear that it is protecting its interests, not ethnic Russians. Russian Defense Minister Pavel Grachev announced, for example, in December 1992, that withdrawal would not be possible as "in Trans-Dniester there is a lot of military property and combat equipment, and, most importantly, we must think about the personnel," (Interfax 12-8-92). The Russian government is also pushing for a federal arrangement for Moldova and the creation of an autonomous state in Trans-Dniester, which would afford it considerable influence in the area. It has linked the withdrawal of its forces directly with this preferred resolution of the status of the region.

Conflict, dismemberment and economic pressure have all had results. In January 1993, public opinion polls showed that the Moldovan population no longer favored reunification with Romania and the Moldovan parliament rejected a proposal to hold a referendum on the issue. On February 4, 1993 the Moldovan parliament elected Petru Lucinschi, the former first secretary of the Moldovan Communist Party, as its chairman. On October 19, Moldova formally handed over all of its obligations to service the former USSR's foreign debt to Moscow and relinquished all former USSR assets to it. And, on October 26, 1993 the Moldovan parliament recommended the

ratification of the CIS agreements on economic union. This immediately resulted in the lifting of restrictions on Moldovan exports to Russia.

Moldova's joining the CIS was a clear capitulation to Russia. Moscow, however, continues to push Moldova to go even further. In October 1993, the Moldovan government expressed its reluctance to participate in the CIS Mutual Security Pact which would enable Russian troops to be stationed permanently in the republic. To encourage Chisinau to sign the CIS security agreements Moscow is trying a new tactic. It has offered Moldova the carrot of territorial integrity in return for a permanent Russian troop presence.

Before talks in Moscow in November 1993 on the status of the 14th Army in Trans-Dniester, Russia made it clear to Moldova that its Trans-Dniester problem could be made to disappear if it complied with Russian demands. The Commander of the 14th Army, General Lebed resigned from his position as a deputy of the Trans-Dniester Parliament after making accusations that Trans-Dniester forces had fought on the side of the Russian Parliament in the October 1993 coup in Moscow. On October 21, 1993 he was recalled to Moscow to account for the role of the 14th Army in the region to the Russian Ministry of Defense.

The nervous reaction of Trans-Dniester leaders to these events suggests that they are concerned about the loss of Moscow's support and developments in Moldova's favor. On October 22, officers of the Security Ministry of Trans-Dniester spoke of an "anti-Dniestrans campaign" in Russia and urged Moscow to "take part in an unbiased investigation and help in identifying the sources and causes of misinformation so as to prevent consequences detrimental to the peoples of Trans-Dniester," (Interfax 10-22-93).

On November 12, the Moldovan government announced that it was considering "reasonable compromises" over the status of Trans-Dniester to facilitate a solution to the conflict. President Snegur suggested the creation of a free economic zone and a high-level of autonomy for the region - still short of the federal arrangement preferred by Moscow.

On November 23 Interfax reported that four extra Russian battalions had been deployed in Trans-Dniester as peacekeepers, ostensibly to relieve four units of the 14th Army from their duties. As none of the units of the 14th Army have been withdrawn from the region, this means that Russian military presence has been increased. On November 24, the Moldovan government announced that it would resume talks with Moscow on the status of Trans-Dniester.

By December 1993, the speaker of the Moldovan Parliament Petru Lucinschi was telling *Interfax* that "Moldova cannot but maintain close contacts with Russia and other CIS countries, since we have much in common," and although Moldova was still in favor of cooperation with the

"fraternal state" of Romania it "cannot go the way of those who demand that Moldova reunite with Romania," (*Interfax*, 12-3-93).

The Russian pressure on Moldova's territorial integrity and economy described above has transformed Moldova into a committed member of the Commonwealth of Independent States. Like Azerbaijan and Georgia, the republic now looks set to see a radical improvement in its relations with Moscow. On December 24, 1993, the Moldovan government was rewarded with the surrender of six Moldovan nationalists, who had been sentenced to death by the Trans-Dniester authorities for "terrorist activities" during the fighting in 1992. Moscow convinced Trans-Dniester to commute their sentences and hand the six over to the Moldovan government as a goodwill gesture.

## Ukraine

Since the emergence of Ukraine as an independent nuclear state and a potentially major player in European politics in 1991, the Ukrainian-Russian relationship has become the most volatile in the post-Soviet space. Russia is determined to undermine the viability and international standing of the new state and to keep Ukraine within the Commonwealth of Independent States as a satellite of Moscow. Ukraine is equally determined to resist Russia's attempts and to ensure its independence. The maneuvers and counter-maneuvers of the two states have pushed them to the brink of conflict.

Russia has a number of specific strategic objectives in the republic, which include: preventing Ukraine from becoming a rival power center; keeping Ukraine in its sphere of influence and within the CIS trading bloc; preventing Ukraine from creating new trading networks that will bypass Russia; stopping Ukraine from claiming its share of the immovable and movable assets of the former Soviet Union; securing the total transfer to the Russian Federation, or the dismantlement, of Ukrainian nuclear weaponry; maintaining its strategic presence on the Black Sea coast; and retaining control of the port of Sevastopol in the Crimea as a naval base for the Russian Black Sea fleet.

To ensure its objectives, Moscow has exerted pressure on Kiev on three fronts: economic, security and territorial. As far as the first two are concerned, the pattern of Russian pressure is complicated by the fact that Ukraine's own policies have done much to destabilize its economy and threaten its security. Kiev has chosen not to follow Moscow's lead by embarking on free market economic reforms: prices on key commodities remain fixed; wages are controlled; enterprise subsidies and the social security net are still intact; state planning structures are still in place; and there has been little privatization of state assets. Far from introducing "wise, balanced policies" as Ukrainian President Leonid Kravchuk envisaged, (*Wall Street Journal*, 3-17-93) and being "wiser than Moscow," the Ukrainian government seems to have chosen the road to economic ruin.

With inflation running at 70-100 percent per month, the budget deficit at 40 percent of annual GNP, and the trade deficit with Russia at 12 trillion rubles as of November 1993,<sup>22</sup> Moscow needs to do very little to bring the shambling Ukrainian economy to its knees. It has thus engaged in economic warfare by not sending Ukraine vital resources such as gas, oil, precious metals for the electronics industry and fertilizer components. In addition, it has cut off fuel supplies during important state visits, such as that of German Chancellor Helmut Kohl to Kiev in June 1993, to remind the West of its still considerable influence there.

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<sup>22</sup> *Interfax*, 11-3-93.

On security issues, in refusing to dismantle its nuclear arsenal and failing to implement the START-1 treaty fully, Ukraine has antagonized the United States. In spite of commitments to become a non-nuclear power, Ukraine began stalling on the withdrawal and destruction of the weapons based on its territory in March 1992.<sup>23</sup> The Ukrainian government feared that as a result of relinquishing the weapons it would be vulnerable to political pressure and territorial claims from Moscow. On April 28, 1992, with direct reference to the perceived importance of nuclear weapons to Ukrainian security, President Kravchuk stated that: "The question of security arises rather acutely when our neighbors tend to present territorial claims. Ukraine, rather naturally in these conditions of instability and particularly with territorial claims against us, raises the issue of security guarantees for the country and its people. Ukraine must have this guarantee," (*Los Angeles Times*, 4-29-92). Since this time Ukraine has consistently demanded security guarantees from the United States in addition to compensation for the material and financial costs of dismantling the weapons.

