

CONFIDENCE BUILDING MATTERS
The CSCE, Security
and Successor States
of the Former Soviet Union

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**THE CSCE, SECURITY AND
SUCCESSOR STATES OF THE
FORMER SOVIET UNION**

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Executive Summary

The break up of the Soviet Union was one of the least expected and most important consequences of the end of the cold war. The CSCE has so far failed to come to terms with the new reality created by this event, preferring to react to events rather than to pre-empt them, taking a piecemeal approach rather than developing an overall strategy.

As full members of the CSCE all the fifteen successor states of the Former Soviet Union have rights and obligations under the Helsinki Final Act and other CSCE agreements. The CSCE is uniquely placed to play a decisive role in moulding their future as it is the only European institution that brings together the successor states with all the other countries of Europe, as well as the United States and Canada, on an equal basis.

- The CSCE should organise a special Conference focused on the successor states of the Former Soviet Union.
- The CSCE should recognise a special responsibility towards the successor states. It should establish missions of long duration in all the successor states with a harmonised mandate to include overall monitoring of the security situation, as well as the development of civil society and the fostering of respect for human rights.
- The West needs to be courageous in dealing with the security concerns of the Russian Federation, moving away from the cold war mentality. A new generation of confidence-building measures should be developed in tune with the changing international circumstances. The Western countries must at the same time extend guarantees to the other successor states who fear Russian hegemony. These successor states must themselves exercise self restraint in the conduct of their foreign and defence policy.
- It is questionable whether the CIS is the best vehicle to promote peace and security in the space of the Former Soviet Union. Pushing the newly independent states into membership may in fact create new conflicts for the future at great cost to Russia itself.
- The issue of arms control, disarmament and nuclear proliferation are at the heart of the security debate in this region. A comprehensive approach will involve addressing any legitimate claims of the successor states over the CFE Treaty specifically taking into account the new European realities.

Introduction

The break up of the Soviet Union was one of the least expected and most important consequences of the end of the cold war. Some politicians in the west, then as now, did not consider this break up as beneficial for European or international security, nor for the political and economic interests of their own countries.

The nationalist euphoria that gripped the periphery of the Soviet State as the communist system disintegrated, together with the political and economic turmoil in Moscow, resulted in a momentum for independence that was simply too strong to be manipulated by outside political interests. Today fourteen republics join Russia to make a group of successor states that are diverse not only in their identity and level of development, but, most importantly, also in their attitude towards each other.

The Conference on Security and Co-operation in Europe (CSCE) has so far failed to fully come to terms with this new reality, on many occasions choosing to react to events rather than to preempt them, and taking a piecemeal approach to the problem rather than trying to develop an overall approach to it. This is particularly true in the issue of security.

With the benefit of hindsight, many in the Budapest Review Conference have hailed the successes in the human dimension as the greatest achievements of the CSCE. Yet we should not forget that initially it was the CSCE's success in the security field - in bringing about an acceptance of borders, in opening dialogue across the cold war divide, in lessening tensions in a divided Europe, and in bringing overall security to all states on the continent - that marked the conference as one of the most important developments in Europe since the end of the second world war.

Similar successes are now needed in the territory of the former Soviet Union, where three security concerns have somehow to be tackled and reconciled:

- (a) The security of the Russian Federation;
- (b) The security of the fourteen other successor states;
- (c) The security of the Russian Federation and the fourteen successor states from the potential threat that they pose to each other.

The Security of the Russian Federation

History has made the Russians extremely sensitive to the security of their homeland. This security has therefore not only to exist, but also to be felt. The west will neglect this consideration at its own peril, for such a sense of security is essential for the development in Russia of a pluralistic democratic society.

This has undoubtedly been one factor which has contributed to Western reticence to expand NATO eastwards. It may be difficult to refuse the demands of Central and eastern European states for NATO membership much longer and there is no space for a Russian veto on this issue. However, extending Nato's security umbrella eastwards should, considering the positive international circumstances, be a political exercise rather than a military one.

High profile gestures by the west, and the United States in particular, could compensate for any Russian fears, real or imagined. In this context it is wise to start thinking of a new generation of confidence building measures that are more in tune with the new international realities. This could involve exchanges of technological know-how, exchanges of satellite intelligence etc.

