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INTERNATIONAL INSTITUTIONS AND CONFLICT RESOLUTION IN THE EX-URSS

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INTERNATIONAL INSTITUTIONS AND CONFLICT RESOLUTION IN THE FORMER SOVIET UNION

by

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The combined result of the end of the Cold War and of the Gulf War "blitz" evoked widespread enthusiasm over the potential role of international institutions, primarily of the United Nations, and of the various regional security arrangements, such as the Conference on Security and Cooperation in Europe (CSCE), in the construction of the "New World Order" and the new "security architecture" for Europe. It was generally accepted at the time that the apparent passivity and inefficiency of those organizations in the preceding period had been the product of the East-West ideological confrontation and superpower rivalry. Once freed from those shackles, it was argued, the international institutions will be able to fully exercise the potential promised in their charters.

This thesis was put to the test very soon. Apparent successes of international mediators and peacekeepers (e.g., in El Salvador, Namibia and Cambodia) were followed, and quickly overshadowed by their perceived failures (notably, in Somalia and ex-Yugoslavia). In the eyes of many, the UN, alongside with the CSCE, the European Union and NATO have all become symbols of international impotence and occasionally even appeasement. Thus, initial enthusiasm has given way to so much confusion and disappointment. Renationalization of foreign and security policies in Europe has loomed as a clear and present danger.

Both the opening thesis and its antithesis appear to be equally flawed. While the former was clearly based on unrealistic expectations, the latter uses skewed assessment scales letting the negatives easily outweigh whatever positive results international involvement may have scored. This paper is based on the premise that the period of turbulence and disorder which has succeeded the Cold War is anything but a transient state of the international system; indeed, a whole era will have passed before world politics can enter a new period of relative stability. To expect international institutions, many of them the products of World War II or the Cold War, to "police" a transition to the ideal envisioned by their founders so many decades ago, is to take leave of the realm of the possible and indulge in pure idealism. On the other hand, it would be wrong to believe that internationalism is a failed idea and the institutions which embody it are merely self-serving bureaucracies, and put all one's faith into national unilateralism.

This should be avoided also because the new era's one most salient feature is extreme instability which challenges the cohesiveness of nations, the permanence of their borders and the long-established social, economic and ideological patterns of national life. The disintegration of the Soviet Union alone has released so much previously pent-up energy that it will take a long time, probably two or three decades, no less, for a new system of relations to mature and re-organize the vast geo-political, geo-economic and geo-strategic space which, for the last several hundred years, has known only one form of organization: a continent-wide empire.

It is the purpose of this paper to examine the role of various international institutions in resolving conflicts in the former USSR. It first attempts to assess the changing perceptions of those institutions in Russia and in the new independent states of the ex-Soviet Union; further, it proceeds to analyze the actual performance of those institutions in preventing, managing and settling conflicts in the post-Soviet space. This performance is contrasted to the institutions' potential which could be realistically mobilized. Special attention is given to the prospects of interaction between the relevant institutions and Russia as the major power in Northern Eurasia. Lastly, likely problems and prospects for selected international institutions involved in conflict-resolution in the ex-USSR are discussed.

I. CHANGING PERCEPTIONS OF INTERNATIONAL INSTITUTIONS IN RUSSIA AND THE NEW INDEPENDENT STATES OF THE FORMER SOVIET UNION

The dissolution of the Soviet Union was accompanied by the formation, on 8/21 December 1991, of a new international grouping, a Commonwealth of Independent States (CIS). From its inception, however, the post-Soviet Commonwealth functioned more as a forum for occasional consultation among its heads of states than as an organization in its own right. Agreements within the CIS soon became famous for their virtually universal non-compliance. Thus, the CIS initially assumed the role of facilitating disintegration of the republics rather than their re-integration.

The Russian Federation emerging from the dissolved Soviet Union has initially adopted a world-view which was influenced by much wishful thinking. It substantially downplayed the conflict potential resulting from the fall of Communism and Soviet disintegration, while at the same time displaying unrealistic optimism as to Russia's immediate prospects.

