

## *Getting It Wrong: Regional Cooperation and the Commonwealth of Independent States*

### **Chapter 1**

#### **THE FAILURE OF THE CIS**

The speed with which the Soviet Union collapsed created mind-boggling challenges. The Soviet Union effectively imploded between August and December 1991, and a single country was replaced by 15 newly independent states, all soon to become members of the United Nations. The problems raised by such a breakup would still have been monumental if there had been many months of advance warning, as the British had given before their withdrawal from India and Palestine in 1948, and would have been eased somewhat even if there had been just three months' prior notification, as there was of the separation of Czechoslovakia into the Czech and Slovak republics.

It took just weeks, however, if not days, to turn millions of Soviet citizens into citizens of various new countries, some of which had not been independent states in living memory, and others that had never been states before. Many people were content with their new citizenship, but others were not, which meant that most of these new states were born with new diaspora populations, some of which had powerful foreign patrons. None of the new states had fully delineated boundaries, and most of them had no means to defend those boundaries even if they had been defined. Paradoxically, the shared territory of these new states also contained more than four million soldiers who were sworn to preserve and protect a nation that no longer existed. No one, not even the soldiers themselves, really knew where the loyalties of these strategic and defensive armed forces, which possessed both tactical and strategic nuclear weapons, really lay.

The new states faced enormous economic challenges. Some economic authority had already been transferred from Moscow to the republics before the breakup, but at the time of independence the new national leaders did not yet know either the full inventory of their national economic assets, or how to assert control of them, since many of these assets were administered by people whose loyalties to the new political entities were dubious. Even if all potential sources of revenue could be identified, it still remained unclear how most of these states could meet their payrolls and social service obligations, since they had no banking systems, and currency emissions had always been controlled in Moscow. The new states shared a single transportation and communication system, which had been designed to integrate the USSR, not to serve or supply its now-independent subunits.

In part because of the immediate need to manage the complexities of this vast political divorce process, the leaders of these new states quickly, and with almost no controversy, agreed to the formation of the Commonwealth of Independent States (CIS). At least as pressing, though, was the universal desire--in Moscow, in the capitals of the member states of the North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO), and in the newly independent

states alike--to determine what Russia's relationship to these new states would be, since it was still taken as a given that, whatever the process, Russia would play a dominant role.

Policy makers in Moscow generally assumed that Russia's preeminence in the post-Soviet space was a foregone conclusion, even if they had no clear idea of how it could be achieved or what form it would take. Leaders in the new national capitals expected that their countries would be treated like Russia's "little brothers," an outcome that some Western policy makers also hoped for, fearing that economic and social chaos would ensue without strong Russian involvement. Many others in the West were willing at least to delay judgment of Russian domination until they saw what form it might take.

The passage of time, however, has put the CIS in many new lights. Moscow's bilateral and multilateral ties with the successor states, which it chose to call the "near abroad," have proven to be paternalistic at best and clearly adversarial at worst. As the first shock of independence began to fade in the other national capitals, their leaders became more aware of the opportunities that their new status offered, and some became much less enthusiastic about and less resigned to remaining in Russia's orbit. Many in the West also came to question earlier assumptions that Russia would prove to be a benign regional influence after Moscow strong-armed states like Azerbaijan, Georgia, and Moldova that had either refused to join or to participate actively in the CIS.

The CIS has also not evolved in ways that serve Russia's purposes. All of the Soviet successor states except the three Baltic nations eventually joined the organization, but most members have opted out of one or more of the key political, economic, and security agreements that were intended to be the main instruments of integration. The heads of the CIS states have all met regularly, but the agreements drawn up at their meetings have had no real force; indeed, the only reason that such sessions continue to be held seems to be that most of the leaders find some other utility in regular summit meetings.

The failure of the CIS to manage them has not made the interconnections of the post-Soviet space disappear, as all of the member states seem to understand. Some of the states have begun to find other ways to group together, sometimes with Russia and sometimes without. To date, though, such efforts have had only limited success, since weak states joining up with other weak states usually cannot create strong, effective unions and organizations. None of the newly independent states has been willing to reduce its autonomy of decision making, preferring to maximize its own national interests rather than to delegate authority to multistate arrangements.

Most of the problems for which the CIS was created remain unresolved. Each of the CIS member states is trying to define itself primarily in relationship to a broad international community, although all of the post-Soviet states remain closely intertwined. Economic competition among CIS member states remains keen, but all are still interconnected enough to suffer the economic crises of their neighbors and, even more so, of Russia. The greatest security threats to these states come from within, or from former Soviet

neighbors, yet member states are not competent either to cope with security needs on their own or to form an effective multilateral security force.