It is at the same time useless, and perhaps even counter productive, for the west to call for reductions in Russia's armed forces, unless it is ready to help these forces to modernise. Similarly, confidence building measures should involve the opening up of the military of all countries to the scrutiny of their legislatures and their civil society. A good start could be made within the context of present CSCE military data exchange arrangements between governments. Some or all of this data could be made available on a regular basis to the national parliaments.

The Security of the fourteen other republics

The fourteen other successor states of the former Soviet Union on the periphery of the Russian Federation are feeling their way through the process of statehood. After the initial euphoria they now have to take stock of what is really required of them as full members of the international community of states. These states are still in the early stages of the process of state building. Many have had to face armed conflict, while simultaneously trying to build their new countries. In Tadjikistan, Moldova, and Georgia civil wars ravaged fragile societies. Armenia and Azerbaijan are still locked in an intractable conflict over Nagorno Karabach. Internal tensions exist in many of the other republics.

However, all the republics are now full members of the CSCE and of the United Nations. Their status as sovereign states should never be questioned again. The CSCE took the courageous step to accept all fourteen republics as new members immediately after their independence. Now it must take a further courageous step of assuming a special responsibility for the security of these republics, based on the principles of the Helsinki Final Act. If the CSCE fails to rise to this new challenge it should not be surprised, if depending on their particular circumstances these republics start looking elsewhere for their security.

The CSCE is already engaged in many of the republics through its long-term missions in Moldova, Georgia, Tadjikistan, Latvia, Estonia and now in Ukraine. The long-term missions have been effective in providing a visible CSCE presence and a sense of security to the countries concerned. However, in many occasions the limitations of their mandate has been a serious hindrance. It is time to consider having missions in all the republics and to harmonise the mandate of the missions to include overall monitoring of the security situation, as well as contributing to the development of civil society and respect for human rights.

The CSCE could also initiate a process for discussing the security problems of the fourteen republics as a separate priority issue, essential to the security of Europe in the mid-nineties, leading to a full CSCE Conference on the Security of Republics of the Former Soviet Union.

Security from each other

The issue of the relationship between the Russian Federation and the other fourteen successor states of the Former Soviet Union lies at the heart of the security debate. In Russia there is still general disbelief that the other republics are now foreign countries and a desire to move quickly to restore the status quo ante. However, history tells us that fusion is much more difficult than fission. It is highly unlikely that any of these countries is going to move freely to give up its sovereignty completely. The issue of the sovereignty of these republics is therefore likely to remain a problematic factor in the relationship that the Russian Federation maintains with them. Because it is not only the former colonial power, but also a strong neighbour it is easy for Russia to exert all sorts of pressures on the republics. The international community must expose and condemn these pressures when they happen. The CSCE has in the past two years failed to act decisively to address concerns that some powerful groups within Russia were attempting to destabilise some of the neighbouring republics. This has made everybody's task much more difficult.

Unfortunately Russian involvement in the conflicts in Georgia, Moldova, Nagorno Karabach and Tadjikistan raise many questions on Russian intentions in its so called "near abroad". Statements by Russian politicians, starting from President Yeltsin, about historical ties, and the interests of Russian minorities in the near abroad, are not only not reassuring but actually give credence to fears that Russia may not have accepted the loss of empire.

There is no doubt that many in the Russian military are in favour of keeping the Russian military presence in the near abroad. In a recent report¹, the International Institute for Strategic Studies mentions the figure of 28 military bases and facilities in the near abroad that the Russian military wants to hold on to. As many of these bases have satellite bases the numbers are probably much larger. Many questions arise as to the tactics that are being employed to secure these bases and to the ability of the newly independent states to refuse demands put on them by the Russian military. This issue is directly linked to the security of the newly independent states and should thus be a matter of direct concern to the CSCE.

A CSCE Conference on the Security of the Former Soviet Union Republics may lay the basis for a time-tabled withdrawal of Russian troops from the newly independent states, and the framework for the presence of such troops in those circumstances where they are requested by the host country. It may also establish the framework for peacekeeping operations, and operations by third parties in support of a request of the legitimate government in the face of insurgency or secession.

