

4. Nationalism and ethnic conflict in Eastern Europe and Central Asia

I. Introduction

Such was the surprise and relief in many Western capitals and among analysts at the demise of the Soviet Union and the formation of the Commonwealth of Independent States (CIS) in December 1991 that there have been few serious attempts at considering the possible long-term impact of these profound events on European security.¹ However, any study of this kind has to be influenced by the idea that, as during the cold war period, much of what is possible and impossible in terms of European security—the patterns of conflict, the distribution of military forces, the sources of security dilemmas—will be largely determined in the new states of Eastern Europe and Central Asia.

Of those states, Russia and Ukraine are obviously of most significance, but other smaller countries are of some importance if they are involved in, or become the catalyst for, conflicts. Moldova, for instance, is crucial. In many ways, it is a microcosm of the political and economic problems faced by the new countries of Eastern Europe, and it offers pointers to both good and bad futures for the region and the rest of Europe. (The situation in the country is analysed in section IV.) However, as Jacques Attali has said, there are many more problems to worry about. There are 160 border disputes involving the former Soviet Union; and of the 23 borders between the republics of the former Soviet Union only three are not contested at all.² In fact, there are so many potential problems that could arise out of the demise of the world's biggest multinational state, that it is

¹ See, for example, Landgren, S., 'Post-Soviet threats to security', in SIPRI, *SIPRI Yearbook 1992: World Armaments and Disarmament* (OUP: Oxford, 1992), pp. 531–57. See also Miller, S. E., 'Western diplomacy and the Soviet nuclear legacy', *Survival*, vol. 34, no. 3 (autumn 1992), pp. 3–27; Kennedy, C., 'The development of Soviet strategies in Europe', ed. C. McInnes, *Security and Strategy in the New Europe* (Routledge: London, 1992), pp. 164–77. For an account of the founding of the Commonwealth of Independent States, see Brumberg, A., 'The road to Minsk', *New York Review of Books*, 30 Jan. 1992, pp. 21–28.

² See Attali, J., 'Post-Communist reconstruction', speech delivered at the UK Presidency Conference, 'Europe and the World after 1992', London, 7 Sep. 1992, p. 1.

impossible to cover all of them in a study of this kind, although all of them deserve close attention. As a result, this chapter, like the two preceding ones, concentrates on an analysis of those key nationalist problems which have the potential to be of most significance for the European security debate.

Although this chapter focuses primarily on an analysis of the states west of the Urals, because of their proximity to the rest of Europe some attention is also paid to events in the Caucasus and Central Asia. There is an ongoing debate within the European security community about whether or not events in Central Asia and the Caucasus have the potential to impact significantly on European security. However, because the majority of the states in these regions are members of both the Conference on Security and Co-operation in Europe and the North Atlantic Cooperation Council (NACC), and events in the region, especially in regard to religious and economic developments as well as the potential influence of China and Japan, could be of great importance in the future, it is considered necessary to include them in this study.³

Most recent academic studies of post-Soviet security have been primarily concerned with the fate of the former Soviet Union's nuclear forces and the future economic development of all the new states, especially Russia, Ukraine and the Baltic states. Less attention has been paid to nationalist developments, despite the fact that the continuing process of disintegration raises a set of problems related to the dynamics and pattern of intra- and inter-state relations which is far from settled. This aspect has been a source of much worry to journalists. As John Lloyd has written,

Around the periphery of the Russian Federation, a series of conflicts has erupted and potential flashpoints are simmering. Small wars they may be—but with a large significance for the states of the former Soviet Union and for the international community. The disputes threaten the fragile post-Soviet consensus that existing borders, no matter how realistically unjust,

³ See, for example, Griffiths, S. I., 'Central Asia and China after the cold war: a new problem for European security?', unpublished presentation, Third Beijing Seminar on Arms Control, ISODARCO and the China Institute of Contemporary International Relations, Beijing, 20–26 Oct. 1992. See also Shambaugh, D., 'China's security policy in the post-cold war era', *Survival*, vol. 34, no. 2 (summer 1992); Menon, R., and Barkey, H. J., 'The transformation of Central Asia: implications for regional and international security', *Survival*, vol. 34, no. 4 (winter 1992–93).

are inviolate. They raise the prospects of intractable conflicts and are courting intervention from Russia.⁴

This chapter attempts to describe as many of these current nationalist problems as possible and to assess their significance for European security. It will, of course, be impossible to provide historical detail in any kind of depth, so only key details will be included. Where possible the footnotes will provide a guide for further reading. Ted Hopf wrote recently:

one could easily believe that the collapse of the Soviet Union is all to the good. The military threat that emanated from Moscow throughout the Cold War has been all but eliminated. Peoples whose identities were suppressed for three-quarters of a century under Communist rule, and as long as 250 years under Russian rule, can now exercise their right to national self-determination. Socialist economic practises are being consigned to the dustbin of history.⁵

However, since the demise of the Soviet Union, the former republics have been beset by new and old political, military and economic difficulties. At the present time, the list of problems is overwhelming: the possible collapse of the economies in the new states, managing the future of nuclear thinking and proliferation, controlling the risk of accidents through the transportation, misuse or illegal seizure of nuclear weapons, preventing the use of nuclear weapons in conflicts arising as a result of the demise of the Soviet Union, rethinking the role of the armed forces, and ensuring the development of civil society and democratic practices. In addition, problems could arise if the CIS fails, through design, chaos or war, to fulfil international obligations, especially in regard to arms control and disarmament accords. However, even in the short term, one of the most complicated difficulties could lie in trying to solve these problems in the context of the new, untested and precarious set of intra- and inter-state relations that have come into existence in the CIS, almost overnight. This aspect of the post-Soviet state system adds another layer to the already complicated post-1989 European security system; there are simply no precedents that can aid understanding of these processes,

⁴ Lloyd, J., 'Painful legacy of an empire', *Financial Times*, 9 July 1992, p. 20. On this problem, see also Barber, T., 'Nations battle for Moscow's lost empire', *Independent on Sunday*, 5 July 1992, p. 12.