This book offers a perspective for understanding both the failure of the CIS and the continuing challenges of integration. It traces the evolution of CIS institutions, showing why they have failed to achieve most of their initial purposes. It describes the challenge of integration, as understood by Russia and by the other newly independent states. It looks at the national strategies adopted by several CIS member states, at efforts of some of the new states to group together in ways other than through the CIS, and at the integrating role played by other regional or multilateral organizations. Finally, this book shows how the failure of the CIS has contributed to the reconfiguration of the former Soviet space, and offers advice to U.S. policy makers who wish to promote good relations with Russia, but who simultaneously want to see each of the other Soviet successor states secure independence and sovereignty in a way that maximizes their own economic and political potential.

## **THE BIRTH OF THE CIS**

Beyond giving long advance warning of their intentions, the British did little to prepare their colonies for postwar independence, failing among other things to resolve competing land claims. This guaranteed a bloody transfer of power. Intercommunal violence broke out immediately in India and Pakistan, as Hindus and Muslims tried to move to their respective new states. Israel's Arab neighbors refused to recognize the partition of Palestine and went to war with the new Jewish state, inadvertently wiping Palestine from the map in the process.

By contrast, the dissolution of the Soviet Union occurred with greater preparatory consultation, which helped make it a relatively peaceful process. Fighting did escalate after independence in Georgia, Armenia, Azerbaijan, Moldova, and Tajikistan, but the underlying disputes had either begun smoldering before independence, or had already become violent. Only the war in Chechnya was the direct result of the USSR's demise; it would have been unlikely to develop had the leaders of the Chechen republic not demanded of Russia the same rights of national self-determination that the titular peoples of the former Soviet republics had been granted.

This is not to suggest, however, that the breakup of the USSR was a considered act. Similar to the demise of the British Empire in 1947, the USSR was not so much dismembered as allowed wearily to collapse, with little thought for what would come next. In a March 1991 referendum, tens of millions of people had shown overwhelming support for the continued existence of the Soviet Union, <roman>but the precise form of that future union was unspecified in the question put to voters. Some regions of the USSR refused to conduct the referendum at all, while others modified the question slightly so that support for the union also meant support for local sovereignty, while still other regions voted for continued union with such unanimity as to raise suspicions of election fraud. The only parts of the USSR that had large, potentially uncontrollable mass

movements in favor of independence were the Baltics, which were formally permitted to leave the Soviet Union in the aftermath of the failed coup of August 1991.

Soviet cohesion, however, had been compromised well before that time. The Congress of Peoples Deputies of the Russian Federation elected Boris Yeltsin as its chairman in May 1990. In part because of the personal rivalry between Yeltsin and Soviet President Mikhail Gorbachev, the Russian republic declared its sovereignty on June 12, 1990. In June 1991, Yeltsin was popularly elected president of the Russian Federation, after which Yeltsin claimed his administration had more political legitimacy than that of Gorbachev.

Gorbachev's authority evaporated entirely after the failed Communist Party putsch of August 1991, and the banning of the Communist Party seemed to obviate any remaining legitimacy the Soviet Union may have had. Between August and November a number of the republics issued declarations of independence through votes in their national legislatures. Most of these declarations were more expressions of a goal than statements of intent, part of an escalating struggle for control of strategic economic assets between Moscow and the periphery, rather than a serious push for independence.

The behavior of the republic presidents in this period suggests that they viewed the formal collapse of the Soviet Union as a real possibility, but not as inevitable. Each of the Soviet republic leaders, however, seemed more concerned with retaining power than with holding the union together. Their fears had justification; political dissident Zviad Gamsakhurdia became Georgia's president even before the 1991 coup, while another political dissident, Levon Ter-Petrossian, came to power in Armenia just after it; in the aftermath of the coup an unruly crowd had also toppled Kakhar Makhamov in Tajikistan, and Ayaz Mutalipov, a Communist supporter, was barely hanging on to power in Azerbaijan.

Outlawing the Communist Party was a popular measure in many republics, as it transferred important assets to the personal control of their leaders, while also making the republics appear to be even more quasi-statelike than they had before. In October 1991 eight Soviet republics agreed to the creation of an Economic Union that would have made the Soviet Union a free trade zone with the ruble as a common currency, to be managed by a banking union headed by Gosbank. The debt of the Soviet Union would be divided among member republics on a formula that was agreed upon at a December 4, 1991, summit of republic leaders. Tellingly, four republics (Azerbaijan, Georgia, Ukraine, and Moldova) refused to attend that October 1991 meeting, because the proposed union usurped more power than these quasi-states were willing to cede.

The results of the referendum in Ukraine held December 1, 1991, made it clear that the Ukrainians were serious about wanting to withdraw from the union, and effectively made the dissolution of the Soviet Union inevitable. Still, it is far from clear whether the leaders of Russia, Ukraine, and Belarus had dissolution as their intention when they met on December 8, 1991. That Kazakhstan's President Nursultan Nazarbayev was invited to join the meeting suggests that they did not, for Nazarbayev had been actively trying to redefine the union in a way that would satisfy most republic leaders. Nazarbayev declined

to attend the December 8 meeting because he disapproved of circumventing Soviet President Mikhail Gorbachev, which also suggests that he did not know that dissolution was on the meeting's agenda.