In an attempt to cut the imperial liabilities and isolate itself from the "hot spots" on its periphery, Russia withdrew its forces from Nagorny Karabakh (Spring 1992), effectively abandoned Central Asia to its fate, and failed to protect ethnic Russian minorities (25.3 m as compared to the Federation's own population of about 148 m) who had become residents of the new independent states. It hastily agreed on a hazy formula for the status of Soviet nuclear weapons and conventional forces. It embraced a concept of the Commonwealth of Independent States (CIS) without

having made up its mind whether it wanted a mechanism for a smooth divorce or for a new cohabitation.

In contrast to that, Moscow diplomacy was very clear in its desire to "rejoin the civilized (i.e, Western) world" which it regarded as its natural habitat by virtue of Russia's thousand-year long Christian tradition, the undeniable "European-ness" of its literature and the arts and its ruling élite born-anew adherence to democratic anti-Communist principles.

Having succeeded the Soviet Union at the UN Security Council as the continuation state, the Russian Federation has also inherited the late-Soviet fascination with universal principles, such as the defense of universal values and human rights, and global mechanisms for their implementation. The UN was considered capable of satisfactorily resolving post-Soviet conflicts. By the same token, Moscow continued to place emphasis on the Conference for Security and Cooperation in Europe (CSCE) which it wanted transformed into a reduced-size copy of the United Nations, with Russia enjoying a comparable elevated status.

The new Russia, however, was especially interested in joining the one organization which had been its prime adversary during the preceding decades, namely, NATO. The famous "spelling mistake" in Mr. Yeltsin's December, 1991 message to the leaders of the Atlantic Alliance which left it unclear whether Russia had viewed NATO membership as its short- or long-term goal, could have been a trial balloon indicative of the prevailing expectations at the time.

Whereas Russia did not have to spend much time or effort to win international recognition through adherence to world and regional bodies, the new independent states, which had, at most, enjoyed only brief periods of rather ephemeral independence during the Civil War of 1918-1921, sought precisely that. Not unlike the Asian and African nations emerging from the process of European decolonization in the 1950s and the 1960s, they viewed admission to the UN and the CSCE as the ultimate recognition of their national statehood. In the long-standing Soviet tradition, their post-Communist power élites were looking to those international bodies as the "new Centre" replacing Moscow as a court of appeal and an arbiter par excellence.

To some of the former Soviet republics (including Ukraine), suffering from the "little brother syndrome" in their new relations with Russia, seeking support from international organizations was a means of counterbalancing their powerful neighbor. Also, in contrast to Russia, most of the new states, apparently weary of their previous role as military staging areas or strongholds of the former Soviet Union, have declared their intention to become neutral countries, staying away from any blocs (1). Appeals for joining NATO (in Ukraine, Georgia, etc.) were coming mainly from opposition politicians concerned about perceived or potential resurgence of Russian imperialism.

The United Nations, in 1991-92, was quick to recognize the Russian Federation as the successor to the USSR, and to admit the new independent states as its full members, with Russia, for its

part, making no attempt to gain concessions from them in exchange for granting its approval within the Security Council. The CSCE, after initial hesitation, decided, under German prodding, to extend invitations to participate in its activities to all former Soviet republics, thus expanding the notion of "Europe" far beyond its generally recognized geographical or cultural boundaries. This was guided by the expressed desire, on the part of the CSCE, to involve the new states into the all-European process, and create new means and incentives for upholding the principles of the 1990 Paris Charter.

The Atlantic Alliance, definitely both unable and unwilling to accept any new members, could not ignore the momentous change in the geo-strategic landscape in Central and Eastern Europe. To offer its erstwhile adversaries a perspective, NATO proposed, at the end of 1991, establishing a North Atlantic Cooperation Council (NACC). The Cooperation Partners in the former Soviet Union came to perceive the Council as a half-way house between full membership and further exclusion.

During 1992 the above perceptions were somewhat corrected or altered. Russian foreign policy was making a hard transition from the idealism of universal values to the reality of national interests. There was a wide-ranging discussion on the subject forming part of a more fundamental debate on the future path for Russia, which itself was inextricably linked with the ever intensifying power struggle culminating in the October, 1993, showdown.

It is hardly surprising that, as the Yugoslav crisis continued, in Russia, too, there was much less faith left in the United Nations and the CSCE. More ominously, some members of the Russian national security establishment observing the policies of leading NATO countries vis-à-vis the crisis in the Balkans, started to perceive them as one-sided, directed against the one country which had been Russia's traditional ally, i.e., Serbia. Fears were expressed that, in a conflict within the former USSR, Western-led international institutions might side with anti-Russian forces (2).