Russia has pressed for stripping Ukraine of its nuclear weapons. First, Moscow raised the phantom of an accidental Ukrainian nuclear strike on the United States. Most recently, the Russian government suggested the catastrophic deterioration of improperly-maintained Ukrainian weapons - each one a Chernobyl waiting to happen -- adding a sense of emergency to the dismantlement process. On November 5, 1993, Russian Foreign Minister Andrei Kozyrev informed *Interfax* that the "withdrawal of nuclear weapons from Ukraine should begin on January 1, 1994. Otherwise, a tragedy worse than the one in Chernobyl might take place 'for purely technical reasons ... It is considered safe to store the nuclear arms deployed in Ukraine for only 24 months. After that no-one can guarantee their safety."

Statements such as these, combined with gloomy prognoses from Moscow on the state of Russian-Ukrainian relations, the possibility of a nuclear war between the two neighbors, and continued wrangling over the ownership of the Black Sea Fleet, mitigate against the possibility of the United States offering Ukraine a bilateral security guarantee. In addition, with no sign of either a coherent economic reform plan or the commitment to undertake reform from Ukraine, the United

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<sup>23</sup> On October 24, 1991, the Ukrainian Soviet Republic announced that it intended to free its territory of nuclear weapons and join international commitments in the capacity of a non-nuclear state on independence from the USSR. On July 6, 1992, Ukraine joined other members of the Commonwealth of Independent States in signing a document recognizing the Russian Federation's exceptional legal succession to the nuclear armaments of the former USSR. The document also contained a pledge by the member countries to sign the international treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons.

States has been reluctant to grant significant assistance to the state beyond the immediate costs of dismantling the nuclear arsenal.

With Ukraine on the verge of economic collapse and engaging in nuclear brinkmanship with Russia, the United States has been sympathetic to Moscow's stance toward Kiev. This has enabled Russia to exert pressure on the third level -- Ukrainian territorial integrity -- without attracting much attention from the international community. It is Ukraine's attempts to head off territorial claims by retaining its nuclear weapons, rather than Russia's manipulation of the territorial issue that have come under fire from the United States.

The ethnic-Russian dominated Crimean peninsula has been singled out and targeted by Moscow. It has offered dual citizenship to Crimean Russians and promoted Crimean presidential candidates oriented towards Russia. Moscow has trumpeted the economic grievances of ethnic Russians in Ukraine's eastern provinces, particularly miners in the Donetsk region, who now regret voting for Ukrainian independence. In addition, it has reminded Ukraine that agreements on the inviolability of its borders with Russia are contingent on Ukraine's continued membership in the Commonwealth of Independent States. If Ukraine chooses to distance itself from Russia, territorial dismemberment is a distinct possibility.

The question of Ukraine's existing borders with Russia was raised immediately after Ukraine's initial declaration of independence on August 24, 1991 with the USSR still intact. Russian President Boris Yeltsin's press spokesman, Pavel Voshchanov, announced on August 26, 1991 that Russia "reserved the right to review borders" with Ukraine if it left the Soviet Union, (*Reuters*, 8-26-91).

The borders between the two republics had first been confirmed within the framework of the USSR on November 19, 1990. At this point, Russia and Ukraine concluded a treaty providing the basis for bilateral relations after their respective declarations of sovereignty.

Since Ukraine declared independence, as the statement by Yeltsin's spokesman would suggest, the Russian government has consistently stressed the need for an agreed institutional framework to guarantee the mutual border. If Ukraine withdraws from this framework, the borders between the states will be redrawn, presumably in Russia's favor.

Judging by its actions and statements, it would appear that the only independent Ukraine that Moscow will tolerate outside of the CIS is an "emasculated" and truncated version, which would be stripped of its nuclear weapons, the Crimea, the Black Sea Fleet and the eastern provinces; and economically ruined. This is obviously not Kiev's vision of an independent Ukraine.

Immediately after the Russian presidential spokesman's statement, on August 28-29, 1991,

Ukrainian and Russian leaders held a series of meetings which were the prelude to the conclusion of the Commonwealth of Independent States Accords in Minsk, Belarus on December 8, 1991. This marked the final demise of the USSR. The creation of the CIS was acknowledged as a mechanism to maintain the close association between Russia and Ukraine. The borders between the signatories (Ukraine, Russia and Belarus) were dealt with in Article 5 of the Commonwealth Accords. The article indicated in somewhat ambiguous terms that existing inter-state borders would now be recognized within the new framework of the CIS: "The agreeing parties recognize and respect each other's territorial integrity, and the integrity of each other's borders in the framework of the commonwealth," (*Associated Press*, 12-9-91).

Aware of the implications of this article, Ukrainian parliamentary deputies attempted to clarify Russia's position on the issue. Before the signing of the second Commonwealth Accord in Alma-Ata on December 21, 1991, which extended the membership of the body to other former Soviet republics, ratification hearings for the Minsk agreements were held in the Ukrainian Parliament. The Parliament requested that Ukraine's borders with Russia be guaranteed irrespective of the republic's membership in the Commonwealth. In remarks made to *CNN*, on December 25, Russian President Yeltsin confirmed that Russia intended to uphold the principle of the inviolability of borders between the republics. He stated that: "Every state is independent and there will be no center ... we have said that the borders between the states will be inviolable ... [Russia is] not seeking to bring about another Empire." The Alma-Ata Accord itself, however, retained the initial ambiguity in a cursory reference to the issue of borders enshrined within the preamble to the signatories' joint statement on the Commonwealth. In the wake of Alma-Ata, the Ukrainians' confidence that the border issue had been resolved on their terms was undermined by prominent figures within the Russian political structure, who subsequently restated that the borders would only be considered inviolable within the framework of the Commonwealth of Independent States.<sup>24</sup> In February 1992, for example, Mikhail Alexandrov, chairman of the inter-republican committee of the Russian parliament, stated that "the 1990 agreement between the two states to respect each other's borders is no longer valid because it was signed when both were members of a third state, the Soviet Union," (*Financial Times*, 2-25-92). Alexandrov did not even refer to the new agreement to respect each others borders in the Commonwealth Accords.

The creation of the Commonwealth of Independent States itself has been a major source of contention between Russia and Ukraine. Russian President Boris Yeltsin outlined his goals for the

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<sup>24</sup> This information was obtained during private interviews conducted by the Strengthening Democratic Institutions Project in Moscow in early 1992.



CIS before the December 21, 1991 Alm-Ata meeting:

"First of all, it makes it possible to preserve the existing borders [between the republics], instead of recarving them. Second, a common economic and ruble zone remains. Third, there is a coordinated price policy and strategy for further reforms. And lastly, in this way we were able to prevent the disintegration of the armed forces into sovereign republican armies," (*Newsweek*, 1-6-92).

With regard to every aspect but the first, Ukraine has attempted to thwart Russian goals. In signing the Commonwealth Accords, Ukraine made it clear that it did not intend the Commonwealth to become the basis of a renewed Russian empire. Rather, it envisaged the creation of a loose association -- a transition mechanism to full independence that would prevent conflict between the former Soviet republics. Immediately after signing the accords, Dmytro Pavlychko, Chairman of the Ukrainian Commission on Foreign Affairs summed up Ukraine's attitude toward the Commonwealth: "We consider this transitional; we are not signing it for centuries. We had no other option if we were to avoid military conflict," (*Washington Post*, 12-13-91).