It is equally unclear whether Boris Yeltsin, Leonid Kravchuk, and Stanislav Shushkevich actually expected the decisions they made that Saturday in a dacha outside Minsk to become binding. The men claimed the authority to dissolve the 1922 Treaty of Union, which had formally organized the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics, on the grounds that the entities that they each headed (which also happened to be the three surviving signatories of the 1922 Treaty) were sovereign republics. The same claim had been made in other contexts, but what distinguished the Minsk Agreement (also known as the Belovezh Accords) from earlier declarations was that, for the first time, the Soviet elite was ready to support a radical redefinition of the Soviet political and economic space.

President Gorbachev tried frantically for several days to find support for holding the USSR together, but without success. The country's military and security forces were formally still under his command, but there was great doubt that his orders would have been obeyed. Tellingly, no crowds took to the streets demanding the preservation of the USSR, and the leaders of the Soviet republics finally seemed ready to dissolve the union.

This does not mean, however, that they were prepared to abandon all their former ties. President Nazarbayev in particular was concerned that Kazakhstan and the other four Central Asian republics had been excluded from the Commonwealth of Independent States, the post-Soviet structure that had been agreed to at the Minsk meeting. Convening a summit of the five Central Asian republics in Ashgabat on December 13, 1991, the leaders of these states asked to join the new commonwealth. Another summit was held in Almaty on December 21, 1991, which was attended by the leaders of eleven Soviet republics; the three Baltic states and Georgia declined to attend.

There the leaders all signed a protocol that was declared to be a part of the Minsk Agreement of December 8, and eight "high contracting parties" joined the three initial members as founders of the new Commonwealth.

The stated goals of the new organization were straightforward. The purpose of the Commonwealth of Independent States was to allow member or participating states to coordinate their foreign and security policies, to develop a common economic space with a common customs policy, to maintain orderly control over the military assets of the former USSR, to develop shared transportation and communications networks, to preserve the environment and maintain environmental security, to regulate migration policy, and to take coordinated measures against organized crime.

The men who dissolved the USSR accepted each other as representatives of a single elite that had interests in common, even as other of their interests increasingly diverged. They believed they had time to work out institutional solutions for their lingering interconnections, and saw it as their first priority to establish themselves as leaders of independent states that were subjects of international law. There was little interest at the

time to look backward and to decide whether what they had dissolved was a state or an empire, because it seemed far more pressing to define what would come next.

## **THE ROCKY START OF THE CIS**

The first CIS structure was very simple, deriving directly from Gorbachev's final State Council, which had been formed in 1991 to bring together the republic presidents. It consisted of two councils, one of Heads of State and the other of Heads of Government, and a working group to prepare materials that these two councils would discuss.

The leaders of Armenia, Azerbaijan, Belarus, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Moldova, Russia, Tajikistan, Turkmenistan, Ukraine, and Uzbekistan recognized the need for continued coordination of the new states. They believed that a summit setting provided the best opportunity for it. In the next two years, between December 1991 and 1993, there were thirteen meetings of the Council of Heads of State and twelve sessions of the Council of Heads of Government.

These meetings may have served an important communications function, but they were unable to promote the CIS as a decision-making organization. Discussions in the corridors were often more important than those at the formal sessions, while the press conferences after most summits projected discord over the nature of the organization, its presumed or projected institutions, and their presumptive functions.

At the first meeting of Heads of Government, held in Moscow in February 1992, the Russian delegation accused the Ukrainians of hindering the council's efforts to reach agreement on pressing questions. The specific topic was whether Russia was the legal successor to the Soviet Union and the guarantor of the foreign creditor agreements of the Commonwealth member states. Of those who attended, all but the Ukrainians were willing to cede Russia such status. A different formulation was offered at the next meeting, in March. The Council of Heads of Government agreed to accept joint responsibility for repaying the USSR's debt; Russia would repay about 61 percent, Ukraine, 16 percent, and the remaining members were to split the rest according to their economic strength. After this agreement, however, Russia negotiated bilateral agreements over the next two years with every state other than Ukraine that transferred its debts and assets to Russia on a "null-null" basis. Ukraine formally refused to grant Russia the authority to administer its portion of the former Soviet debt, but Russia still took de facto control of all USSR assets.

At the March 1992 summit, Armenia, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Moldova, Uzbekistan, Ukraine, Belarus, Turkmenistan, and Tajikistan signed agreements on taxation policy, pension provisions, price setting, customs policies, the internal debt of the USSR, and a protocol on banking. Azerbaijan only sent an observer to the meeting. There was so little confidence in the potential efficacy of any of these agreements that just a week later, at a summit in Kyiv, President Leonid Kravchuk was already describing the CIS as completely ineffective.