⁵ See Hopf, T., 'Managing Soviet disintegration: a demand for behavioural regimes', *International Security*, vol. 17, no. 1 (summer 1992), p. 44.

and as a result, analysis of a meaningful kind has become a demanding task.

Most important, in relation to both this study and the future of European security, is the problem of new nationalisms in the former republics and ethnic conflict. The type and mix of nationalist and ethnic difficulties vary from state to state, but taken together it seems obvious to suggest that the former Soviet Union is engulfed in dangerous spirals of nationalist and ethnic activities and feuds. Of course, many of these troubles were already evident in the late 1980s throughout the Soviet Union, especially in regard to the Baltic states. As Nahaylo and Swoboda have pointed out, 'the Soviet Union [was] the world's largest multinational state', with over 800 ethnic peoples if the smallest nomadic tribes are included in the calculation.⁶ Of the population of 286 million (1989), over 50 per cent were non-Russian. Far from ignoring the ethnic divisions in the Soviet Union, administrators divided the country along complex ethnic lines; different ethnic groups were given different degrees of autonomy either under the central government of the Russian Federation or under the government of one of the other republics. However, a sufficient number of strains, resulting from the shifting of populations and the changing of borders, were built into the system that problems were inevitable.

Along with the Balkan region, the situation in the former Soviet Union represents the most potent danger area for European security. There are many ancient ethnic feuds and rivalries that have been simmering for 70 years; the economic conditions are far worse and provide a useful breeding-ground for 'hyper-state' forms of nationalism. In addition, the psychological impact of failure, of having lost the cold war, especially in Russia, has produced a tremendous sense of humiliation that could also act as a source of future resentment, especially if economic reforms fail to bring rewards in the short term. David Hearst has argued that humiliation, dispossession and self-loathing are already causing some to call for the return of a 'strong hand' to steer Russia back to glory.⁷

It was always likely that there would be a period of difficulty after the demise of such an extensive empire. In some respects it is surprising that more of the initial problems have not become worse in recent

⁶ Nahaylo, B. and Swoboda, V., *Soviet Disunion: A History of the Nationalities Problem in the USSR* (Hamish Hamilton: London, 1990), p. 3.

⁷ Hearst, D., 'Cry for Mother Russia', *The Guardian*, 24 July 1992, p. 23.

months, and the future does not look bright in terms of solving the problems. The main reason for this is that many of the difficulties have such deep roots in the historical landscape of the former Soviet empire that thinking of solutions over the short term is the wrong way of approaching them.

The evolution of flawed and even praetorian polities in the new states, suggested as a feared but plausible vision of Eastern Europe's future only 18 months ago, already seems to be under way.⁸ In those former Soviet states west of the Urals, there is an ongoing struggle to sustain the weak political and economic processes designed to implement early democratization and marketization policies.⁹ As a result, one can already witness the development of, at best, paternalistic regimes, sustained by myths of liberation from empire by the fathers of the nation. This problem seems particularly acute in the Baltic states, especially Lithuania, where nationalism has 'roots in a deep and abiding commitment to the Lithuanian language, culture, and territory, to the Roman Catholic Church, and to a shared history measured by centuries of oppression'.¹⁰ Elsewhere, the élites in the former republics are dominated by a mix of opportunistic former Soviet Communist Party (CPSU) officials and 'old nationalists' who together seemingly have little or no vision of creating Western-style states bound by a pluralistic democratic culture.¹¹

To add further to the problems, the process of state disintegration continues, and it remains possible that even more states and nations might emerge from the Russian Federation and other former republics. Many issues of human and minority rights also remain unresolved, especially in relation to the status of Russians in now alien lands, who are at the mercy of competing élites and ethnic

⁸ See Snyder, J., 'Averting anarchy in the new Europe', *International Security*, vol. 14, no. 4 (spring 1990), pp. 5–41. Samuel P. Huntington has defined praetorian polities as 'political systems with low levels of institutionalisation and high levels of participation'; Huntington, S. P., *Political Order in Changing Societies* (Yale University Press: New Haven, Conn., 1968), p. 80.

⁹ See, for example, Applebaum, A., 'Simulated birth of a nation', *The Spectator*, 29 Feb. 1992, pp. 12–13. See also Freeland, C., 'Kiev gripped in Russian stranglehold', *Financial Times*, 23 July 1992, p. 4.

¹⁰ Krickus, R., 'Lithuania: nationalism in the modern era', eds I. Bremmer and R. Taras, *Nation and Politics in the Soviet Successor States* (Cambridge University Press: Cambridge, 1993), p. 157.

¹¹ See, for example, Freeland, C., 'Unholy alliance of the heart robs Ukraine of its head', *Financial Times*, 16 June 1992, p. 2.

groups in different new states.¹² For example, in the September 1992 elections in Estonia, Russians, who form over 30 per cent of the population, were denied a vote on the grounds that they were not Estonian citizens.¹³ The reaction in Moscow to this situation was rather more dramatic than that of the Russian citizens in Estonia; as shown in the section on Moldova, Russia is taking a more aggressive interest than formerly in regard to the protection of its minorities in former Soviet republics, and this could have consequences for the future stability of Eastern Europe.