The other republics have also found reality to be very different from their expectations. International recognition was granted, but funds and expertise necessary to establish a credible diplomatic presence abroad were not. International institutions started showing an interest in the problems of the former Soviet republics, but this interest was often considered to be superficial or intermittent. It was Russia on which the world's attention continued to be almost exclusively fixated.

As a reaction, some of the new states started looking for allies and sponsors among the more powerful countries: thus, the Baltic States were increasingly turning to the Scandinavians, the Moldovans to Romania, and the Azeris to Turkey.

Another option probed during that period was creating new regional security associations or alliances. Having internalized the CSCE principles in its foreign and security policy documents,

Ukraine soon found out that those principles had no guarantees. In February, 1993, Ukrainian President Leonid Kravchuk proposed establishing a security system in the Baltic/Black Sea area, which would include eleven Central and Eastern European nations positioned between Russia and Germany. Central Asian states have also issued declarations of their intention to organize on a regional level, either among themselves or with the participation of the neighboring Moslem nations. So far, none of these alternatives, however, has proven viable.

1993 has witnessed the political crisis in Russia mature and develop into an armed battle in the center of Moscow. Russia's policies in the "near abroad" were also becoming more assertive. Views on CIS started to change somewhat. In January, 1993, the Commonwealth Charter was signed. In May, the Russian Supreme Soviet ratified the Collective Security Treaty, which then went into force. Armed cross-border incursions into Tajikistan from Afghanistan have helped to rally the governments of Central Asian countries around Russia which at last succeeded in organizing a framework for a multinational peacemaking force in Tajikistan. Military developments in Transcaucasia have made the leaders of Azerbaijan and Georgia seek membership in the CIS, while the Moldovan president has proposed to do the same for economic reasons.

Thus, two years after independence, the perception of other international institutions in the former Soviet republics has also undergone certain changes. The UN is regarded largely as a symbol of international recognition or status (for Russia), but hardly as a world policeman. The CSCE is respected for its principles and for its egalitarianism, which ironically makes those principles difficult to enforce. The Council of Europe, with the obligations it imposes matching its prestige, is a distant goal for many republics. NATO, although its membership, too, is still out of reach for the republics of the former Soviet Union, remains popular from the Baltic to the Caucasus. In Ukraine, for example, most of the political élite and 40.6% of the population are in favor of a NATO membership. At the same time, however, 45.3% of Ukrainians support - despite international pressure - the country's nuclear status (rejected by only 35.5% of respondents) (3). According to President Kravchuk, Ukraine "has become a full member of the international community" and now needs to become "an influential European power" (4). This resurgence of nationalism may be as detrimental to the security of the post-Soviet area as the revival of imperialist tendencies elsewhere.

II. PERFORMANCE OF THE INTERNATIONAL INSTITUTIONS IN SETTLING THE CONFLICTS IN THE FORMER SOVIET UNION

The perceptions described above are largely conditioned by the elite and popular evaluation of those institutions' performance. The Soviet Union is a cluster of many actual and potential conflicts. Many of them are of distinct ethnic coloration. As devised by Stalin, the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics was composed of 54 national territories enjoying

various degrees of nominal autonomy. Although in 35 of these entities no inter-ethnic conflicts were reported, sixty disputes did take place since the dismantlement of the Soviet Union had started. Thirty-two of those disputes degenerated into violent confrontations, while eight of them can be described as ethnic wars (5). The casualties have risen from some 800 dead in 1991 to at least 50,000 in 1992 in Tajikistan alone (6). While even this is substantially lower than the number of victims in Bosnia-Herzegovina, potentially post-Soviet conflicts are fraught with far worse consequences.

The performance of the various international institutions in conflict-resolution in the former USSR shall be assessed in the present paper separately for conflict prevention, crisis management and dispute resolution.

Conflict Prevention

It is generally recognized by the international security institutions that it is ethnic minority problems within one country, rather than interstate disputes, which constitute the prime threat to peace in Europe. This prompted the CSCE, for example, to establish, in July 1992, the post of a high commissioner for national minorities.