Nevertheless, the Kyiv summit produced a number of agreements, including a Declaration on the Non-Use of Force or the Threat of Force in Relations between CIS Members and an Agreement on Groups of Military Observers and Collective Peacekeeping Forces. Ukraine signed these agreements, but vehemently opposed a plan for the creation of an Inter-Parliamentary Assembly, which was subsequently supported by seven member states at an inter-parliamentary conference held in Almaty, also in March 1992.

That such major differences surfaced so quickly should have made clear that the CIS was doomed as any sort of formal political organization, but the organization nevertheless started work on a formal charter. Completed in January 1993, the draft document closely resembled the agreement that had been signed at the first Minsk meeting, with two important additions. The 1993 draft charter expanded the organization's duties to include protection of human rights and fundamental freedoms, and, most importantly, it added the coordination of defense policy and border protection. Despite the five months of contentious negotiation that had gone into drafting the CIS Charter, its presentation to the Heads of State Summit in Minsk on January 22, 1993, led to further disagreement. Only Kazakhstan and Russia fully supported the draft, while Belarus had reservations about the collective security provisions, and Uzbekistan objected to the inclusion of human rights issues, which it considered to be the internal affair of member states. Ukraine, Moldova, and Turkmenistan refused to sign the charter, while Azerbaijan and Georgia did not even come to the meeting.

Member states were given a year to ratify the charter, after which it would come into effect in January 1994. Only nine nations did so, including Georgia, which did not ratify the charter until March 1994. Moldova, Turkmenistan, and Ukraine have never ratified it. Of these nine signatories, only Armenia and Uzbekistan fully met the criteria for founding membership that the charter set forth, by endorsing the Minsk Agreements and Almaty protocols prior to ratifying the charter. Azerbaijan, Georgia, Kyrgyzstan, Tajikistan, and Turkmenistan never ratified the Minsk agreements, while Moldova did so only in April 1994, when it ratified the Almaty protocols as well. Moldova, however, specified that it would participate on economic questions only, and so accepted associate member status. Belarus, Kazakhstan, and Russia never ratified the Almaty protocols, which then necessitated the creation of a new category of participating states to parallel that of member states.

Well before even this partial ratification, the CIS had begun to elaborate a number of formal institutions. The Inter-Parliamentary Assembly was created on March 27, 1992; its powers were subsequently enhanced at the Minsk meeting of May 26, 1995, when the formal convention outlining its responsibilities was adopted. Not all member states agreed to participate in the assembly; the most crippling refusal was that of Ukraine, an absence that limited the potential effectiveness of this body from its inception. Ukraine did eventually join on March 3, 1999.

Two new coordinating councils were established, the Council of Defense Ministers (Heads of State summit, February 14, 1992) and the Council of Foreign Ministers

(September 24, 1993). The CIS established a formal Executive Secretariat in September 1993, with headquarters in Minsk. A Committee for Consultation and Coordination (of the economy) was also established in 1993, but was effectively replaced by the Inter-State Economic Committee of the Economic Union in October 1994.

In all about sixty institutions were set up, most with highly specific coordinating functions (see tables 1.1 and 1.2). A few of these, such as the Inter-State Aviation Committee and the Council on Railroad Transportation, had tasks of vital importance, but most of the employees of the CIS, who at one point numbered about 2,500, were essentially wasting their time. The CIS institutions prepared approximately a thousand different agreements for signature by CIS members, of which only a handful were ever implemented.

The institutional design of the CIS was in conflict with the goals of many of its members from the beginning. Many of the goals set out in the Minsk Agreement and CIS Charter were explicitly integrative, but the institutional structures meant to implement them were either exclusively consultative or were not empowered to impose legally binding decisions. Indeed, Article 1, paragraph 3 of the charter states that, "The Commonwealth . . . possesses no supranational authority," a limitation that had been inserted to satisfy Ukraine and some other CIS states. The charter also contains no instruments of enforcement. An Economic Court was proposed in July 1992 to insure the fulfillment of economic commitments made within the CIS framework and to settle economic disputes among member states, but its powers were exclusively consultative and member states generally preferred not to avail themselves of its services.

The Inter-Parliamentary Assembly holds consultations and elaborates proposals on legal issues; since inception it has recommended sixty-three legislative acts, including model civil, criminal, criminal-procedure, and criminal-enforcement codes, but the national parliaments of member states are not required even to look at such proposals.

Nothing in the CIS Charter encourages consensus; in addition to signing a given agreement, members also have the options of abstention, of signing with reservations, or of refusing to sign. Instead of encouraging members to seek compromises or to modify their positions, this procedure allows all of the contradictory stances on a given question to be brought to the conference table.