There is also a serious problem concerning the number of Soviet troops still stationed in what are now independent countries. This problem is particularly acute in the Baltic states, where there are still over 150 000 Soviet troops. In total, there are some 1.5 million former Soviet troops stationed in the other independent states of the former Soviet Union.¹⁴ Despite the fact that Boris Yeltsin has agreed to withdraw all troops from the Baltic states by the middle of 1993, their presence has caused so much tension that Douglas Hurd, the British Foreign Secretary, described the area as 'potentially more explosive' than Yugoslavia.¹⁵ The main reason for this is that many in the Baltic states view Moscow's promises with understandable suspicion and are yet to be convinced that Moscow does not still view the newly independent states as part of its strategic territory. This problem of Russian interests throughout the former Soviet Union extends to other areas, which are analysed in more detail later in this chapter.

The founding of the CIS has done little to prevent destabilizing power struggles between the various republics in the months following the August coup; Landgren has gone so far as to describe the CIS as a 'fragile construction'.¹⁶ In terms of the real distribution of power, one journalist put it this way, on the first anniversary of the coup: 'it put Russia in centre stage, and returned its neighbours to their centuries-old dilemma: how to live with the Bear as a neighbour?'.¹⁷

¹² There are something like 25 million Russians living in newly independent former Soviet republics, outside the borders of the Russian Federation.

¹³ See Rettie, J., 'Estonia poll puts Moscow on edge', *The Guardian*, 19 Sep. 1992, p. 12.

¹⁴ See Goble, P. A., 'The Russians abroad are a threat to peace', *International Herald Tribune*, 24 July 1992, p. 6.

¹⁵ See Lloyd (note 4).

¹⁶ See Landgren (note 1), p. 554.

¹⁷ Lloyd, J., 'History bears down on states of the Union', *Financial Times*, 19 Aug. 1992, p. 3.

For the purposes of European security, the country that most needs a satisfactory answer to that question is Ukraine.

II. Russia and Ukraine

Of the sovereign states that emerged following the demise of the Soviet Union, none is more crucial to the future of both the CIS and the direction of European security over the coming decades than Russia and Ukraine. In terms of a traditional account of power in the international system, both Russia and Ukraine, because of their geographical size, population and economic resources, should have the potential to become crucial and rival regional powers and in the long run even global powers.¹⁸ However, at present, both states, although set on courses of radical political and economic reform, are facing severe crises of confidence and identity that threaten not only to slow, but possibly reverse, the current processes of transformation in Eastern Europe.¹⁹

Until the end of 1991, the Russian Federation encompassed the former 16 Autonomous Soviet Socialist Republics and 15 other autonomous areas. In 1992, as part of new constitutional negotiations in the Federation, it became necessary, as a result of threats of secessions, to reconsider the administration of the regions and provinces of Russia.

In April 1992, a new federation treaty was signed which has eased the problem of secession by redistributing power between Moscow and local governments. However, a series of problems remains. Two of the regions with powers of self-government refused to sign. Checheno-Ingushetia, a small Russian province on the border with Georgia, with a population of just over a million, had already seceded in 1991; and Tatarstan, which held an independence referendum in April which resulted in a 61 per cent vote in favour, has refused to sign the treaty, although it does not want to leave Russia. Instead it has called for a bilateral treaty with Moscow. However, Moscow has

¹⁸ This view of the importance of geographical size, population, and economic resources is being challenged by theorists of Globalization. See, for example, Robertson, R., *Globalization: Social Theory and Global Culture* (Sage: London, 1992); Ohmae, K., *The Borderless World: Power and Strategy in the Interlinked Economy* (Fontana: London, 1990). For a useful and fascinating discussion of the future course of Russian foreign policy, see Stankevich, S., 'Russia in search of itself', *National Interest*, no. 28 (summer 1992), pp. 47–51.

¹⁹ See Lloyd, J., 'The quagmire of Russian reform', *Financial Times*, 5 Aug. 1992, p. 12.

refused to make any bilateral deals until all the regions have signed the treaty. With all the confusion, which has been made worse by the delays in passing a new constitution, of which the federation treaty forms a part, many local authorities have begun unilaterally expanding their powers of self-government. In Tyumen, Russia's largest oil-exporting region, oil producers now need an export licence from the local commodity market. In other areas, local public spending has increased as local authorities, worried about price liberalization, took an active interest in the price of basic foodstuffs. This resulted in a fall in the accumulated regional budget surplus from 95 billion roubles to less than 85 billion roubles by early summer, which has caused alarm in Moscow.²⁰

In addition, as regions have started to realize their economic potential and Moscow concentrates on its own struggles, bureaucracy has been put aside and a phenomenon which has been christened the 'Wild East' has come into existence. As entrepreneurs appear under the new economic conditions, Siberia is emerging as the potential 'powerhouse' of the Russian economy. This has already encouraged commentators to wonder if Siberia might emerge as a threat to Russia proper in the decades to come.²¹ An Independent Siberia Party has already emerged, and Yakutia, motivated by resentment at having to sell gold and diamonds to Moscow at prices below world prices, has been pushing for much greater autonomy. In addition, small movements are active, calling for a Urals republic and, most importantly, a Far Eastern republic consisting of Russia's Pacific coast. It seems likely, even in the medium term, that the problem of Moscow/regional relations will result in conflict, although the calls for autonomy seem to have more to do with the airing of views and problems after decades of communist rule. However, future developments will depend on how delicately Moscow deals with its resentful and ambitious regions.

In view of the first 12 months of the Russian-Ukrainian relationship, there would seem to be much to fear about the long-term stability of relations between the two countries. A number of leading commentators have expressed great concern about this. For example, John Lloyd and Chrystia Freeland argued at the beginning of 1992

²⁰ On this problem, see 'The cracks in Russia widen', *The Economist*, 5 Sep. 1992, pp. 41-42.