In March 1992, at a meeting of Commonwealth leaders in Minsk, President Leonid Kravchuk of Ukraine rejected every stated Russian goal for the body. He announced that all 700,000 Soviet troops on Ukrainian territory, including the forces of the Black Sea Fleet, should pledge allegiance to Ukraine. He went on to advocate the creation of an independent Ukrainian armed forces and asserted that all military property on Ukrainian soil belonged to Ukraine. He also insisted that Ukraine should have a 16 percent share of former Soviet Union property, including gold, embassies and armed forces in return for paying its estimated 16 percent of the USSR's foreign debt. These statements entrenched the conflict between Ukraine and Russia.

Since the summer of 1992, Russia has pushed Ukraine on three fronts, economic, security and territorial, making it clear that it will make life extremely difficult for Kiev if it persists in the pursuit of complete independence from Moscow. In June and July 1992, for example, when Ukraine indicated that it intended to introduce its own currency, the hryvnia, by October 1, 1992, Russian negotiators assured Kiev that Russia would charge world prices for oil the instant that Ukraine introduced a separate currency and left the ruble zone. At the same time Moscow stressed that if Ukraine remained in the ruble zone, Russia would continue to sell its crude oil below the world price, (*Financial Times*, 6-19-92, 7-1-92, 7-23-92).

In September 1992, the Russian Central Bank froze all payments to Ukraine in response to

Ukraine's persistence in issuing credits to Ukrainian firms trading with Russia. Ukrainian firms had flooded the Russian market with subsidized products that Russian enterprises, whose own subsidies had been slashed under the Russian reform program, could not afford. The Ukrainian government continued to issue credits to its enterprises to compensate for the shortfall in Russian payments. As a result Russian firms became heavily indebted to their partners in Ukraine, and the credit issuance in Ukraine fueled inflation in Russia. Russia accused Ukraine of undermining its attempts at economic reform. The move to freeze payments brought commerce between Russia and Ukraine to a halt.

Russia's policy prompted Ukraine to withdraw completely from the ruble zone and introduce its own currency. On November 12, 1992, Ukraine replaced the ruble with a coupon, the Karbovanets, which would be the transition to a new currency at a later stage. The ruble ceased to be legal tender in the state. The Ukrainian government also announced that it would slash subsidies to enterprises that continued to sell products to Russian firms that had defaulted on their payments. Ukrainian customs imposed restrictions on the passage of goods over its borders without a certificate of advance payment. This policy resulted in the virtual cessation of Ukrainian exports to Russia.

This development has increased Ukraine's vulnerability as the state is dependent on Russia for 90 percent of its energy supplies. With exports to Russia halted, Ukraine must nonetheless continue to import oil to keep its enterprises in operation and meet other domestic consumption needs. It has become heavily indebted to Russia, thus fueling the trade deficit. As of January 1, 1994 Russia intends to charge world prices for its energy supplies, a decision which will further destabilize the Ukrainian economy. Ukraine will not be able to maintain fixed prices on other commodities when energy prices rise and this will increase inflation precipitously.

Russia has consistently tied economic issues to the satisfaction of its objectives at the other two levels: on security and territorial matters. The struggle between Russia and Ukraine over ownership of the former Soviet Black Sea Fleet epitomizes this. Russian claims to the Black Sea Fleet and the Crimea are closely connected.

After the creation of the CIS Ukraine and Russia agreed that the Black Sea Fleet would form part of the combined forces of the Commonwealth, which were essentially the Soviet forces under a new guise. However, neither Ukraine nor Russia had any intention of abiding by the agreement. Ukrainian leaders favored either the division of the fleet between Russia and Ukraine and the creation of a new independent Ukrainian Black Sea Fleet on the basis of their share of the hardware; or the complete transfer of the fleet to Ukraine's jurisdiction. Neither of these ideas was well-received by the Russian government. Russian counter-claims to the fleet, which in fact

undermined Moscow's own suggestion that the fleet be controlled by the CIS, followed immediately on the heels of the creation of the Commonwealth.

President Yeltsin frequently referred to the fleet as "Russian," in spite of equally frequent corrections by Marshal Yevgeny Shaposhnikov, the commander of the CIS forces, who reminded Yeltsin that the fleet came under his jurisdiction not that of the Russian Federation.<sup>25</sup> In January 1992, in a private memorandum to President Yeltsin, Vladimir Lukin, currently Russian Ambassador to the United States and then head of the Russian parliamentary commission on foreign affairs, suggested that Russia use territorial claims on the Crimea as a lever to pressure Ukraine into reconsidering its plans to assume direct control of part of the fleet.<sup>26</sup>

The Russian parliament began to act on this suggestion immediately. In mid-January Lukin's parliamentary commission raised the question of sovereignty over the fleet's shore-based support facilities and its Crimean headquarters in Sevastopol. It then passed a resolution suggesting that the transfer of the Crimea from the administrative jurisdiction of the Russian Federation to that of Ukraine in 1954 was illegal. In July 1992, the Russian parliament went further and passed a resolution claiming Sevastopol directly for the Russian Federation. In such a manner Russia indicated to Ukraine that Moscow would not permit it to exercise either ownership of the Black Sea Fleet or sovereignty over the Crimea, both of which Ukraine perceived as essential attributes of its new statehood.

In fact, the Black Sea Fleet itself is hardly a desirable asset.<sup>27</sup> Its most modern ship was commissioned in 1982 and the remaining hardware has been poorly maintained. It is the actual physical base of the Black Sea Fleet, Sevastopol, with its facilities and installations that Ukraine and Russia deem the most important and neither will permit the other to share the port. The added complication for Ukraine is that 300,000 of the 400,000 residents of Sevastopol are ethnic Russians. In addition, when Ukraine declared its independence from the USSR in August 1991, Russians in Crimea launched a movement to secede from Ukraine and rejoin the Russian Federation.<sup>28</sup> The Russian parliament consistently supported the secessionist movement from its

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<sup>25</sup> See for example, *Financial Times*, 2-25-92.

<sup>26</sup> See for example, *Financial Times*, 2-10-92.

<sup>27</sup> The Black Sea Fleet is the smallest and least significant strategically of the former Soviet fleets -- given the obvious difficulties of reaching the Mediterranean through the narrow Black Sea straits in wartime. It consists of 309 small and medium-sized ships, 45 cruisers, 28 submarines, 150 aircraft, 85 helicopters, and 70,000 personnel, (*Washington Post* 6-27-92).

creation in 1991.

The Ukrainian government, for its part, has encouraged the repatriation to the peninsula of thousands of Crimean Tatars who were exiled to Central Asia by Soviet leader Josef Stalin in 1944. The Crimean Tatars were the majority population of the region until its annexation by Russia in the 18th century, and have made counter-claims to the territory. The Ukrainian government anticipated that a mass Tatar migration would dilute the peninsula's Russian population and complicate their attempts to create a secessionary Russian republic.

On May 5, 1992, however, the Crimean Parliament declared independence subject to a referendum on August 2. President Kravchuk of Ukraine immediately declared the move illegal and on May 13 the Ukrainian parliament ordered the Crimean government to annul the declaration. This threat to Kiev's sovereignty over the Crimea stepped up the pressure on Ukraine to reach an accommodation with Russia. In June 1992, in the Russian Black Sea resort of Dagomys, the two governments reached an agreement that the fleet would be split in principle. The agreement, however, immediately broke down as the Black Sea Fleet sailors themselves began to fight for its control.