## **NO TRUST OF RUSSIA**

In part this proliferation of positions was the fault of overly ambitious CIS institutions, which threatened to usurp sovereignty that member states had not yet really exercised, but it also reflected the differing visions of the member states about the role of the CIS and the degree of integration that each wished to achieve. Theoretically there was a wide variety of forms that integration might have taken; even deep integration may have been achievable in the first years of independence, before member states began reform programs and otherwise ruptured Soviet-era linkages.

The only vehicle for integration put forward, however, was the CIS, which Russia strongly advocated, thereby making the other states cautious and suspicious. Russian leaders pushed immediately for the organization to increase its formal powers. The failure of CIS leaders to reach consensus on important issues only intensified Russian pressure, as in the April 1993 special meeting at which Boris Yeltsin, assisted by Nursultan Nazarbayev, attempted to force the leaders of Ukraine, Moldova, Georgia, and Armenia either to accept greater CIS control or to leave the organization.

The costs of doing the latter had already been made clear in Georgia, Azerbaijan, and Moldova. The Azerbaijanis pulled out of the CIS in October 1992 after the nationalist Abulfaz Elchibey was elected president in free and fair elections in June, replacing Ayaz Mutalipov (who had been forced from office in March). Within the next year well-armed Armenian troops took control of Karabakh and much of the territory surrounding it, essentially annexing 20 percent of Azerbaijan. The Armenian government position is that the fighting was done exclusively by soldiers from Karabakh. Similarly, Georgians claim that Russia supported and armed Ossetian and Abkhaz separatists. The Transdnestr region, where Russia's Fourteenth Army was stationed, continued to seek secession from Moldova, which had refused to sign the CIS Charter or founding documents.

The Russian government sought to distance itself formally from its surrogates active in Abkhazia, Armenia, and Transdnestr, but most observers remained unconvinced that it had done so. Withdrawal from the CIS seemed to insure that internal security problems would worsen. All of the new states were multinational (see table 1.3) and thus were vulnerable to ethnic tensions. Ukraine in particular was susceptible because of its eastern regions, which are heavily ethnic Russian.

States thus acquiesced to the CIS, as Azerbaijan and Georgia did in September 1993 and December 1993, respectively, but they had no interest in empowering its institutions, since these appeared to be vehicles for Russian domination. Suspicion of Russian motives for the degree and type of integration Russia desired was universal among the other members of the CIS. The behavior of the Russian elite, as well as that of the Russian government, seemed to justify these suspicions. From late 1992 on, when the Russian government was energetically pursuing CIS integration, many Russian commentators were tying CIS integration to Russia's vital interests and its claims to be a world power. A number of prominent Russian figures, including Ruslan Khasbulatov, speaker of the Russian Supreme Soviet, Vladimir Shumeiko, first chairman of the Russian Federation Council, and Vladimir Zhirinovskiy, the leader of the newly triumphant Liberal-Democratic Party, were vociferously critical of what they described as Russia's abandonment of ethnic Russians and Russian speakers in the other new states, or were loudly decrying the security risks to Russia posed by the unsecured international borders of its near-abroad. Speaking at a June 9, 1994, session of the Inter-Parliamentary Assembly, Shumeiko argued that the CIS would evolve into a single confederate or even a federal state, while Zhirinovskiy went even further to say that Russia should reacquire the most desirable parts of the former Soviet territories by force. Even Russia's State Duma, the first post-independence parliament, which was elected following the dissolution by force of Russia's Soviet-era legislature, passed formal resolutions

demanding the reconstitution of the USSR, a stance the legislators reiterated as recently as March 1996. In the early 1990s, even many moderate Russians held the view that, while the sovereignty of the newly independent states should be preserved, the CIS should become an eastern version of the European Union, with a single currency, a strong supranational parliament, and a single security system.

No serious political actor in Russia, however, ever advocated that the CIS become a union of juridical equals, as the European Union is. The EU has two or three strong nations at its core, but it was Russia's intention that the CIS would have only one. Indeed, most influential Russians believed that the CIS states were incapable of sustaining independence, so membership in the CIS would be beneficial to all parties by minimizing the hardship of transition in the new states, while helping to insulate Russia from its neighbors' problems.

Such a geostrategic vision was never stated openly by President Yeltsin, former Foreign Minister Andrei Kozyrev, or former Prime Ministers Viktor Chernomyrdin and Yevgeny Primakov, but leaders elsewhere in the CIS understood the implications of Russia's integrationist desires even though they were not openly articulated. All of the CIS leaders were products of the Soviet system and were accustomed to a world in which public pronouncements had little to do with. Whatever the challenges of independence, these leaders were reluctant to concede power to a large powerful neighbor that had contempt for their independence.