The Newly Independent States have however to realise that sovereignty also means responsibility and that restraint should not be interpreted as either weakness or an infringement of sovereignty. Reconciling their security interests with that of neighbouring countries has been a process that many countries in Europe have had to do for a long time. Many have concluded that there is more security in restraint than in confrontation. Proper guarantees for the newly independent states may be a good substitute to joining military alliances. In fact the guarantees may be part of a moratorium on the part of the Newly Independent States from seeking membership of military alliances, bilateral or multilateral.

The Helsinki Final Act, and subsequent CSCE documents promise security, sovereignty and territorial integrity to all the member states. The Newly Independent States have the same rights

1. The Military Balance 1994/95, *International Institute for Strategic Studies, London, 1994.*

and obligations under these agreements. Their fragility, however, puts a bigger responsibility on the rest of the Euro-Atlantic community, a "special responsibility", as the delegate of Estonia put it in Working group 1 of the Budapest Review Conference on 2nd November 1994.

The Future of the Commonwealth of Independent States (CIS)

The future of the CIS is closely linked with many of the issues already raised. The attitude of many of the newly independent states that have joined the CIS is to play along with the Russian plan for the CIS but in reality to aim to keep the organisation as ineffective as possible. Some Russian officials do not even try to hide their grand design behind the CIS. In Minsk recently the Chairman of the Council of the Russian Federation, Vladimir Shumeiko, declared that the CIS provided "the only possibility of saving the Soviet Union from complete break-up"².

A consensus seems to have emerged in Russia that sees the CIS as a counterbalance to NATO, assuring for Russia superpower status. President Yeltsin personally chaired a meeting of leaders of the two chambers of parliament on 17 November during which participants agreed on the need to unite around the principle of "great-power patriotism"³.

Foreign Minister Kozyrev two days later told Russian Television that the CIS was meant "to become in the future a real military-political *soyuz* of republics, united by a common history and by the common CIS border, for we simply do not have and do not need another border"⁴.

There is nothing wrong in countries joining together to co-operate. In fact this should be considered a positive development even in the case of the successor states of the former Soviet Union. However such co-operation should not be pressed upon countries as has obviously been the case with Georgia and Azerbaijan. Also, as the experience in the European Union shows, integration even between countries, that have been sovereign for centuries and have worked towards it for decades is a slow and painful process. Trying to achieve integration with former colonies only a few years after independence has all the ingredients for a recipe for disaster.

The Commonwealth of Independent States should therefore remain very much a loose organisation of sovereign states, focusing primarily on practical economic and social issues. It is only when co-operation on an equal basis can be achieved on these issues that other more ambitious plans of political and military union could be achieved.

If Russia pursues, and the CSCE acquiesces to, a reintegration of the former Soviet Union, under whatever name, by means other than the free will of the people of the countries concerned, both will be responsible for a *new generation of conflict* on the continent. At the same time addressing legitimate Russian security concerns is also the responsibility of the international community.

2. Report of Interfax News Agency on 1st November 1994 quoted by Radio Free Europe/Radio Liberty Daily Report No 209, 3rd November 1994. For further examples of Russian plans for the CIS see also Yevgeny Primakov, "Russia-CIS, Does the Western Position need Correction?", Moscow, September 1994.

3. See Radio Free Europe/Radio Liberty Report, No 219, 18th November 1994.

4. Foreign Minister Kozyrev speaking on Russian Television, 19th November 1994 quoted in Radio free Europe/Radio Liberty Report No221, 22nd November 1994.

The CSCE, the collapse of the Soviet Union and the Future of Arms Control Regimes

One of the complications arising out of the dissolution of the Soviet Union was the inheritance of its huge military arsenal, and its obligations under various arms control agreements, especially those negotiated and signed at the end of the cold war. The Conventional Forces in Europe Treaty (CFE) could easily have been a victim of the new situation. After it became clear that Russian attempts to maintain a unified armed force under the umbrella of the CIS had failed, the west pushed for the successor states to accept the obligations under the CFE Treaty and to ratify it.