In July 1992, a group of pro-Ukrainian officers took control of a garrison at the fleet headquarters in Sevastopol, after 97 percent of the officer corps swore allegiance to Ukraine. On July 22, the Fleet's Russian Commander, Igor Kasatonov, accused Ukraine of "unilateral attempts to take possession of the Fleet, circumventing agreements reached with Russia during a summit meeting of both countries" leaders. He accused the Ukrainian Navy of "snatching ships from the Fleet and giving the Ukrainian oath of allegiance to the crews" and warned that he would take "resolute and adequate measures" to stabilize the situation, (*Interfax*, 7-22-92). The Dagomys agreement was merely the first in a long line of failed bilateral agreements between the two states on the control of the fleet. It also marked the end of any pretense that the fleet was under the jurisdiction of the CIS. The dispute became a test of Ukrainian sovereignty and resolve to stand up to Russia.

On August 3, 1992 at Yalta, Presidents Kravchuk and Yeltsin agreed to disagree and resolved to shelve decisions on the fate of the Black Sea Fleet until 1995. In the meantime they placed the fleet under a joint command that would answer to both presidents. This move was unpopular in both Ukraine and Russia.

Soon after the Yalta agreement, the Ukrainian government protested a unilateral decision by

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<sup>28</sup> See *Current Digest of the Soviet Press*, November 20, 1991, p. 9.

the Black Sea Fleet's Russian commander Admiral Igor Kasatonov to send nine ships to the coast of Georgia to protect Yeltsin during a series of meetings there. The commander of the Ukrainian Navy, Rear Admiral Boris Kozhin, stated that this action "demonstrated disrespect for the state [of Ukraine] and the existing agreements with the government of Russia," (*Interfax*, 10-13-92).

After August 1992, the economic difficulties surrounding the introduction of the Ukrainian coupon, Russian pressure on the Black Sea Fleet and the Crimea and President Yeltsin's emerging struggle with the Russian Parliament combined to force Ukraine to reconsider seriously its commitment to dismantle its nuclear weapons. As Mykhailo Horyn, leader of the Ukrainian Republican Party stated in September 1992: "No state guarantees us security. We shouldn't blindly follow the advice of other states without thinking of our own interests. The biggest nuclear state in Europe [Ukraine] is disarming and taking its nuclear weapons to a neighboring state that says it may reconsider our borders," (*New York Times*, 9-6-92).

Between October and December 1992, Ukraine's position on the removal of its nuclear arsenal began to harden. In response, Russia began to link the three issues of the Black Sea Fleet, the Crimea and the nuclear weapons together. On December 7, 1992, the 7th Russian Congress of People's Deputies ordered the Russian Parliament to reconsider the status of the port of Sevastopol within Ukraine. The Congress suggested that Sevastopol should be accorded a special status independent of Ukraine. Ukraine protested this move, asserting that the Russian Congress had transgressed international principles on territorial integrity and the inviolability of established borders. President Kravchuk announced that the Congress' decision "represents a gross act of imperialist intervention in Ukrainian internal affairs." Ukrainian protests had little effect. In February 1993, Russian Vice-President Alexander Rutskoi declared that the International Court of Justice should determine the status and ownership of the Crimea. He went on to warn Ukraine that Russia would "rectify the situation using our own opportunities," (*Interfax*, 2-18-93).

These threats were combined with economic pressure. In February 1993, the Russian government threatened to raise oil prices again. Victor Shokhin, the Russian Deputy Prime Minister, informed Ukraine that if it made concessions to Russia over the Black Sea Fleet, permitted the creation of Russian military bases in Ukraine and allowed Russia to export oil and gas through Ukrainian pipelines to Europe, subsidized energy supplies would be ensured, (*Financial Times*, 2-19-93). Shokin made Russia's position on the issue clear in a February 17 news conference with the Russian press:

"The increase in prices is a serious matter and has a deleterious effect on the

economic situation, but to subsidize the Ukrainian economy from the Russian budget would make it impossible for Russia to get out of its crisis. It would require billions of dollars in subsidies, trillions of rubles. If Russia is going to give subsidies, then there should be some weighty reason for doing this, in particular, possible concessions on other issues," (*FBIS-SOV-93-031*).

Ukrainian Prime Minister Leonid Kuchma had no illusions as to Russia's intentions. In an interview with the *Financial Times* published on February 19 he stated that "Russia is trying to bring about a full paralysis of the Ukrainian economy ... I cannot understand the Russian position. It is not motivated by economics. It can only be seen as some sort of pressure on Ukraine. But Russia must realize that to return to the former Soviet Union is neither technically nor politically possible."

On February 20, 1993 Gazprom, the Russian natural gas producer and supplier sent a telegram to the Ukrainian government threatening to terminate gas supplies to Ukraine as of February 25, as a result of the latter's failure to pay for gas received in January. At the same time the Russian Parliament formed a commission which distributed a questionnaire to residents of Sevastopol inquiring as to their preference for the status of the city. At a mass rally held in Sevastopol on February 23, 1993, representatives of the National Salvation Front, the All-Crimea voters' Movement, the Republican Movement of the Crimea and the Russian People's Assembly warned the Ukrainian government that, "expressing the will of the people of the city," they would "be forced to take measures appropriate and adequate to the authorities' indecision" on the issue of its status, (*Interfax. 2-23-93*).

These actions merely had the effect of further hardening Ukraine's resolve to retain its nuclear weapons. The Ukrainian parliament announced on February 24 that President Kravchuk's commitment to ratify START 1 as soon as possible was "premature," (*Interfax, 2-24-93*). The Ukrainian Deputy Foreign Minister Aleksandr Makarenko stated that "Russia has advanced a number of political terms which independent Ukraine will never accept. Russia would like to secure a 50-year rent of Sevastopol and to obtain part of Ukrainian property on Ukrainian territory. Russia is ready to supply us with gas and oil at reduced prices on the condition that Ukraine makes political concessions. All this is reminiscent of the mother country's diktat in relation to the colonies. No one will ever accept such terms." The Ukrainian government went on to threaten to increase transit fees on Russian gas exports to Western Europe, a move which would stifle Russia's export market. And in early March 1993, Mikola Mikhailchenko, chief political adviser to

President Kravchuk, made it clear that Ukraine was prepared to challenge Russia: "Ukraine will never recognize that Ukrainian territory is a sphere of special Russian interest ... We want relations of equality," (*Financial Times*, 3-2-93).

This challenge was immediately met with a response to undermine Ukraine's legitimacy and reliability as a potential partner for the West. On March 2, 1993 Russia announced that Ukraine's nuclear missiles were leaking as Ukraine had refused to permit Russian technicians to gain access to the weapons for maintenance purposes. General Mikhail Kolesnikov, head of the general headquarters of the Russian army stated that, "According to our data, the radiation levels from some sites exceed the permissible levels by thousands of times." He informed the international community that the state of Ukrainian weapons was "very serious" and that, in fact, Russia had "lost control" of the missiles and could no longer take any responsibility for their safety, (*Financial Times*, March 3, 1993).

The Ukrainian government immediately refuted these claims. Boris Tarasiuk, the Ukrainian Deputy Foreign Minister denounced them as "imaginings" and assured the West that "according to our experts the state of the nuclear missiles located on Ukrainian territory in no way differs from that of the missiles found in Russia." He countered that Russian experts had full access to the missiles to perform the necessary maintenance and that Ukraine was fully prepared to pay for Russian spare parts, (*Financial Times*, 3-3-93). Russian Defense Minister, Pavel Grachev then stated that if future talks on the status of the missiles broke down, he would take "action" to resolve the crisis.