Potential conflict areas in the ex-Soviet Union urgently requiring preventive care include the Baltic States (Russian minority rights and Russian troop presence), Ukraine (internal cohesion, status of minorities and the whole complex of Russo-Ukrainian disputes: the nuclear weapons, the Black Sea Fleet, the status of the Crimea), and Central Asia with its extremely arbitrary boundaries and numerous territorial claims. Standing somewhat apart is the "non-issue" of Kaliningrad.

Predictably, it is the Baltic States which receive the most attention from the international institutions. Special commissions sent out from the UN Center for Human Rights, setting up of a CSCE mission in Estonia and frequent visits to the area by the CSCE High Commissioner for National Minorities, intervention by the Council of Europe, and the subtle diplomacy by the Nordic and EU countries have all contributed to the continuation of the internal dialogue between the local Russian communities and Baltic governments. Losing its nerve, Russia even came out against Estonia's admission into the Council of Europe, only to discover that it had no veto rights on the subject. However, a potentially provoking Estonian law on aliens was amended (July, 1993).

On the other hand, NATO expressed concern over the lack of clarity with respect to Russian military withdrawal from the Baltic States. The Russian military, worried over what they interpret as NATO's excessive interest in an area so close to Russia's nerve centers, have been trying to link the withdrawal of their troops from Estonia and Latvia with a satisfactory solution to the problem of Russian minorities in those two countries.

Unlike the case of the Baltic States, Russo-Ukrainian relations are less susceptible to outside intervention. The UN Security Council denunciation, in July 1993, of a Russian Supreme Soviet resolution on the Crimea/Sebastopol issue was only possible due to a conscious decision by the Russian government to have its parliament internationally exposed as war-mongering. All these steps seem to have been mainly symbolic. On the other hand, NATO's threat to freeze cooperation with Ukraine until it formally renounces all claims to nuclear weapons now in its territory and ratifies the NPT is a clear form of international pressure. Central Asia is as yet largely "out of bounds" for international institutional involvement, which enhances the role of major states (Russia, Iran, Turkey, Pakistan, India and China). Competition between them is not likely to contribute to conflict-prevention. As to Kaliningrad, it is considered too sensitive an issue to be approached directly.

Management

Several conflicts in the FSU have degenerated into violent crises: Nagorny Karabakh, South Ossetia, Moldova, Abkhazia, Tajikistan, Western Georgia. The United Nations and the CSCE had for the first time to deal with those areas on the periphery of the ex-USSR of which the outside world had previously known very little. Top international functionaries paid official visits there; fact-finding missions were sent out to collect information and present reports; permanent monitoring stations were set up to keep track of new developments. The UN Security Council took up the cases of Karabakh and Abkhazia. Where cease-fire agreement was reached, the UN and CSCE provided military observers to monitor it (7).

The CSCE started, in 1992, a negotiating process (the "Minsk Conference") to settle the Karabakh dispute. While the good offices offered by the UN Secretary General in the summer of 1993 and the shuttle diplomacy of his personal representative failed to prevent a new eruption of violence in the conflict in Abkhazia, the UN was instrumental in bringing Abkhazian and Georgian representatives together in Geneva for face-to-face talks.

Various international organizations have been very active in providing humanitarian assistance to the victims of the various conflicts. Refugee relief stands out as one of the more salient aspect of humanitarian activities.

Post-Conflict Dispute Resolution

With the acute phase of the crisis over, international organizations have been attempting to play a constructive role in dispute resolution. Thus, a special CSCE mission to Moldova was given a task to help formulate the status of the country's eastern region, monitor the human rights situation in Moldova and look into the problem of the withdrawal of Russia's 14th army from Transdniestria.

In an attempt to promote internal stability in the new independent states, international organizations have been willing to send observers to monitor elections and referendums. Both Edward Sheverdnadze's government in Georgia and Gaidar Aliev's presidency in Azerbaijan owe their legitimacy in no small measure to the verdict of international observers present during elections there.

The perception of international organizations' performance in the new countries themselves was uneven. Azerbaijan and Georgia were disappointed over the slowness of the Security Council reaction with respect to Armenian or Abkhazian military offensives. In the latter case, there was bitter disappointment when only 22 of the planned 88 UN observers had arrived before the resumption of the Abkhazian offensive, and then were unable to carry out their mission. In other cases, the credibility of international organizations, such as the CSCE, was occasionally put into question (i.e., by Azerbaijan, which found CSCE actions in October, 1993, at variance with the UN Security Council resolutions 822 and 853).