## **THE GOALS OF THE CIS**

Fears of Russian domination and the desire of each country's leader to be free to shape the domestic politics of his state made it equally difficult for the CIS states to move toward realization of the organization's stated goals. Attempts at cooperation in economics and security are discussed at length in the following two chapters; those chapters show that efforts in both of these spheres bogged down from the beginning in a combination of suspicion of Russia and the insistence of each leader to maximize his nation's interest, even if that came at the expense of a neighbor.

The ways in which this combination made it difficult for the CIS states to work for common goals may also be seen in other spheres. The CIS Charter, for example, calls for member nations to coordinate their foreign policies, but the issue of NATO enlargement, which infuriated Russia, initially caused barely a ripple in any other CIS states except Belarus, which supported Russia. Ukraine even welcomed NATO enlargement, and some Ukrainian politicians voiced hopes that their country might also join the alliance some day.

Another case in point is the civil war in Afghanistan. The Afghan-Tajik border has been the site of frequent attacks both by Tajik opposition forces and by Afghan Mujahideen rebels; one such incident in August 1994 left seven Russian border guards dead and fourteen injured. Russian leaders unsuccessfully tried several times to mobilize the five

Central Asian presidents to adopt a common stance both on defending the old Soviet-Afghan border and on bolstering the Northern Alliance of Afghanistan's combatants as the alliance was being overwhelmed by the Taliban. The five states understood the threat in different ways, however. Turkmenistan did not even attend the summit held in Almaty to discuss the problem in October 1996 and then, one year later, gave de facto recognition to the Taliban government, when two senior Taliban officials were received in Turkmenistan's capital. By contrast, Uzbekistan openly supported the ethnic Uzbek opposition in Afghanistan, which was locked in bloody struggle with the Taliban.

It has not proven any easier to coordinate policies on what might seem to be less contentious issues, such as environmental policy. Usually this is because what seems to be an environmental question to one state is an economic question to another. In the case of water, for example, the comparatively richer states of Turkmenistan and Uzbekistan are especially big users, while the comparatively poorer states of Tajikistan and Kyrgyzstan are Central Asia's major suppliers. However, water is supplied free to the users, while the individual states must pay to maintain all dams, reservoirs, and other water-storage facilities found on their territories.

Similarly, the Caspian littoral states of Russia, Azerbaijan, Turkmenistan, and Kazakhstan have been unable to reach formal agreement on the legal status of the Caspian Sea or on how it may be divided. Ownership of the fossil fuel reserves in and around the Caspian is a major concern for most of the littoral states, but Russia initially tried to frame the discussion in terms of ecological management. The CIS has proven a wholly inadequate forum in which to debate such issues, let alone to resolve them.

The CIS Charter is also marred by the amorphousness of some of its goals, especially in the cultural sphere. The charter mandates common support for the spiritual unity of citizens, based upon respect for identity, cultural exchange, and close cooperation in the preservation of cultural values. This goal, however, contradicts the desire of most CIS states to strengthen the role of the core ethno-national community in what is usually seen as a national homeland. The CIS states have failed to reach agreement on protecting the rights of national minorities, in large part because Russia has defined protection as synonymous with the Russian minorities retaining their privileged position, including the retention of Russian as the dominant language and as a medium of education in the Soviet successor states. The other member states have resisted this position, because the right to set policies of language and culture is crucial to these new states, touching as it does the heart of national identity and state sovereignty. Only Belarus and Kyrgyzstan have been willing to give Russian formal status as one of their national tongues.

The issues concealed behind such questions are of enormous importance because of the unsettled waves of migration that have rolled across all of the post-Soviet expanse. Some of this population movement has been caused by war. Armenia and Azerbaijan both have large refugee populations, constituting 6 percent and 3 percent of their total populations, respectively; per capita, these are the largest refugee populations in the former Soviet Union. Kyrgyz have fled Tajikistan's civil war, as have some Uzbeks, even though the Tashkent government has tried to limit their flight wherever possible for fear that it might

provoke reprisals against local Tajiks. Georgia and Russia both have serious refugee problems as results of their respective internal conflicts.

Peacetime migrations, though, involve even larger numbers of people. Individual motivations for relocation are complex, but ethnicity generally plays a major role. Some migrants feel that their nationality limits their economic prospects. As national languages gain hold in the new states, many feel that they have become second-class citizens, while others are reluctant to become citizens of what they now view as foreign states, even if in some cases they, or even their parents, were born in the former Soviet republic that they are now leaving.

Ethnic Russians seeking to return to Russia make up by far the largest group of migrants, but there has been a migration in and out of every post-Soviet state. From 1991 to 1997 there was a net migration to Russia of more than 2.6 million people. According to data compiled by demographer Zhanna Zayonchkovskaya, of all the other CIS states only Belarus shows a small but steady net in-migration of some 86,000 people. Ukraine had a net in-migration for 1991 -1993, but since 1994 has had more people leaving the country each year than coming in.