By mid-March 1993, Russian officials were reportedly warning Eastern European countries "not to bother building large embassies in Kiev because within 18 months they will be downgraded to consular sections." Sergei Stankevich, the Russian state councillor and a senior advisor to President Yeltsin, was reported to have warned the Polish government to limit its growing political and military ties with Ukraine, as Ukraine fell within Russia's sphere of influence and Moscow was opposed to their "increasingly cozy relationship." In addition, Leonid Smoliakov, the Russian Ambassador to Ukraine, stated that if the people of Crimea expressed a desire for self-determination, Russia would support their choice. Western diplomats in Ukraine asserted that Smoliakov had informed them privately that Ukrainian independence was a "transitional" phenomenon, (*Financial Times*, 3-17-93).

Faced with these statements and a lack of any response from the West, the Ukrainian government came to the realization that, as the Ukrainian Prime Minister Leonid Kuchma put it, the "West is indifferent as to whether we are independent," (*Financial Times*, 5-7-93). In May 1993,

162 deputies of the Ukrainian Parliament, wrote letter to President Kravchuk informing him of its intention to consider the issue of claiming ownership of the nuclear arsenal on Ukrainian territory. The deputies said that they could not ratify international disarmament treaties until Ukraine proclaimed itself owner of all the former Soviet nuclear weapons on its territory, (*Wall Street Journal*, 5-3-93). This move alarmed the United States government which, on May 10, 1993, decided that action would have to be taken to persuade Ukraine of the necessity of de-nuclearization. Ambassador-at-large Strobe Talbott was dispatched to Ukraine to offer to mediate the state's differences with Russia.

Russia's response to Ukraine's move and Talbott's visit was immediate. Moscow accused Ukraine of attempting to assume control of the nuclear weapons. Sergei Stepashin, chairman of the Russian parliament's Defense and Security Committee, alleged that Ukraine was trying to retarget its nuclear weapons and was seeking to override the blocking devices preventing the unauthorized launch of the missiles, (*Boston Globe*, 5-15-93). The statement was no doubt timed to coincide with Talbott's visit to Kiev and to alarm the United States even further about Ukraine's nuclear intentions.

In June 1993 Ukraine and Russia concluded a further agreement on the issue of the Black Sea Fleet, but not until after Yeltsin had threatened to play the "oil card" to force Ukraine to comply with Russian objectives. On June 17, Presidents Yeltsin and Kravchuk agreed to divide the fleet equally between the two states and to use the facilities jointly at Sevastopol. In addition, Russia pledged to contribute more funds for the fleet's upkeep and to support its base in Sevastopol during a transition period. President Yeltsin also stressed that Russia was ready to "give Ukraine security guarantees" if it fulfilled its undertaking to relinquish the nuclear weapons on its territory, (*Washington Post*, 6-18-93).

Kravchuk and Yeltsin's attempt to find a basis for resolution and the reaction to this move in Russia revealed the intensity of the resolve within the Russian government and parliament, and the Russian military, to retain exclusive control of the Black Sea Fleet and Sevastopol. While President Yeltsin himself may be in favor of compromise, albeit on Russia's terms, there are circles within Russian politics who have no intention of compromising or giving Ukraine even a modicum of sovereignty.

The agreement to divide the fleet was met by a mutiny of 120 Russian naval officers who asserted that such a move would be detrimental to both republics. They called for the 300 ships of the fleet to be placed under direct and sole Russian jurisdiction. The mutiny was seen as a serious rebellion against Yeltsin and Kravchuk personally. In its wake there were demands that the



respective parliaments of both Russia and Ukraine reject the agreement. Russian Vice President Alexander Rutskoi immediately denounced the agreement to divide the fleet and Russian Admiral Eduard Baltin referred to it as "ruinous" for Russia, (*Washington Post*, 6-30-93). On July 9, 1993 in a vote of 160-0 with one abstention, Russian Supreme Soviet declared unequivocally that Sevastopol belonged to Russia. For his part, on July 11, President Yeltsin declared that he was "ashamed about this decision," (*Economist*, 7-17/23-93). The impact of the Supreme Soviet's declaration in Ukraine was immediate. President Kravchuk reversed his policy of seeking the approval of the START 1 and Nuclear Non-Proliferation treaties in the Ukrainian Parliament and instead backed a majority of Ukrainian deputies in calling for the retention of some of the 1,800 nuclear missiles left on its soil. The Ukrainian Parliament also went on to threaten the imposition of a state of emergency in Sevastopol. On July 20, the United Nations Security Council declared that Sevastopol and the Black Sea Fleet belonged to Ukraine in an attempt to quell the crisis.

Moscow was not, however, deterred by these developments and kept the pressure on Ukraine. The Black Sea Fleet's personnel, dominated by ethnic Russians, expressed their readiness to support the decision of the Supreme Soviet. In addition, the Russian Navy attempted to attract sailors from the Black Sea Fleet to its forces with the promise of higher salaries. After an incident in which 200 ships of the Black Sea Fleet displayed the Russian flag, the crews of the ships reported that they had received a payraise from \$12.50 in Ukrainian coupons to \$31.25 in Russian rubles, (*New York Times*, 7-22-93). Later in July it was announced that the Crimea, Sevastopol, and the Donetsk region of eastern Ukraine were proposing to unite as a Russian-dominated 'carpathian' republic. On 30-31 July, a new Ukrainian political party, the Party of Slavic Unity, convened its first congress in Kiev. The party called for the creation of a new united Ukrainian-Russian state on a federal basis. In August, Russia decreased its energy supplies to Ukraine at a critical juncture in the harvesting season. With crops left to rot in the fields as a result of the fuel shortage, Ukraine's agriculture export trade was jeopardized.

By September 1993, Ukraine was in desperate straits and President Kravchuk was forced to seek accommodation with Moscow. Russian economic, security and territorial pressure had direct results. On September 3, 1993, the Ukrainian and Russian Presidents met at Massandra in the Crimea. The series of agreements concluded there seemed to satisfy key Russian objectives and marked a significant diminution in Ukrainian sovereignty. It was agreed, for example, that Ukraine would sell its share of the Black Sea Fleet to Moscow to pay off its estimated \$2.5 billion debt for Russian fuel imports, and that Russia would be able to lease Sevastopol, (*Interfax*, 9-3/5-93).

In addition, the Russian government offered to dismantle Ukraine's nuclear weapons, and

return the enriched uranium supplies to Ukraine for use in nuclear power plants. This offer was accepted by the negotiators for the Ukrainian government. Russian Prime Minister Viktor Chernomyrdin also persuaded Ukrainian Prime Minister Leonid Kuchma to sign three agreements on the guaranteed supervision of missile mounts, on the use of nuclear energy and on basic principles for the use of nuclear warheads. It seemed that Russia had won this latest round of confrontation with Ukraine quite convincingly.

The reaction to the Massandra accords in Ukraine, however, simply pushed the Ukrainian-Russian conflict onto another plane. For Kravchuk the accord was an immediate disaster. At a post-agreement press conference he was asked how he felt about betraying his country. The Ukrainian President's reply was indicative of the pressure he was under from Moscow on all fronts, he replied that if he had pushed Ukraine's claims on the fleet, "We could well have lost both the fleet and the Crimea," (*Financial Times*, 9-11-93).

The Ukrainian nationalist movement *Rukh* accused President Kravchuk of high treason and called for his resignation, (*UNIAR*, 9-4-93). Kravchuk responded that Russian President Yeltsin had presented him with a clear ultimatum: start repaying your debt to us, or we will cut off your energy supplies. Yeltsin had then suggested that Ukraine sell the Black Sea Fleet's warships to Russia and lease Sevastopol as a means of solving the problem, (*Economist*, 9-11-93). President Kravchuk pointed out that the Massandra agreements could only be implemented if the Ukrainian Parliament ratified them, and it was obvious from the reaction in Ukraine that it would not, (*Radio Ukraine*, 9-7-93).