Some governments adopted activist attitudes to influence international organizations, either directly, or through their more prominent member states, or by way of influencing world public opinion. The Azerbaijanian foreign ministry adopted the practice of organizing guided tours to the war zones for the ambassadors of the five permanent members of the UN Security Council. The Georgian leader, while appealing to the international community, and especially the UN, for help, made maximum use of his personal contacts with his US and German counterparts. The UN platform has come to be routinely used for airing various allegations and complaints (as by the Moldovan foreign minister in the fall of 1993).

Following the pattern of the national liberation movements of the 1960s and the 1970s, the self-proclaimed republics of Abkhazia, Karabakh and Transdniestria, have been trying to use international organizations (primarily the UN and the CSCE) to win a measure of international recognition. Karabakh Armenians have been attempting to do that through the Minsk peace talks, while the Abkhazians have offered UN a referendum on the sovereignty issue.

While all sides in the conflicts were continuously appealing to the world public for support, the media was devoting comparatively little attention to the troubled spots in the former Soviet Union. The "CNN factor" was singularly absent. Consequently, there has been virtually no pressure in favor of international intervention in any of the former republics.

Based on their perceived record, individual organizations clearly enjoy very different standing in the eyes of the élites in the post-Soviet countries. The United Nations continued to be universally respected by Russia and the new states. To the former, currently in a period of weakness, an active UN is a guarantee against domination drives by other, more powerful states. Russia's permanent membership in the Security Council, a status symbol in itself, ensures that the world body shall take

no action against Russian interests (8). To the latter, participation in the UN serves the purpose of nation-building. On a more practical level, the UN is not considered to be particularly effective in dealing with crises. Within the Ukrainian political élite, for instance, there is uneasiness over Russia's privileged position within the organization.

The CSCE, long a favorite with Soviet diplomacy as the preferred version of a pan-European security structure, has preserved its high standing with Moscow. Russia wants the CSCE become a regional organization in its own right, a mini-UN, complete with a scaled-down version of a Security Council. Russian academics have been offering proposals for building up the CSCE to enable it deal with inter-ethnic strife in Europe(9).

From the perspective of some other republics, the CSCE has become too large without improving its conflict-resolution mechanisms. More limited mutual security combinations of neighboring states are proposed as a complement and perhaps an alternative in Ukraine and in the Baltics. In Central Asia, interest in a reinvigorated CSCE is not self-evident. Kazakhstan and Uzbekistan, however, are making proposals leading to the creation of a regional security (sub)system (10).

NATO has taken a very discreet public role in the affairs of the FSU countries, which are of great interest to the Alliance. It appears that its policies largely depend on the assessment of the development of the political and socio-economic situation in Russia. NACC, started as more of a symbolic gesture, has established itself as a useful forum for political and strategic dialogue. Its interest in peace support operations (11) reaches deep into the realm of the practical, while suggestions to institute political consultations within the Council could transform it over time into a new security association.

The European Union and the Western European Union have taken a comparatively low profile in post-Soviet conflict resolution, which may be explained by their political and structural problems.

Despite initial hopes, the Commonwealth of Independent States has been unable so far to function as a conflict-resolution agency. Most political negotiations have taken place on a bilateral basis, and it took the CIS more than 20 months to mount its first peacekeeping operation (in Tajikistan), which remains, in fact, largely a Russian affair.

III. POTENTIAL CAPABILITIES OF INTERNATIONAL ORGANIZATIONS

International organizations provide a range of capabilities which could be used to prevent, manage or resolve disputes in the FSU.

At the preventive stage, global monitoring of the human and minority rights situation could provide the international community with an early warning system. There seems to be a good

argument for expanding the activities of the Office of the High Commissioner for National Minorities and of the Conflict Prevention Center of the CSCE which, at present, have extremely limited capacities.

Other potential sources of conflict should not be ignored. Thus, the disastrous ecological situation in Central Asia and the issue of water rights in the region should be seriously addressed. The UN specialized agencies, as well as international economic organizations, which have enough experience in this field, should be asked to address the new area of potential disaster.