²¹ See Winchester, S., 'The sleeping giant wakes', *The Guardian*, 14 Aug. 1992, p. 17; 'The Wild East', *The Economist*, 4 Jan. 1992, p. 38.

that 'relations between Russia and Ukraine, the two largest Slav states, are worsening to the point of alarm'.²²

However, at the time of writing it is difficult to foresee a scenario whereby relations could break down to the extent of provoking conflict. There have been bitter disputes about military policy, especially about the future of the Black Sea Fleet.²³ Also, there has been a dispute over the status of the Crimea, transferred to Ukraine in 1954 in an act which many Russians regard as illegal. It remains possible that this dispute might result in conflict between these powerful countries. In addition, there has been a whole host of problems over the direction of mutually beneficial economic reforms, especially in relation to currency developments and supplies of raw materials. These disputes have also served to heighten nationalist feelings. President Kravchuk of Ukraine neatly summarized the state of relations at their worst when he said: 'If Russia stops supplies to Ukraine, we will of course die. But Russia will die the next day'.²⁴

Of course, internal political and economic problems could, if conditions worsen, provoke the development of 'hyper-state' forms of nationalism in both Russia and Ukraine that could lead to conflict, although as George Urban has pointed out, Ukrainian 'exceptionalism', for example, is only like other forms of nationalism evident in those countries that feel that they have played a key role in the defence of Christendom from the Mongol hordes or the Ottoman Empire. The notion that either Russia or Ukraine is on the way to 'clerico-fascism' is probably exaggerated or even wrong. He has written:

All the evidence points in a different direction. Today's nationalism in Ukraine and Russia is the benign kind of the mid-nineteenth century, in which the search for national sovereignty and the search for representative democracy went hand in hand and were in most cases indistinguishable from each other . . . The most telling proof that Ukrainian re-birth is not heading in anything like the direction of 'fascism' is the active membership of many of the country's 500,000 Jews in the national movement Rukh.²⁵

By the beginning of 1993 tensions seemed to have diminished somewhat. In 1992, the two countries reached agreements committing

²² Lloyd, J. and Freeland, C., 'A painful birth', *Financial Times*, 25 Feb. 1992, p. 18.

²³ See Landgren (note 1), p. 544.

²⁴ Leonid Kravchuk, cited in *Sunday Times*, 16 Feb. 1992, section 2, p. 3.

²⁵ Urban, G., 'The awakening', *National Interest*, no. 27 (spring 1992), p. 42.

them to open borders, to delay a decision on the future of the Black Sea Fleet and to certain economic reforms. Leonid Kravchuk argued that ‘a fundamental turning point has been achieved in the relations of two great powers . . . Russia, Ukraine and the world can breathe a sigh of relief’.²⁶ In addition, following the signing of the 1993 US–Russian Treaty on the Further Reduction and Limitation of Strategic Offensive Arms (the START II Treaty), Russia, rather than making an issue of Ukraine’s difficult attitude to compliance, even decided to extend security guarantees to ensure the swift ratification of the 1991 US–Soviet Treaty on the Reduction and Limitation of Strategic Offensive Arms (the START I Treaty), and early consideration of START II.²⁷

Despite these agreements, some doubts remain about the future course of relations; dangers remain in the present situation, especially in relation to the future of the CIS as an umbrella organization for most former republics of the Soviet Union. However, both countries remain preoccupied, despite the rhetoric, with programmes of political and economic transformation, and neither could afford the trauma of an open dispute; many of the problems seem tactical and temporary, although there is always a possibility of misunderstanding; and in the years ahead there may be a temptation to deepen the conflicts.

III. Central Asia and the Caucasus

Less obvious, but increasingly important, is the debate on the future of the Muslim republics of Central Asia, where Iran, Pakistan and Turkey are vying for political and economic influence. Although the republics of the region are not identical in terms of their ethnic composition, they have a sufficient number of common characteristics, in terms of language and religion, to make possible an analysis of events on a regional basis. The former Soviet republics of Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Tajikistan, Turkmenistan and Uzbekistan are referred to as the Central Asian countries, but for the purposes of external policy, especially that of Turkey, many of the countries of the Caucasus, Azerbaijan for example, can also be included, although this is not strictly correct. The brief remarks that are made in this study about the

²⁶ Kampfner, J., ‘Ukraine and Russia end Black Sea Fleet dispute’, *Daily Telegraph*, 24 June 1992, p. 9.

²⁷ See editorial, ‘Get Ukraine on board’, *International Herald Tribune*, 12 Jan. 1993, p. 6.



Map 2. The newly independent states of Central Asia



Map 3. The Caucasus

wars in Georgia and between Armenia and Azerbaijan appear in this section.

In terms of external interest in the future of Central Asia, the great untapped goldmine of the Islamic world, Iran has offered the Muslim republics financial and technical assistance and is particularly interested in using Azerbaijan for supplying oil to Europe; Pakistan has signed a memorandum of understanding with Tajikistan, under which Pakistan may import hydroelectricity, minerals and cotton, for example.²⁸ However, among the many debates on this issue, the one concerning the future of Turkish and Iranian influence in the region is the most curious and for some potentially unsettling.