The Ukrainian Ambassador to Russia Volodymyr Krzhanovskiy summed up the results of the Massandra meetings in an interview with *Izvestiya* on September 8. He stated that this was just one more lesson in the history of Ukraine's independence. Under the guise of "in order to assist it" Ukraine was being told by Russia that "we will take this and that from you."

When it became clear that the Ukrainian Parliament did not intend to comply with the Massandra agreement in spite of President Kravchuk's undertaking, Russia stepped up the pressure even further. The Russian government announced once again that Ukraine was attempting to gain operational control of the weapons on its territory and that this should be of great concern to the international community as the weapons were a potential hazard in Ukrainian hands. Something, the Russian government declared, must be done to prevent this, (*Boston Globe*, 9-15-93). The Russian daily newspaper *Pravda* followed this up with the publication of an article outlining the depth of anti-Russian sentiment in Ukraine on September 15, 1993.

According to the article, on September 7, the Defense and Security Council of the All-

Ukrainian Congress and the Ukrainian Government Defense and Security Committee convened a joint session. At this meeting President Kravchuk argued the need for closer relations with Russia and a strategy to protect Ukraine's interests "in the struggle against Russia's imperial impulses." *Pravda* asserted that the tone of Kravchuk's speech was decidedly anti-Russian in nature. The newspaper quoted President Kravchuk as telling the assembled Ukrainian delegates that: "On the basis of the events of 3 September we must make it crystal clear that the main - I stress this - the main enemy is Russia. Earlier I read you excerpts from Russian newspapers stating that they see us as their province and nothing more, and therefore we should concentrate on the following areas of our state activity."

The *Pravda* article went on to outline the political, economic and military steps advocated by Kravchuk for Ukraine to take. These included: joining other CIS countries against "the might of Russia; finding the necessary arguments to justify indefinitely delaying the withdrawal of nuclear weapons ... if we lose our nuclear weapons, we forfeit the main element in status for Great Ukraine;" economically, Ukraine "should not be a party to anything the Russian Federation is involved in," but in meetings with Russian leadership, should "secure all the energy resources that Ukraine needs;" and finally, Ukraine should "shake Russia's influence in [the Crimea]... by making more active use of the Crimean Tatar movement and convincing personnel of the Black Sea Fleet and population of Crimea that their problems will be compounded and that Russia does not want them."

On September 16, the Ukrainian government denounced the *Pravda* article and suggested that it would initiate court proceedings for a libel suit against the paper, (*FBIS-SOV-93-179*). The *Pravda* article demonstrated that certain elements in Russia were anxious to convince the Russian population that Ukraine posed a serious threat to Russian security and objectives. Its publication gave Moscow license to raise the stakes in the confrontation, which they did immediately.

Only hours after the publication of the *Pravda* article, the Russian Television program *Parliamentary Hour* reported that Colonel General Yevgeny Maslin, head of the Russian Defense Ministry's Chief Directorate for Nuclear Munitions, had announced that "Russia has de facto lost control over the use of nuclear weapons deployed on the territory of Ukraine," and that Ukraine was on its way to becoming a fully-fledged nuclear state. Maslin admitted that while the missiles were still technically under Moscow's command Ukraine would find it difficult to retarget the missiles to targets of its own choosing but, he asserted, this problem could be solved "within the next year or two." In addition, he cast further doubt on Ukraine's ability to properly maintain the hardware by announcing that "the temperature suddenly went up in a nuclear munitions storage facility in

Nikolayev Oblast." Ukraine, Maslin implied was becoming increasingly dangerous to itself, Russia and the international community, (*FBIS-SOV-93-178*).

During the same week, Oleg Rumyantsev, head of the Russian Parliament's Constitutional Commission, arrived in Crimea to rally the ethnic Russian population in Crimea against Ukraine and to hold meetings with the Republican Party of Crimea. Rumyantsev expressed the Russian Parliament's support for the party's program for the restoration of a single economic and political space on territory of the former USSR. In addition, Rumyantsev met with the command of the Black Sea Fleet and assured them that the agreements at Massandra did not represent the final settlement of the issue.

He went on to also hold meetings with the Chairman of the Crimea Supreme Council Mykola Bahrov during which he attempted to raise the issue of a "constitutional crisis" in relations between Crimea and Russia. He suggested that a Russian consulate be opened in the Republic of the Crimea and stated that Crimea was "Russian land." *Interfax* reported that Rumyantsev had assured Crimean representatives that he "will insist on including provisions on federal status for the Crimea and Sevastopol in the draft of a new Russian constitution," (*Interfax*, 9-13/15-93).

By late September, the effects of Russian pressure on the mood in Ukraine were visible, and Ukrainian leaders were advocating rapprochement with Moscow for the first time. Valentin Landik, Ukrainian Deputy Prime Minister in charge of relations with CIS countries, announced on September 17 in an interview with the *Financial Times* that he was seeking closer integration between the CIS states: "I want an economic union to be concluded. Why? Because the situation is getting worse. We can't sell our goods in the West because of bad quality -- and thus we should trade our goods and cooperate with the East so we can go forward together." Landik expressed his belief that "without an economic union, the sovereignty of Ukraine cannot be safeguarded."

On October 4, Ukrainian Defense Minister, General Konstantin Morozov, resigned as a direct result of the Massandra accords. Morozov asserted that conflicts with those in the Ukrainian Parliament advocating closer ties to Moscow made it impossible for him to continue in his position.

He stated that he had no intention of seeing his armed forces being dragged into any "political games". Russia had succeeded in significantly undermining Ukraine's independence. A public opinion poll published by the *Economist* on October 2, 1993 confirmed this fact. The poll showed that less than half of the respondents still supported Ukrainian independence from Moscow, and that in the Russian-speaking industrialized eastern region the majority of people were favorable to reunification with Russia in the belief that this would solve many of their economic difficulties.

In spite of these developments, the Ukrainian government continued to take steps to bolster

its autonomy from Moscow, beginning with confronting its fuel problems. The government established a joint venture with a British company, the JP Kenny Group, to begin oil extraction from the shelf of the Black Sea in 1994. Despite serious safety concerns over the RBMK type reactors, Ukraine's parliament went further on October 21 and voted 221-38 in favor of continuing nuclear energy production at the Chernobyl power plant. This vote reversed a decision taken in 1991 to close the plant and was an obvious response to Russian pressure on the energy front.<sup>29</sup> As President Kravchuk stated: "We cannot reject the development of nuclear power in Ukraine at the moment," (*Washington Post*, 10-22-93). Scandinavian and German governments protested Ukraine's decision and vowed to "put whatever pressure we can to get the decision reversed." This pressure would merely enable Russia to compromise Ukraine's energy regime even further.

In November, Russia once again raised the issue of the potential catastrophic deterioration of Ukraine's nuclear weapons. Russian Foreign Minister Andrei Kozyrev warned that a "tragedy worse than the one in Chernobyl" that was possible if nuclear weapons were not withdrawn from Ukraine by January 1, 1994. Ukrainian Foreign Minister Anatoly Zlenko was quick to denounce Kozyrev's assessment of the situation as "an exaggeration," while Deputy Foreign Minister Boris Tarasiuk asserted that this was once again "pressure upon Ukraine" and a further attempt to influence world opinion against it, (*Interfax*, 11-5-93).