International agencies (including the IAEA) are also capable of watching closely nuclear power plants and chemical installations in the FSU. More should be done, however, to preserve the intellectual potential contained in Russia's "atomic cities", so that toward the end of the decade, when these issues are expected to come to the fore even more than now, Russia has still enough experts to deal with them.

International mediation of disputes. Helping with organizing informal talks, adopting, where appropriate, the "Norway model" used by the Israelis and the Palestinians.

Crisis-management

International organizations (primarily the UN, but also the CSCE) could engage in traditional peacekeeping in the areas of crisis of the FSU. This would largely include cease-fire monitoring (setting up observation posts to monitor compliance). One area where this appears possible is along the Dniester River and around the town of Bendery in Moldova.

Deploying multinational forces as a buffer between the conflicting parties is another traditional mission to be taken up. Both Abkhazia and Karabakh call for this kind of international involvement.

Where there is a peace agreement already reached, but the partners do not trust each other, the experience of the Multilateral Force in Sinai could be useful. It appears that Armenia and Azerbaijan might have with time to look at this option.

While some new countries (Georgia, Moldova) and political groups (e.g., in Ukraine) at one time or another spoke in favor of inviting NATO forces as peacekeepers, this, even if it were feasible, would be clearly counterproductive. Not only the Russian military will see this as a challenge, but Moscow's overall strategic orientation can change as a result.

Regional arrangements could be a way to help manage conflicts threatening several countries. Thus, Central Asian nations should be encouraged to cooperate among themselves as a regional group within the CSCE framework.

For Post-Conflict Dispute Resolution:

Some of the more recent patterns of action by the international community could be applied to some post-Soviet situations. Upholding law and order in areas torn by internecine strife (such as Georgia or Tajikistan) would require mounting an international civil police force, as in Namibia. Demobilization of local forces, and their disarmament would have to be the prerequisite to national dialogue and reconciliation, especially in Georgia and Tajikistan. Central American examples (Nicaragua, Honduras) might be helpful.

In seemingly intractable cases, establishing a temporary international protectorate for organizing elections (like in Cambodia) appears to some analysts a worthwhile option to pursue(12).

International assistance in nation-building should be accompanied by clear insistence on observing human rights, protecting the rights of minorities and strengthening democratic institutions, including reforming the military along democratic lines.

Also, compulsory dispute settlement by international mediation might be a condition for international aid and support.

IV. PROBLEMS AND PROSPECTS OF INTERNATIONAL INVOLVEMENT

One conclusion which may be drawn from the previous section is that international organizations are much more effective either before a conflict enters the crisis phase or after the period of intensive confrontation has passed. Practical world-wide experience seems to suggest the same. Thus, conflict prevention and post-conflict dispute resolution in the former USSR are the two areas in which international organizations can do the most. Active crisis management, especially if it involves using force, is something these organizations are not best suited to do.

International organizations have important advantages over individual actors: consistency, impartiality, non-selectivity, non-politicization, universality or regionality (whichever is more appropriate), preference for dialogue over physical intervention, and the like.

Their disadvantages, however, are just as evident. Increasingly, they are reluctant to engage themselves; when they do, there is not enough coordination. Perhaps, most importantly, international organizations are not independent actors, with their authority depending on the cooperation of their leading members, few of whom feel the pull to engage themselves.

Thus, as far as the conflicts in the former USSR are concerned, it is the interaction between the various international institutions and Russia which is of paramount

importance for managing post-Soviet instability.

When defining her national interests, Russia declared the former Soviet republics as zones vitally important to her security (13). Among the "sources of external military danger" Russia's military doctrine cites specifically actual or potential hotbeds of local wars and military conflicts "in direct proximity of Russian borders", "suppression of rights, liberties and legitimate interests of citizens of the Russian Federation in foreign states", "attacks on military installations of the Armed Forces of the Russian Federation in the territory of foreign states", and international terrorism. These dangers would be upgraded to "direct military threats" in case Russian borders, or the borders of Russia's allies, came under attack; or if armed groups were organized for the purpose of infiltration into the territory of Russia or her allies; or if foreign troops were deployed to the countries on Russia's periphery, unless in the form of peacekeeping forces acting under an international mandate having Russia's backing (14).