The people of the Muslim republics of Central Asia are predominantly Turkic by origin, and Turkey has seized the chance to become the most influential state in the region. Although the region was never a part of the Ottoman Empire, pan-Turkic sentiment earlier this century led some Central Asians to call for the creation of a 'Turkic Union'.²⁹ Turkey has already opened embassies in all Central Asian republics and Azerbaijan. In addition, in April 1992, Turkey extended its influence in the region further with the launch, via the Intelsat VI satellite orbiting the Indian Ocean, of 83 hours a week of Turkish-language television programmes.³⁰

It has been suggested that because the Soviet threat has disappeared, Turkey no longer has a card to play with the West, and as a result, it believes that only by selling itself as the Central Asian 'magnet', the force for Islamic moderation and secular political and economic development in the region, can it continue to hold sway over the West. Certainly the UK and the USA are already fearful of Islamic fundamentalism taking a grip in the region; after all, there are still nuclear weapons involved in the calculations. Because of this, Turkey may find itself in an even more powerful position than it was during the cold war.

Already, it looks as though the Turkish approach is working; seminars explaining the methods and achievements of Kemal Ataturk have been organized in Baku in Azerbaijan, and the Azeri script is in the

²⁸ For a comprehensive overview of developments, see 'The scramble for Central Asia: a global contest for hearts, minds, money', *World Press Review*, July 1992, pp. 9–14. See also 'The scramble for Central Asia', *Foreign Report*, no. 2191 (16 Jan. 1992), pp. 1–2.

²⁹ See Tett, G., Le Vine, S. and Brown, J., 'Turkey discovering new role in former Soviet Central Asia', *Financial Times*, 11 Feb. 1992, p. 2.

³⁰ See Harden, B., 'Ankara's war for Central Asia: waged at the hearth, on TV', *International Herald Tribune*, 24 Mar. 1992, p. 5.

process of being Latinized, just as Turkish was earlier this century; and the 500-year old Turkic poetry of Mir Ali Shir Navai has become a rallying cry for Uzbekistan in its first months of independence.³¹ In addition, it seems as though the Central Asians are much more interested in the 'Turkish road to the West', as it were, than they are in Islamic fundamentalism, although there is evidence of some enthusiasm for 'Islamic development' in Tajikistan and Uzbekistan.³²

As a result of this, Iran has begun a propaganda campaign calling on the populations of the region to reclaim their faith, has already offered to act as a mediator between Azerbaijan and Armenia, and, like Turkey, has opened embassies in the five Central Asian republics and Azerbaijan. It also seems that Turkmenistan, the poorest of the former Soviet republics, is already attracting attention in Washington because of growing Iranian influence: Iran is building an international business centre near the Kara Kum Canal, has signed eight significant economic deals with Turkmenistan, and is heavily involved in modernizing factories. It could be that the chief attraction is the fact that Turkmenistan is the world's third largest exporter of natural gas.³³

In addition, Tajikistan, whose citizens speak a Persian dialect, has looked to Iran for salvation from economic hardship. Over half the republic's population of 5.5 million live in dire poverty. However, the country was engulfed in conflict during much of 1992. There are widespread fears that Tajikistan might be the first of the former Soviet republics to fall into total anarchy. Apart from the fact that there has been fighting between supporters and foes of Tajikistan's President, Rakhmon Nabyev, who was forced to resign in September 1992, there have been reports of Yugoslav-style 'ethnic cleansing' operations in the south of the country. This has caused between 50 000 and 60 000 refugees to flee to northern Afghanistan since the beginning of December 1992.³⁴

Even more seriously, in terms of external reaction, there were reports of Russians being on the receiving end of hate campaigns and

³¹ See Hyman, A., 'Return of the native', *Index on Censorship*, vol. 21, no. 2 (Feb. 1992), p. 13.

³² See 'Islam rises in Uzbekistan', *Foreign Report*, no. 2197 (27 Feb. 1992), pp. 2-3. See also 'Containing Islam in Uzbekistan', *Foreign Report*, no. 2210 (4 June 1992), pp. 4-5.

³³ See 'The Turks, the Turkmen and Iran', *Foreign Report*, no. 2196 (20 Feb. 1992), pp. 4-6. See also Levine, S., 'Turkmens revert to the days of Khan', *Financial Times*, 19 June 1992, p. 4.

³⁴ See Clerc, H., 'Tajik refugees in icy flight from devastating war', *The Guardian*, 15 Jan. 1993, p. 12.

starting to leave the country. As a result, in September 1992, some 800 Russian troops, mostly paratroopers, were sent to the republic (as they were to so many other newly independent republics of the former Soviet Union) to seal the border with Afghanistan where arms are pouring in for rebel fighters, and to help protect the 10 000 embattled troops, and their families, already stationed in the country.³⁵

Although it seems logical that developments in Central Asia will continue in the direction of decentralization, following the demise of the Soviet Union and the increased influence of key Islamic powers, there have also been calls for the formation of a 'Greater Turkestan' or a 'United States of Asia'. As Gregory Gleason has pointed out, 'the solution to problems of economic regionalization, trans-border conflicts and inter-ethnic strife is seen, in the eyes of some Central Asians, in the formation of an all-embracing political concept—the creation of a greater Turkestan'.³⁶ However, as he also points out, this is probably more of dream than a realistic political option, and not only because of current moves towards decentralization. The idea of a 'Greater Turkestan' has its origins among Uzbeki intellectuals, but any moves to promote the idea by Uzbekistan would 'be seen by others as seeking regional political hegemony. In other words, such an effort would be easily seen more as a "Greater Uzbekistan" than as a "Greater Turkestan"'.³⁷

As in Tajikistan, conflicts are rife throughout the Caucasus. Landgren has written, 'the Caucasus region is the most conflict-ridden area and provides ample warning of the complexity of inherited political and ethnic grievances as well as their potential for escalation'.³⁸ Of the conflicts under way, the most serious are those involving Armenia (the oldest Christian country) and Azerbaijan over Nagorno-Karabakh, and Georgia—although Azerbaijan has also been involved in clashes with internal minorities, such as the Kurds who want a restoration of the Kurdish region which existed in the 1920s.