Vladimir Kryzhanovskiy, Ukraine's Ambassador to Russia informed the Russian government that if a missile deployed in Ukraine were indeed in a dangerous condition it would be deactivated immediately. He stated that "we are not enemies of our own people, and we shall not let a tragedy take place," (*Interfax*, 11-9-93). Kryzhanovskiy reaffirmed Ukraine's intention to "move toward ratifying the START-1 treaty, the Nuclear Nonproliferation Treaty and the Lisbon Protocol," and he asserted that "the main obstacle that prevents Ukraine's parliament from ratifying them is the issue of compensation for the tactical nuclear arms which have already been removed from Ukraine."

The Crimean issue arose simultaneously. On November 8, Sergei Shuvainikov, leader of Crimea's Russian Party told *Interfax* that he intended to run for the post of Crimean president in future elections. The Russian Party had been established at the beginning of 1993 with the strategic goal "to recreate the fraternal union of Russia, Ukraine and Belarus." Shuvainikov stated that "historical justice must be restored, and Russia and Ukraine must be reunited."

These most recent developments have raised the stakes in the Ukrainian-Russian

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<sup>29</sup> Atomic energy accounts for 35% of Ukraine's electricity production and consumption.

confrontation. In a survey published by *Interfax* on November 12, 33 percent of Ukrainians polled could not rule out the possibility of a military conflict with Russia. Forty percent expressed a desire for Ukraine to join NATO while only 12.8 percent were in favor of joining the CIS military alliance. Forty-five percent of respondents stated that Ukraine should hold onto to the nuclear missiles remaining on its soil because of the persistence of Russian territorial claims.

On November 16, the Ukrainian Supreme Soviet passed a draft resolution agreeing to ratify the START-1 treaty only if "Ukraine is granted compensation for its tactical and strategic nuclear arms pulled out of its borders and guarantees of its security." The draft resolution also made it clear that in ratifying START-1 and the subsequent Lisbon Protocol, Ukraine would not agree to become a nuclear-free state at this juncture, (*Interfax*, 11-16-93).

On November 18, the Ukrainian parliament ratified the START-1 treaty and the Lisbon Protocol without its fifth paragraph on the commitment to become a nuclear-free state. In addition, the Parliament attached conditions to the ratification which included demands for substantial financial compensation and security guarantees such as the non-use of force and economic pressure in the resolution of disputes from Russia, and guarantees of Ukraine's territorial integrity and the non-violability of its borders. Ukraine's Foreign Minister, Anatoly Zlenko stated that "such guarantees could be provided in the form of a trilateral agreement with participation of Ukraine, USA and Russia." Ukraine also committed itself to "state-by-stage" disarmament -- a process which would begin with the relinquishing of only 63 of the 176 nuclear missiles and 42 percent of the 1,656 nuclear warheads left on its soil. Ukraine set no deadline for the dismantling of the remainder. All of this was a direct response to the pressure exerted by Russia on Ukraine's economy, security and territory, (*Interfax*, 11-19-93).

Russian Foreign Minister Kozyrev responded immediately asserting that, "the Ukrainian Parliament, which ratified the START-1 agreement, but reserved Kiev's right to possess nuclear weapons is in direct violation of the nuclear non-proliferation treaty," (*Interfax* 11-22-93). President Kravchuk, however, was adamant that Ukraine did intend eventually to become a nuclear-free state. He stressed that Ukraine had attached conditions only as a result of the international community's failure "to account for the complexity and specifics of the Ukrainian situation, and its lack of desire to cooperate with his country in the pre-ratification period." He also agreed to resubmit the issue of the ratification of the treaty and protocol to a new Ukrainian Parliament due to be elected on March 27, 1994, (*Interfax*, 11-22-93).

The Ukrainian Ambassador to Moscow, Vladimir Kryzhanovskiy, confirmed that Kiev did not intend to destroy the non-proliferation regime, "given that the country is unable to produce, or

launch nuclear weapons from its territory." He stated that "we will not do less than is envisaged by the treaty, but we cannot work miracles and we are not going to speed up the process without a proportionate response from our partners. Ukraine is well aware of Western anxiety over nuclear weapons deployed in Ukraine, and is doing all it can to coordinate its actions with Western countries, especially the United States. Ukraine meets more understanding on the issue from Washington than from the fraternal Russian state," (*Interfax*, 11-23-93).

The "fraternal" Russian state was indeed anything but understanding. On November 30, a group of experts from Russia's Atomic Energy Ministry sent an appeal to the Russian government that was made public by the Russian Foreign Ministry's press and information department. According to the group, recent inspections of Ukrainian nuclear weapons had revealed a number of violations of standard operating procedures, including "too many nuclear warheads in the highest degree of combat readiness stocked in one spot; no systematic technical servicing; untimely replacement of the components whose time of guarantee expired; failure to observe the rules of transportation, and the like." They stated that "These violations may lead to accidents with consequences whose scope would be comparable with the Chernobyl catastrophe....The strict system of handling and servicing nuclear arms, which existed in the USSR for many years and which continues to function in Russia, has been destroyed in Ukraine," (*Interfax*, 11-30-93).

To reiterate this point Russian Foreign Minister Andrei Kozyrev told *Interfax* on December 2, that once again he was "extremely concerned" at the possibility of Ukraine becoming a nuclear power. "At a time when we are concluding the agreement on nuclear disarmament," he stated, "a new nuclear state is emerging in Europe." On December 7, with regard to Ukraine's incomplete ratification of START, Grigory Karasin, Director of the Russian Foreign Ministry's press and information department announced that Kiev should take the world community's reaction to its actions into account. He asserted that the West did not view the Ukrainian Parliament's resolution on the START-1 treaty as "an important and positive step on the road to nuclear disarmament." Instead the West "believed that Kiev's nuclear ambitions create a threat to the interests of the entire world community and undermine the process of disarmament," (*Interfax*, 12-7-93). In such a manner Russia has tried to suggest that in exerting pressure on Ukraine over its failure to dismantle its nuclear weapons, Moscow is acting in the best interests of the international community rather than in its own interests.

The fact that Russia continues to act in its own interests and is bent on subjugating Ukraine was underscored, however, in comments made to *Interfax* by Russian Foreign Minister Andrei Kozyrev on December 7, 1993. He summed up Russia's current interests in Ukraine thus:

"Considering our international commitments and proceeding from the interests of Russia's security, we cannot allow the emergence of new nuclear states on our borders ... [Russia] did all it could to conduct a peaceful dialogue with Ukraine. However the problem of nuclear weapons makes the situation hopeless. The same relates to the Black Sea Fleet whose division is absurd in itself. Sevastopol was Russia's naval base and it must remain as such."

As the analysis we have outlined above would indicate, the struggle for Ukraine's independence is far from over. Every time Ukraine attempts to assert its independence, Russia responds by exerting pressure on Ukraine's economy, security or territory. The new state's sovereignty is being chipped away in a piecemeal fashion by Moscow. Ukraine's retention of its nuclear legacy from the Soviet Union is presently its only insurance against total capitulation to Russia, and Moscow is determined to wrest it away. Ukraine's resistance can only increase the likelihood of conflict between the two states and its own eventual territorial dismemberment and economic collapse. The presidential elections in the Crimea in January 1994 will be a particularly testing time for Ukraine. The *Financial Times* reported on December 30, 1993 that tensions on the peninsula had increased dramatically with the murder of four Crimean politicians, including a Ukrainian member of parliament and a Crimean presidential candidate.