Russia's interest in stabilizing her immediate periphery is genuine. There is a real danger of a spill-over effect - for instance, in the Caucasus region, where the abandoned conflict in Karabakh has functioned as a generator of regional instability, producing hundreds of thousands of refugees, encouraging illicit arms transfers and providing training to would-be fighters in other local conflicts. By the same token, inter-ethnic wars in South Ossetia and Abkhazia have had a destabilizing effect on Russia's own North Caucasian frontier, helping to provoke the first armed conflict within the Federation (between the Ossetians and the Ingushi) and putting into question Russia's territorial integrity.

Russia is clearly worried over the potential spread of "Islamic extremism" from Afghanistan and Tajikistan into Central Asia and Kazakhstan, which has a 7,200 km-long border with Russia - totally unguarded and indefensible.

While the West has been concerned over the flow of immigrants from the FSU, it is Russia which, for the moment, has to shoulder the main burden. In the past 12 months alone, she has received some 2 million refugees and economic immigrants. Officials from Russia's Federal Migration Service predict an influx of additional 4 to 6 million people before the end of 1995, of which 400 thousand are expected to arrive from Transcaucasia, 600 thousand from the Baltic States, and some 3 million from Central Asia (15).

Initially, the Russians were ambivalent about any outside participation in peacekeeping operations within the FSU. Plans for Romanian and Bulgarian units to police the cease-fire in Moldova alongside with Russian and Ukrainian elements in July, 1992, had to be abandoned at the last moment, probably because of the opposition from the military.

Later, however, this position itself began to change. In late February, 1993, Russia asked for a UN mandate to conduct peace operations in the former Soviet republics. Predictably,

this raised a number of serious objections. Russia's actions from Moldova to the Caucasus to Tajikistan represented a radical departure from standard UN peacekeeping practices: in all cases, Russian national interests were directly affected (no impartiality); Russian troops were often used to support one party in an internal conflict (no de-politicization); and the methods employed, for example, in Tajikistan, were all too reminiscent of the Soviet Union's previous Afghan involvement(16).

The present Russian government, however, does not relish this unilateralism. Russia remains a strong supporter of building up the peacekeeping capabilities of the UN, including the revitalization and reform of its Military Staff Committee (both for traditional peacekeeping and Chapter VII operations). Ideas have been floated at a high level in the Russian government about creating a clear political chain of responsibility running from the UN and the CSCE to NACC, NATO, the WEU and the CIS. Moscow is especially interested in institutionalizing a UN-CIS link(17).

Russia, however, disagrees with the UN Secretary-General's proposal that Russians help make peace in Asia and Africa, while Asians, Africans and Latin Americans are given a similar job in the former USSR (18). This is not viewed as realistic: were Russian peacemaking forces suddenly withdrawn from Moldova and South Ossetia, a resumption of violence is considered likely. This does not mean that Russia remains allergic to foreign troop presence (as peacekeepers) within the borders of the former USSR. Troop contingents from neutral CSCE countries are welcome to take part in multilateral operations (19).

The UN/CSCE-Russia/CIS interaction in the field of peace operations should be based on a set of clear principles. These would include agreement of all parties to the conflict; impartiality; recognition of sovereignty and territorial integrity of states; multilateral nature of operations; continuous international monitoring. Operations would be authorized on a case-by-case basis, so that the international approval is not perceived as a blank check.

There is also a genuine interest in Russia for turning the CSCE into a full-fledged organization to promote regional security and stability. In particular, Moscow would like to see the writ of the High Commissioner for National Minorities expanded. Thus, Russia is prepared to rely on international institutions to protect the rights of ethnic Russian minorities in the former Soviet republics.

CONCLUSIONS

The following conclusions seem appropriate.

1. International security institutions have both a duty and a potential to involve themselves still closer in conflict resolution in the former Soviet Union. Failure to do so would not only undermine the credibility of the institutions themselves, but very probably will contribute to a sweeping Balkanization of

large parts of the ex-USSR, with all its adverse consequences attendant.

2. So far, the results of the involvement of those institutions (primarily, the UN, the CSCE, the European Union, the Council of Europe, NATO, NACC) in the post-Soviet area have been modest. Clearly, they recognize the danger of over-extension beyond their current capabilities. More important, however, is the lack of interest on behalf of the leading members of those institutions in the problem areas. It could be said, then, that the institutions have some potential, but little will to act.