Frequently, non-Russians are returning to a "historic homeland," but often the motive for relocation is economic. The domestic economies of Armenia, Georgia, and Azerbaijan depend heavily upon remittances from workers living in Russia; it is estimated, for example, that about a third of the Azerbaijani labor force is employed outside of the country. Large numbers of Belarusians and Ukrainians are also employed in the Russian economy, but their presence does not provoke the same kind of race hatred there as do the so-called people of Caucasian nationality. In Moscow in particular, there have been periodic roundups of "illegal aliens" from CIS states, which have led to deportations of even long-term residents who had failed to secure the proper registration during the Soviet era.

Russia put strong pressure on all the CIS leaders to adopt policies of dual citizenship, but without wide success. Turkmenistan and Russia signed a dual citizenship agreement in December 1993, at which time Boris Yeltsin demonstratively accepted Turkmen citizenship. Anecdotal evidence suggests, however, that while this treaty made it easier for ethnic Russians living in Turkmenistan to get Russian citizenship, it never became easy for Turkmen to do so. Moreover, when relations between Turkmenistan and Russia later began to sour over the question of pipeline access for Turkmen gas, Ashgabat allowed this treaty to fall into disuse. Turkmenistan then became the first CIS state to restrict entry to citizens of other Commonwealth members when it introduced a visa regime on June 9, 1999.

The Tajiks also came to permit local Russians to hold dual citizenship, although Russians living in Tajikistan have complained that it is hard to obtain Russian passports. Kazakhstan, Russia, and Kyrgyzstan all reached bilateral agreements on interchangeability of citizenship among their states, but the Kazakh-Russian agreement was debated for two years by the Russian State Duma before it was ratified.

Citizenship questions were part of the "deep integration" agreement signed by Belarus, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, and Russia on March 30, 1996. The signatories all pledged to preserve "a common cultural and educational space" and to facilitate the granting of citizenship. While there is regular talk of this agreement becoming a model for other CIS states, only Tajikistan has shown any interest in participating; it was accepted with apparent reluctance, having had to wait until February 1999 to be granted full membership. This treaty, however, has yet to achieve its stated goals. Citizenship is not proving easy to exchange, except for ethnic Russians returning home.

The CIS Charter commits member states to various principles of international law, including respect for territorial integrity and border inviolability; noninterference in other members' domestic affairs, either by force or through the threat of force; priority of international law over national legislation; peaceful resolution of conflicts; right to self-determination; conscientious discharge of commitments; and various other human rights decrees.

The CIS has had as much difficulty in meeting these goals as it has had in setting standards for ethnic tolerance. Russian officials have downplayed or denied official involvement, but Georgian, Azerbaijani, and Moldovan officials have all complained of Russian interference in their internal affairs. President Eduard Shevardnadze of Georgia has claimed several times that "outside groups"—generally understood to mean Russians—are responsible for several assassination attempts against him, while Azerbaijan's President Heydar Aliyev accused Russians of being behind the failed insurrection led by Surat Hussein.

For most of the CIS states, it is not necessary that Russia's hand actually be visible in such interventions; it is sufficient only that Russia does not seem displeased by them. After all, at one time Russian Foreign Minister Andrei Kozyrev stated openly that Russia reserved the right to intervene militarily to protect ethnic Russians living in the former republics. To be sure, he subsequently tried to reassure concerned senior officials from the rest of the CIS that Russia planned no unilateral actions. Kozyrev's foreign policy nevertheless saw the protection of the rights of Russian minorities as falling explicitly within Russia's domain, rejecting claims that these were domestic or internal problems. Although Russian law defines such "foreign" Russians as co-nationals, not citizens, the Russian Duma has nevertheless attempted to legislate privileges and rights for them. Russia preferred to apply pressure on states that it considered to be violating the rights of local ethnic Russians through international bodies, such as the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe and the Council of Europe, but Moscow refused to rule out more direct responses, if it deemed them necessary.

CIS members have demonstrated little inclination to respect mutual interests, frequently employing economic levers against one another for larger political gains. Russia, for example, has played "pipeline politics" with all the CIS fossil fuel oil producers, but it is not the only country to link energy supply with political aims. Uzbekistan has done the same with Kyrgyzstan, Kazakhstan, and especially with Tajikistan. Even though the two

countries are part of a formal economic union, Uzbekistan has not hesitated to cut off gas supplies to Kyrgyzstan regularly.

The CIS has done little to promote consistent legal and human rights standards throughout the former USSR. CIS member states exhibit a wide spectrum of political regimes and demonstrate significant differences in human rights standards. In Belarus, Uzbekistan, and Turkmenistan, authoritarian leaders have already consolidated power, so the citizens of these states have few rights or liberties. The performance of the rest of the CIS members is more mixed. Russia, Ukraine, Georgia, and Kyrgyzstan offer better protection of human rights and civil liberties than do Kazakhstan, Moldova, Azerbaijan, and Armenia, while Tajikistan's record approaches that of the three authoritarian states.