The war between Armenia and Azerbaijan over the largely Armenian-populated region of Nagorno-Karabakh has been going on

³⁵ See Boulton, R., 'Uzbeks endure Tajik "ethnic cleansing"', *The Independent*, 12 Sep. 1992, p. 12. See also Bowers, C. and Rettie, J., 'Russia reinforces embattled Tajik garrison', *The Guardian*, 30 Sep. 1992, p. 7.

³⁶ Gleason, G., 'Uzbekistan: from statehood to nationhood', eds I. Bremmer and R. Taras, *Nation and Politics in the Soviet Successor States* (Cambridge University Press: Cambridge, 1993), p. 351.

³⁷ Gleason (note 36), p. 351.

³⁸ Landgren (note 1), p. 547.

since 1988. As Landgren has pointed out, it was the Karabakh demand for the area's transition to Armenia that first provoked massacres of Armenians in Sumgait and Kirovabad in 1988 and in Baku in 1990. These, in turn, led to an escalation of violence that brought open warfare. For the populations of the region, the war has been horrific; thousands have died over the four years of violence, and all attempts at mediation—by the Soviet Government, the leaders of Russia and Ukraine, the CSCE, Italy, Turkey and Iran—have either failed or led to even worse fighting.³⁹

During 1992, the Armenians managed to open up a corridor to the enclave. However, the Azeri Government of Abulfaz Elchibey, elected in May 1992, seems determined to win the war, and fierce counter-attacks have occurred since the Armenian success. In addition, support for Azerbaijan from Turkey, which has threatened to block Armenia's export route to the Black Sea in an effort to make it give up the fight for the enclave of Nagorno-Karabakh, increased throughout 1992.⁴⁰ Turkey, frustrated by the war's delaying of the foundation of a Turkic economic order and area of diplomatic interest in the Caucasus and Central Asia, is likely to increase its support of Azerbaijan in 1993.⁴¹ This may well result in a dramatic shift in the balance of power between Azerbaijan and Armenia, and it may lead to victory for Azerbaijan. However, the prospects for a peaceful resolution to the conflict are practically nil; even if one side manages to achieve a decisive victory, instability will continue in the region for decades.

A few hundred kilometres to the north of Nagorno-Karabakh, President Eduard Shevardnadze is attempting to resolve what amounts to a multi-ethnic, multi-sided civil war that has all but destroyed Georgia in the past 12 months. Georgia, which is an independent republic with a long Christian tradition, has refused to join the CIS and only joined the CSCE in March 1992. It has not been able to find a way out of the conflicts that have gripped the country since anti-Soviet demonstrations in 1989 resulted in massacres by Interior Ministry troops in Tbilisi, the country's capital. Following the ousting

³⁹ See Landgren (note 1), p. 550. See also Lloyd, J., 'Mountain to climb', *Financial Times*, 9 Mar. 1992, p. 14.

⁴⁰ See Buchan, D. and Boulton, L., 'Turkish threat to cut off Armenia', *Financial Times*, 7–8 Mar. 1992, p. 22.

⁴¹ One of the best summaries of the course of the war up to May 1992 is Lloyd, J., 'The cauldron in the Caucasus', *Financial Times*, 26 May 1992, p. 16.

of President Zviad Gamsakhurdia in January 1992, conflict has continued between allies and foes of the former president.⁴² At the same time, although a cease-fire has been in effect since June 1992 in South Ossetia, where forces were fighting to unite with North Ossetia in Russia, trouble has continued in the Abkhazia region.⁴³

On balance, there seems little reason to believe that the various conflicts can be resolved quickly, unless there is massive external intervention to destroy the warring parties. However, such is the ferocity of the fighting that this seems very unlikely. It seems that the only thing that will stop the war will be the total destruction of the country.

Much now depends on how serious Iran and Turkey are about their future roles in the region, and lengths to which they will go to fulfil their ambitions. It has been suggested that Turkey may be in the process of creating a new Pan-Turkic nation, although a Black Sea Community might be more in tune with its present ideas.⁴⁴ However, the fulfilment of either idea could have implications for European security, especially in regard to which countries are to be considered as members of the various politico-economic and politico-military institutions. For the United States and the countries of Europe, Turkish influence in the region would be far preferable to Iranian, although there seems little enthusiasm for either at the present time. There also remains a potentially crucial question-mark about Chinese and Japanese influence in the region. As Kennedy-Pipe has pointed out, 'the fight for influence in Central Asia is more than just a contest between Islamic Iran and Modern Turkey'; China has also emerged as a crucial possible player because of the spill-over effects of Islamic nationalism from Central Asia in China's Xinjiang region, where approximately 60 per cent of the population are Turkic Muslims.⁴⁵ The possible nature of Chinese influence in the region is as yet unclear, although it is likely that, rather than necessarily being a problem in the region, it will be a force for stability and moderniza-

⁴² See Lloyd (note 4).

⁴³ The cease-fire in South Ossetia is being overseen by a peace-keeping force consisting of 469 Ossetians, 320 Georgians and 700 Russians: see Narayan, N., 'Peacekeepers bring uneasy calm to South Ossetia', *The Guardian*, 23 July 1992, p. 12.

⁴⁴ See Lodge, R., 'Black Sea club gives Turkey more clout', *Sunday Telegraph*, 9 Feb. 1992, p. 15; 'Black hole', *The Economist*, 27 June 1992, pp. 48–49; 'Black sea area leaders sign economic agreement', *Financial Times*, 26 June 1992, p. 3.