3. Russia seems to be the only major power which feels its vital interests endangered by the growing instability on its periphery. Its actions in the "near abroad", however, are far from the standards set by the international institutions. Moreover, Russia has not yet found internal stability, which accounts for Moscow's policies' inconsistencies and the general lack of transparency. Thus, Russia can and will act - but the unilateralism of her actions adds to the problems.

4. International passivity and Russia's over-engagement do not offer an optimal solution to the post-Soviet conflicts. Ways should be found to combine substantially increased activity of the institutions with a markedly more restrained and responsible attitude taken by Russia.

5. Prevention of new conflicts, and arresting the deterioration of the existing tensions should be given clear priority. Encouraging and facilitating dialogue could be supplemented by "soft" or "hard" mediation. The CSCE appears especially well suited for preventive diplomacy, and the Council of Europe for facilitating democratic transformation of post-Communist societies.

6. In the field of conflict management, interaction between the international institutions and the Russian Federation could take the form of the institutions (e.g., the UN and/or the CSCE) commissioning Russia and the new independent states of the CIS to engage in multilateral peace support operations in the territory of the former USSR, provided that these operations are closely monitored by the authorizing institutions, which establish their own presence in the field (observers/monitors, liaison officers with CIS units, troop contingents, etc.).

7. In most cases, dispute resolution will require mobilizing substantial economic and financial resources. In the short to medium term this appears only possible if Russia and the new independent states agree, within the framework of the CIS, on the terms of trade and a system of settling mutual accounts, which, being realistic, would also keep the markets of the former Soviet republics open to all of them. For any new arrangement economic arrangement to be viable, however, the initiative for its creation should come outside of Russia. In the long term, much will depend on the form that future economic relations between the former Soviet republics and the EU will take. A "Fortress Europe" will perpetuate crises around its walls.

8. Finally, the institutions (e.g., the Council of Europe, NATO and the European Union) could make full use of the respect they command in the former Soviet republics to create incentives for eventual membership, on condition that certain standards have to be met and maintained. Realistic plans for gradual integration could be then drawn up.

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(1) Cf., e.g., declarations of national sovereignty passed by the Supreme Soviets of Ukraine and Belarus in 1990).

(2) Cf., e.g., Ruslan Khasbulatov. Vozmozhna li "balkanizatsiya" Rossii. "Rossiyskaya Gazeta", 27 May 1993.

(3) "Nezavisimaya Gazeta", 13 November 1993.

(4) "Polityka i chas". 1993, No.8, p.25.

(5) "Rossiyskaya Gazeta", 28 August 1993.

(6) "Izvestia", 29 September 1993.

(7) Cf. The Sochi agreement on Abkhazia. Text: "Nezavisimaya Gazeta", 29 July 1993.

(8) Cf., e.g., Kontseptsiya vneshney politiki Rossiyskoy Federatsii. "Diplomaticheskiy vestnik", 1993, Special Issue.

(9) Vladimir Baranovski. Ispytanie na razryv. "Moskovskie novosti", No.3, 17 January 1993.

(10) For the Uzbek point of view, cf. Rais Tazmukhamedov. Uzbekistan v mirovoy politike. "Nezavisimaya Gazeta", 20 October 1993.

(11) Cf. Report of the NACC Ad Hoc Group on Cooperation in Peacekeeping. "NATO Review", 1993, August, p.30-35.

(12) Rol' OON... p.14.

(13) Vladislav Chernov. Osnovnye polozheniya kontseptsii vneshney politiki Rossiyskoy Federatsii. "Nezavisimaya Gazeta", 29 April 1993.

(14) For the summary of the Russian military doctrine cf. Voyennaya doktrina Rossii: novoye ponimaniye bezopasnosti strany. "Krasnaya Zvezda", 4 November 1993.

(15) "Segodnya", 13 November 1993.

(16) Cf., e.g., a report by "Helsinki Watch" in "Nezavisimaya Gazeta", 9 November 1993.

(17) Andrei Kozyrev. OON: trevogi i nadezhdy mira. "Rossiyskaya Gazeta", 30 October 1993.

(18) "Izvestia", 29 October 1993.

(19) Andrei Kozyrev's speech at the UN General Assembly. "Nezavisimaya Gazeta", 22 September 1993.