Despite a lot of bickering, agreement was reached in Tashkent on 15 May 1992, which amongst other things provided for new allocations under the CFE treaty amongst Azerbaijan, Armenia, Belarus, Georgia, Kazakhstan, Moldova, Russia and Ukraine⁵.

These changes, over and above the changes in Eastern and Central Europe that practically deprived Russia of both its allies and a buffer zone, meant that Russia has become more and more reticent about the treaty, to the point that Russian diplomats openly cast doubts as to whether Russia will fully comply with the provisions and deadlines of the treaty. Although there are provisions in the treaty that allow for amendments, such amendments have to be approved by all the parties concerned. Many western countries are reluctant to do this, despite some sympathy with the Russian predicament, afraid both that they might give the wrong message to Moscow regarding its presence in the near abroad, and also that revising the treaty to accommodate the Russian side will necessarily bring other demands from other parties. The CFE Treaty was negotiated as a result of a mandate given by the member states of the CSCE in January 1989 included in Concluding Document of the 1986/89 third follow-up meeting in Vienna. Once it was signed however the Treaty was considered outside the CSCE framework and officially not on its agenda. However various CSCE agreements overlap with the CFE Treaty. Thus the Budapest Review Conference has found itself discussing harmonisation between various CSCE agreements and the CFE. One position is that CFE has been overtaken by events and should be renegotiated within the framework of the CSCE. Leading western delegations insist on full adherence.

On this issue the two sides are calling each other's bluff bringing back an air of cold war politics that is very disturbing indeed. Despite the fact that CFE is outside the parameters of the CSCE this does not mean that this issue is separate from the overall issue of dealing with the security concerns of the successor states of the former Soviet Union. In fact any serious consideration of revising the CFE Treaty should only take place in a context where the full range of the security concerns of all the successor states, as well as all other CSCE states, could be considered i.e. within a CSCE Conference on the Security of the Successor States of the Former Soviet Union. The prospect that the revision of the CFE Treaty could be discussed in such a conference might encourage Russian interest.

Another security concern of importance to all CSCE countries is the issue of nuclear proliferation. Agreements have now been reached with Ukraine and Kazakhstan for these two states to dismantle their nuclear capability. The hesitation, at least in Ukraine, to comply with these agreements is mainly due to security considerations, and as such is a matter of interest to the

5. For a background to the Tashkent Agreement see Jane Sharp, *Conventional Arms Control in Eastern Europe in 1992*, in VERIFICATION 1993, VERTIC/Brassey's, London, 1993.

CSCE⁶. The contribution of the CSCE in providing security to the successor states of the former Soviet Union will therefore contribute towards ensuring full compliance with the dismantlement programme. The CSCE could also provide a forum for co-operation on a continental level to curb the trade in nuclear material and avoid nuclear proliferation.

6. The Ukrainian Parliament finally decided to accede to the Treaty on the non-proliferation of nuclear weapons on 16th November 1994 as part of a package whereby the United States and Great Britain joined Russia in extending Security guarantees to the Ukraine.

The CSCE is unique

The CSCE is a unique institution bringing together all the states of the Euro-Atlantic region. It is the only regional institution that brings together all the Republics of the former Soviet Union with the other European states, as well as with Canada and the United States. It has a proven record of success in the difficult times of the cold war. But while times have changed so have the issues. Providing a framework of security for, and co-operation with, the successor states of the Soviet Union should now become a top priority of the CSCE. This has to be done keeping in mind the different outlooks of the different republics. The CSCE should not simply wait for the next crisis to erupt. It should take bold initiatives that can ensure continued peace on the European continent.

Map of the Commonwealth of Independent States

Commonwealth of Independent States



About VERTIC

What is verification?

The success of any agreement depends on building an atmosphere of trust. These agreements can be international treaties on arms control, or on the environment, or agreements between different communities within a state. Trust can best be built and maintained when all sides are aware that "cheating" is likely to be detected. The process is known as verification.

What is VERTIC?

VERTIC, the Verification Technology Information Centre, was established in 1986 as an independent, non-profit making organisation of scientists in response to the needs of policy-makers, journalists, legislators, the academic community and others for reliable information on verification.