⁴⁵ Kennedy-Pipe, C., 'Sources of stability and instability in the CIS', ed. R. Cowen Karp, SIPRI, *Central and Eastern Europe: The Challenge of Transition* (Oxford University Press: Oxford, forthcoming); see also Griffiths (note 3).

tion, especially in regard to the maintenance of the territorial status quo and economic advances.⁴⁶

One factor that stands in the way of progress is the conflicts in the Caucasus. Turkey seems to be taking more of an active role to resolve the Nagorno-Karabakh conflict in its favour, but the principal powers should probably be deciding whether that is an outcome they want. The war may yet come to the serious attention of the great powers.

Beyond this, the wider political and economic developments are in their early stages, so that it is difficult to draw conclusions about the threat potential. It might be fair to say, however, that Turkish–Iranian relations are now a significant factor for the future of European security. There may be an argument for an early EC–Turkish agreement on future policy, to defuse any potential controversy; however, in the meantime the area should be watched carefully for problems.

IV. Moldova

We cannot only resort to diplomacy. It is preferable to solve any conflict by diplomatic or peaceful means. But if that is not possible and the other side strikes first, you have to respond. If you don't, then the question arises: why do we still have military forces?⁴⁷

Of all the conflicts that are taking place in Eastern Europe, the most important, and in many ways the most interesting, is that in Moldova. It is important because most of the sources of political, economic and nationalist conflict in post-Soviet Eastern Europe are present, although one special added ingredient, the close interest that Romania takes in events in the republic, could turn it into a conflict of more importance even than those in Croatia and Bosnia and Herzegovina. If Romania felt the need to intervene, against the wishes of neighbours and the principal powers, especially Russia, on behalf of the Moldovan Government in the civil war, with the purpose of re-unifying Bessarabia with Romania, then that act might legitimize the idea of changing borders in post-cold war Europe. The psychological impact of a country as important as Romania, with interests in all three regions of the former Soviet bloc under analysis in this study, carrying out such a policy could have profound implications for the

⁴⁶ See Kennedy-Pipe (note 45).

⁴⁷ Tocaci, E., the Romanian Education Minister. See Magureanu, E., 'Force the issue', *The Guardian*, 10 July 1992, p. 25.



Map 4. Moldova

stability of Europe in the coming decades. Moreover, the activities of Russia, which by June 1992 was organizing military operations to 'defend' the Russian minority in the republic, seemed to pose further dangers for the future of the region.

Moldova, a former Soviet republic constructed out of the ethnic Romanian bulk of Bessarabia in 1939, has begun to experience great difficulties since the demise of the Soviet Union, despite its success in distancing itself from centralized control in the late 1980s. For fairly straightforward historical and ethnic reasons, Moldova has developed a very close relationship with Romania. The country is mostly Romanian-speaking, although this has been substantially reduced by Russian influence over the past 50 years. The country has also expressed a wish to re-unite with Romania some time in the future, and has already restored the main elements of the Romanian flag in Kishinev, the capital. In addition, a great number of high-level meetings have been taking place between the Romanian and Moldovan authorities to explore the possibility of rapidly expanding trade and economic links, and of establishing a common customs zone. The two countries have also agreed to begin a process of creating a systematic approach to making decisions on common issues.⁴⁸ By February 1992, co-operation was further advanced with talk of the creation of a 'free economic trade area'.⁴⁹

However, there is not whole-hearted support for these initiatives among some sectors of the population, who see them as the preliminary round of full unification talks. As a result, a three-way dispute for control of the territory of the newly founded state is now under way.

Two parts of Moldova have announced their intention to act independently of the Moldovan authorities: the self-proclaimed Trans-Dniester Republic, which has a population of 730 000, of whom over 53 per cent are Russians and Ukrainians, and which proclaimed independence from Moldova in 1990 in an effort to force Moldovan authorities to construct a federal system of government; and the self-proclaimed 'Gagauz Republic', where a Christian people of Turkish origin control affairs. This has resulted in calls for succession and, in the case of both self-proclaimed republics, unification with the Russian Federation. These two regions have even gone so far as to

⁴⁸ See Summary of World Broadcasts, EE /1269 A2/1, 4 Jan. 1992

⁴⁹ See Summary of World Broadcasts, EE/1308 i, 19 Feb. 1992.

establish their own parliaments, and in one of the regions a separate judiciary is allegedly functioning, which calls into question the ability of the Moldovan Government to maintain authority over its own territory. Two further problems complicate the situation: much of Moldova's industrial base, vital if the country is to have any chance of becoming a viable state, is in the Trans-Dniester region, and the very presence of the former Soviet 14th Army, which has so far refused to leave Moldova. In a very real sense, this war is the first test of Russian policy in regard to its minorities abroad.

By the end of 1991, the country was embroiled in violence, and it has been estimated that 1000 deaths occurred between November 1991 and June 1992.⁵⁰ It was alleged that Moldovan policemen and civilians had died in clashes, although the number of dead was hard to establish accurately. After fierce fighting in March and April 1992, the foreign ministers of Moldova, Romania, Russia and Ukraine were calling for a cease-fire. Romania, in particular, called for a whole series of measures to bring about a peaceful solution to the conflict, although it was also concerned to defend itself from charges of direct involvement in the war. In effect, Romanian policy has been as cautious as possible.⁵¹

As the war escalated throughout the spring and summer of 1992, it became clear that cease-fires seemed to have as much meaning in this conflict as they did in Croatia and Bosnia and Herzegovina, and that there was little chance of a peaceful settlement. Talks and quadripartite negotiations had been taking place in Kishinev to find a solution, but little progress had been made. By June, fighting was intense; there were reports that a Moldovan bombardment of Bendery, a Dniester stronghold, had resulted in over 300 dead. The war had reached a new level of intensity, and it began to seem as though Eastern Europe was now close to the kind of war that the academic analysts had been predicting since 1989—one between regional powers over a multiple-sided dispute in a third country.