## SECTION IV

### IMPLICATIONS FOR UNITED STATES FOREIGN POLICY TOWARD RUSSIA

The evidence presented in the preceding section suggests that Russia has done nothing to help achieve an equitable and peaceful resolution in any of the conflicts. In Azerbaijan, Georgia and Moldova Russian troops have colluded in the *de facto* dismemberment of the republics. In regions where there is, as yet, no sign of violent conflict, inflammatory statements by Russian politicians and punitive actions by Moscow have served to increase tensions.

Russia has a clear but unstated motive for all of these interventions: to reassert control of its former empire. Because of its economic problems, Russia cannot afford the burden of financially supporting its empire, as it has done in the past. Similarly, a weakened Russian Army (and guaranteed Western opposition) precludes it from using the military to forcibly reconquer the region. Instead, Russia has discovered that exploiting existing regional conflicts and grievances is a very cost effective and convenient way of destabilizing its neighbors and quickly reestablishing Moscow's authority.

Russia's actions should be of concern to the United States as they represent a major threat to regional stability and run contrary to stated US goals for the region. In particular, the democratic transformation of both Russia and the former republics is thrown into question. The broad policy goals for the United States in the former Soviet Union were enumerated during September 1993 testimony before the House and Senate Foreign Relations Committee by Strobe Talbott, the United States Ambassador-at-Large to the former Soviet Union:

- the attainment of democracy;
- the transition to a market economy;
- the non-proliferation of nuclear, chemical and biological weapons;
- and the resolution of regional conflicts.

To achieve these goals, the Clinton Administration needs a government with which it can --

in the words of Margaret Thatcher -- "do business." It has made an investment in President Yeltsin, gambling that his success will guarantee democracy, reform and non-proliferation. The US has supported Yeltsin unwaveringly.

This support for Yeltsin has extended to his policies toward the former republics of the Soviet Union. On November 4, 1993 Secretary Christopher told a Congressional committee that the countries of the former Soviet Union are "a long, long ways from the United States," and that Russia could act to guarantee regional stability if it respected "international norms." Christopher further stated that he was confident Russia would respect the territorial integrity of the former republics, and that simply asking Russia to comply with international norms would be enough to ensure that it honored its neighbors' sovereignty.

Secretary Christopher also did not criticize the new Russian Military Doctrine. He stated that "what we're seeing here is Russian military doctrine trying to catch up with the new reality in Russia." Even when questioned by a member of Congress about a specific instance of aggressive Russian behavior, Christopher was indulgent toward Moscow. Secretary Christopher dismissed Russian Defense Minister Pavel Grachev's remarks that Russia would link the withdrawal of troops from the Baltic States to the resolution of the rights of the Russian minority there as the posturing of the leader of a demoralized army. He assured the Congressional committee that the Russian government is "committed to reaching a prompt agreement with both Latvia and Estonia on the withdrawal of Russian troops." The republic by republic analyses in this Report raise serious questions about whether such optimism is warranted. Russia has consistently undermined the independence of its neighbors and it has used military force for this end. This is cause for concern for the United States on three counts:

First, Russia's undermining of these countries' independence threatens the regional stability that is in the United States' national interest. One cannot assume that the former Soviet republics will continue to succumb *passively* to Russian pressure.

Second, Russia may lose its ability to manage the conflicts it has been exploiting. These conflicts could escalate out of Moscow's control and spill into other major countries, particularly Turkey and Iran. This is evidenced by the Karabakh Armenians push towards the Iranian border.

Third, if Russia commits the resources necessary to reestablish full control over its former republics by strengthening its ailing military and security forces, and rejuvenating its military-industrial complex, market economic reforms will be imperiled. The "peacekeeping" operations that Russia seeks to lead are costly in monetary, human and political terms. They can divert funds away from privatization and the modernization of industry, housing and agriculture.

## SECTION V

### RECOMMENDATIONS FOR UNITED STATES POLICY TOWARD RUSSIA

The United States government does not want to be perceived as guilty of having "lost Russia." But does it instead want to be responsible for the loss of 14 newly independent states? Although no one in the Administration has suggested publicly that these states are expendable, the US is acquiescing in the *de facto* reconstitution of the USSR by turning its head as Russia maneuvers its way back into the affairs of all its former republics.

The details in this Report suggest that, while Yeltsin is still in power and while the US retains a degree of influence with the Russian government, the United States should give serious consideration to alternative policies, as, for example, the following:

- Be tough on the issue of the Baltic States and demand that Russia comply quickly with its agreement to withdraw troops from Estonia and Latvia. In August 1993, when Russia temporarily suspended its withdrawal from Lithuania, US pressure on Moscow and threats to withhold \$700 million in technical assistance were instrumental in persuading Russia to comply with the August 31 deadline.
- Oppose attempts by Russia to install Russian peacekeepers unilaterally in the former Soviet republics.
- Do not simply farm off responsibility to allied regional powers such as Turkey. Make symbolic moves in the region to demonstrate that the entire US policy is not Moscow-centric, such as: initiating high-level meetings with heads of state that are not simply an adjunct to meetings in Moscow; inviting heads of state to Washington DC; offering high profile technical assistance to individual states for the development of key infrastructure; creating prestigious fellowship programs for each individual state rather than for the former Soviet republics as a bloc.
- Support and assist moderate forces in the former Soviet republics to counteract nationalist extremists pushing for punitive measures against ethnic minorities: particularly ethnic Russians in Latvia and Estonia, Abkhazians and Ossetians in

Georgia. Encourage the states to submit pertinent laws and statutes to the CSCE and the Council of Europe for review. This will help to prevent Russia from exploiting minority grievances.

- Urge the CSCE or commission international human rights agencies based in the United States to undertake factfinding missions to Central Asia to investigate alleged infringements of the rights of ethnic Russians. These findings should be made public, and any recommendations made to the governments concerned to head off Russian attempts to use this issue as a lever.
- Acknowledge the fact that without nuclear weapons, Ukraine will lose its bargaining chips in negotiations both with Russia and the US and will be vulnerable to an expansionist Russian power. Once the nuclear weapons are gone Russia will interpret the economic grievances of ethnic Russians in Eastern Ukraine as violations of human rights. It has already begun to play the ethnic Russian card in Central Asia now that the region has been pushed from the ruble zone. The US must convince Ukraine that in giving up its weapons, it will not be relegated to second-class status and fed to the Russian Federation. So far the US has failed to do this.

Purposeful action taken now by the United States could dissuade Russia from pursuing imperial designs and instead persuade it to focus inward on economic and political stabilization. Moscow does not have to resort to subjugation and annexation to maintain the regional infrastructure and raw material supplies necessary for its economic transformation, or to insure its security. All the former Soviet republics have been dependent on Russia for decades, if not centuries, and Russia will be the predominant power in the region no matter what it does.

Valery Tsepikalo, an advisor to the Chairman of the Belarusian Parliament, admitted to *Interfax* on December 13, 1993 that "neither Belarus, nor Ukraine, nor the Baltic States will be able to stop Russia's economic expansion, if that proves its official policy." He went on to question the method that Moscow would now choose to achieve that expansion with Vladimir Zhirinovskiy now a major factor in Russian politics: "the way of Prince Ivan Kalita ("Moneybags"), who in his day employed diplomatic and economic means to put the Moscow Principdom together, or the way of Bismarck, a way of iron and blood?" So far Russian policies have included a bit of both: "the way of Prince Ivan Kalita" in Belarus, Central Asia and Ukraine, "the way of Bismarck" in Azerbaijan,

Georgia, Moldova and Tajikistan. The way of Bismarck should be strongly discouraged by the United States and the West.