How does VERTIC operate?

Research VERTIC carries out research in verification technologies and methodologies within the framework of political reality. VERTIC takes a professional, non-partisan and scientific approach to research, and is frequently called upon to provide expert comment on verification.

Publish Our staff and international network of consultants publish widely: in the general and specialist press, in contributions to books, and in our own publications.

Broadcast media VERTIC is the first port of call for many TV and radio journalists. We are approached for our knowledge of international and national agreements and for our technical expertise.

Seminars, conferences and workshops VERTIC holds a number of meetings on all our subjects throughout the year. VERTIC personnel are frequently invited to present papers at international gatherings throughout the world.

Personnel VERTIC permanent staff operate from offices in central London, and are supported by a worldwide team of consultants, project study groups, and an Oversight and Advisory Board.

How is VERTIC funded?

VERTIC receives a large part of its funding from Charitable Trusts including the W. Alton Jones Foundation, John D. & Catherine T. MacArthur Foundation, Joseph Rowntree Charitable Trust, Ploughshares Fund, Rockefeller Brothers Fund, Rockefeller Foundation, Polden-Puckham Trust, Carnegie Corporation of New York, and the John Merck Fund. We also have project funding from the British Ministry of Defence, the Foreign & Commonwealth Office and the European Union. VERTIC also accepts commissions for research.

Areas of Work

Arms Control and Disarmament including nuclear non-proliferation, nuclear testing, remote sensing technologies, conventional forces and open skies, chemical and biological weapons and South Asian security.

The Environment including climate change, biodiversity and sustainable development.

Conflicts and Confidence-Building The third main area of VERTIC's work focuses on conflicts between states and within states, particularly conflicts with an ethnic dimension and looks at what confidence-building measures can be applied to the situations. VERTIC follows closely the work of the CSCE in the field of conflict prevention, arms control agreements, CSBMs and national minorities

General approach The conflicts and confidence-building projects breaks new ground, particularly in the field of civilian confidence-building measures. The role of verification and confidence-building in preventing and resolving sub-national conflicts has been paid very little attention until now. In the first place, VERTIC is studying a selection of actual and potentially violent situations, taking into account the concerns and aspirations of all sides.

We are looking at how laws and constitutions can be used as confidence-building measures and how existing international measures between states impact on conflicts within states. We are particularly interested in the role of cultural symbols and in the role of the media.

We are establishing procedures for "action-research" within the case-study countries. From the research, we are developing proposals on how to verify agreements between different communities within a state and on how to involve both governmental and non-governmental organisations in this process of confidence-building.

Case studies In the first phase (1994) the project looks at three case studies: The conflict between the Romanian and Hungarian communities in Romania; Conflict and state building in Georgia; and religious conflict and national cohesion in Egypt.

Our work in Romania, Georgia and Egypt will continue throughout 1995, with further case studies from Southern Africa, the South Balkans, Latin America, South Asia and the Pacific added in due course.

Audience In this project VERTIC is collaborating closely with governments and communities. The audience for this research is primarily the communities themselves, mediators and negotiators, non-governmental organisations, international governmental organisations (for example the United Nations, the European Union, the Conference on Security and Cooperation in Europe, etc.), and the media.

Other relevant VERTIC publications

The Verification yearbook series

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| J. B. Poole & R. Guthrie (eds), Verification 1994: Arms Control, Peacekeeping and the Environment , VERTIC/Brassey's, 1994 | ISBN 1 85753 110 8
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Research reports

- Patricia M. Lewis and Owen Greene, **The CSCE, European Security and Verification: Considerations for Helsinki 1992**, (to be re-issued as: Confidence Building Matters No 1, VERTIC, London 1992).
- Owen Greene & Dennis Sammut, **The CSCE, and the Process of Confidence Building**, Confidence Building Matters No2, September 1994
- Dennis Sammut, **The Birth of the Georgian State: Giving Georgia a Second Chance**, Confidence Building Matters No3, October 1994
- Walter Kemp & Dennis Sammut, **The CSCE beyond the Budapest Summit**, Confidence Building Matters No5, (forthcoming)