⁵⁰ See Conference on Security and Co-operation in Europe, *Final Report on the Conflict in the Left Bank Dniester Areas of the Republic of Moldova by the Personal Representative of the Chairman-in-Office of the CSCE Council Adam Daniel Rotfeld (Poland), Director of SIPRI*, CSCE Communication no. 38, Prague, 31 Jan. 1993; and Shorr, D., 'CSCE action on Moldova awaits envoy's meeting with Yeltsin', BASIC Reports no. 27 (British American Security Information Council: Washington, DC, 23 Dec. 1992), pp. 1.

⁵¹ See 'Statement by Romanian President and Government on situation in Moldova', Summary of World Broadcasts, EE/1333 A2/1, 19 Mar. 1992.

In a bitter speech to the Moldovan Supreme Soviet on 22 June, President Mircea Snegur, condemning the Russian policy of being the 'policeman of the CIS', said: 'We have to call a spade a spade: we are at war with Russia'.⁵² He went on to call on the Moldovan Parliament to adopt a resolution describing the Trans-Dniester region as being under the occupation of the Russian 14th Army.⁵³

At present, despite the growing controversy about Russian intervention policy, the conflict has started to come under some control. A cease-fire, which has been in effect since 21 July 1992, is being monitored by a tripartite peace-keeping force composed of Moldovans, Russians and Trans-Dniestrians, and the CSCE has become active in trying to find a solution.⁵⁴ In addition, a UN fact-finding mission, led by Gilberto Schlittler, was sent to Moldova in June 1992, following an appeal by the Moldovan Foreign Minister for UN support in finding a solution to the war. However, there is plenty of room for further conflict, possibly involving Ukraine, Russia and Romania, should the situation in Moldova deteriorate again.

V. Conclusion

It is evident that there are tremendous dangers, of a political, social and economic kind, in the new countries of Eastern Europe and Central Asia. It is also evident that there is a potential threat of substantial nationalist difficulties. There are conflicts in progress that have effectively destroyed Georgia and Tajikistan, and the long-running war between Armenia and Azerbaijan has crippled political and economic developments in both countries. In addition, the war in Moldova has threatened to turn into an international war, and problems between Russia and Ukraine also need to be watched for potential dangers.

Ray Taras has written that spill-over of ethnic conflict in Eastern Europe and Central Asia into the international arena can occur under any of four sets of conditions:

⁵² See 'Snegur: "We are at war with Russia"', Summary of World Broadcasts, SU/1414 i, 23 June 1992.

⁵³ For a detailed analysis of the 14th Army, see Orr, M. J., '14th Army and the crisis in Moldova', Soviet Studies Research Centre (Royal Military Academy: Sandhurst, May 1992).

⁵⁴ See CSCE (note 50) and Shorr (note 50), pp. 1–2.

1. Ethnic conflict and resulting instability may tempt outside powers to intervene in order to maximize their self-interest. This applies particularly to Russian action.

2. When an ethnic group is spread over more than one state but is a majority in none, it can cause ethnic strife arising in one state to spill over to another.

3. Conflict can arise in situations where a dominant group in one state is separated from co-nationals making up a minority in another.

4. Disaffected ethnic groups can resort to terrorism in their efforts to attain their objectives.⁵⁵

There seems little chance that there will be a large improvement in political and economic conditions in any of the new republics over the short term. Even in the long run, a generation or two at best, 'steady adjustment'—which could be described as a slow evolutionary process towards semi-workable liberal constitutionalism, ballasted by internal market processes and rudimentary international trade—is the best that can be hoped for, and aided by, the outside world. In the short and medium term, even that limited hope might be described as wishful thinking.

It is to be expected that many of the new countries and displaced minorities of the CIS will be sources of instability for some time to come, and it is unclear what impact Russian intervention policies in the newly independent states will have. It is already clear that the main impact of current problems is at the sub-state, national and regional level, but with the possibility of migration, and the spill-over of conflict into central Europe and the Balkans, the strains of trouble in the former Soviet Union could spread westward. This would almost certainly mean an added burden for those countries affected, which might have a severe societal impact. This, in turn, like a post-cold war 'domino effect', might affect Western Europe, and particularly Austria and Germany. The problems in the former Soviet Union, particularly those between Russia and Ukraine, could easily translate into systemic threats.

It is almost certain that if the countries of Western Europe and North America do not find appropriate mechanisms, in political, economic and military terms, to help tackle the problems that are evident

⁵⁵ See Taras, R., 'Making sense of matrioshka nationalism', eds I. Bremmer and R. Taras, *Nation and Politics in the Soviet Successor States* (Cambridge University Press: Cambridge, 1993), p. 533.

in the former Soviet Union, over the coming months and years, then they may discover that the policy of consolidation which has predominated since 1989 is of little use. As a result, the situation in the former Soviet Union may yet raise questions in people's minds about who exactly were the winners and losers of the cold war.

In this sense, this huge new region, if that is an appropriate label, deserves close and early attention from Western governments and analysts. However, it is crucial that the region is not just looked upon as an 'atomized' Soviet Union. The political and economic dynamics of the new states of the former Soviet Union are now quite different from those analysed by the Sovietologists. The new states deserve a fresh, inter-disciplinary scholarship that will highlight key problems and present a new perspective on states largely hidden from public view for decades.