Ironically, the restriction of human rights is one of the few areas of reasonably good cooperation within the CIS. The state security services do cooperate with one another on both a formal and an informal basis. Uzbek and Turkmen opposition figures have been detained in Moscow at the request of their national authorities. Uzbek officials were given the right to detain an Uzbek opposition figure who was visiting Kyrgyzstan, which they did with considerable force, and Kazakh security officials are rumored to have been responsible for the beating of a prominent Kazakh opposition figure who was attending a conference in Bishkek.

Cooperation on crime fighting has been less systematic. Law enforcement officials have signed a series of agreements on cooperation in criminal investigations and in controlling narcotics trafficking. One example is a 1998 initiative that calls for the creation of an Inter-State Center for Combating Drug Trafficking subordinate to the CIS Executive Secretariat. The center has yet to be organized, however, because CIS member states disagree on several issues, including the important question of how the center will be funded. Unless an international sponsor is found, this initiative is likely to join the legions of other stillborn CIS proposals.

Despite the failure of these agreements to produce an integrated crime fighting program for the CIS, cooperation among the various Ministries of Interior must be seen as one of the CIS success stories, for it is well institutionalized, has generated a common database, and takes place on a regular basis. It should be pointed out, however, that one of the reasons why this form of cooperation has been relatively successful is the persisting influence of close personal ties among Soviet-era law-enforcement professionals, which extend across the new national boundaries. The structure of the CIS is such that the rising generation of law-enforcement professionals, who are now receiving different types of training in their various states, have no venue in which to develop similar relationships for the future.

## **NEW UNDERSTANDINGS OF SOVEREIGNTY**

During the first years of the CIS's existence, the degree to which the various CIS leaders wished to see integration work was largely a function of how they thought it would impact national sovereignty of their particular states.

In many ways Turkmenistan has been the most adamant opponent of integration. Ashgabat adopted a doctrine of positive neutrality immediately after independence, which was recognized by a UN resolution in 1995. The state prefers bilateral relations to multilateral structures and has avoided participation even in regional Central Asian bodies.

The stand of Ukraine is of greater impact though, for it has from the beginning limited the scope and effectiveness of the CIS, making it impossible for the CIS to take action on any of the myriad issues on which Ukraine and Russia disagree. Ukraine understands the CIS to be a mechanism for the civilized divorce of the Soviet Union's constituent republics. The Ukrainians resist political integration of the post-Soviet states both because of the threat this poses for the country's current positions and because they seek greater integration with Europe. The Ukrainians prefer to strengthen the organization that they created with Georgia, Azerbaijan, and Moldova, which was originally given the acronym GUAM, and renamed GUUAM after Uzbekistan joined in April 1999. Kyiv is also eager to promote new trade routes that would pass south of Russia and use Ukraine's territory to link China with Europe.

Since the formation of the CIS, Uzbekistan's position has moved toward that of Ukraine; Presidents Karimov and Kuchma have also developed a close personal relationship; they have even vacationed together. Uzbekistan is more open to the development of multilateral relations than is Ukraine but it also seeks a strong regional role for itself. For this reason it formed a Central Asian Economic Community with Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, and Tajikistan. It has openly opposed attempts to have the CIS act as a suprapstate.

The Aliyev government in Azerbaijan is becoming an increasingly reluctant CIS partner as Western interest in the country's petroleum resources has grown. Azerbaijan is especially interested in developing transit routes for oil and gas that bypass Russia. As long as its dispute with Armenia remains unsettled, however, Azerbaijan will have to take Russia's geopolitical demands and concerns into account.

Georgia and Moldova are also reluctant participants in the CIS, having been dragged into the organization by economic helplessness, the possibility of civil collapse, and Russian pressure. As already noted, Moldova formally limits its participation in the CIS to economic questions, while Georgia has concentrated on reducing, and if possible eliminating, Russia's military presence in its country.

The leaders of Kazakhstan and Kyrgyzstan, who did not want to leave the USSR, saw the CIS as an instrument by which to preserve as many of the Soviet Union's features as possible and thus were among the most enthusiastic integrationists. After Russia, probably the strongest advocate of integration was Kazakhstan, because President

Nursultan Nazarbayev was convinced that the economic integrity of the USSR's geopolitical expanse had to be preserved. But Nazarbayev would not accept integration that sacrificed the juridical independence of each of the member states. He proposed instead that the CIS be replaced by a new organization, the Euro-Asian Union (EAU), in which member states would adopt common policies at an intergovernmental assembly and share a common currency and mutually beneficial foreign economic policies. EAU decisions would require a four-fifths majority vote, with each member state having an equal vote.

Nazarbayev offered this proposal at the CIS summit in April 1994, but it evoked little response. That did not stop him from pushing forward with the idea, which he formally introduced as a public document at the United Nations. Some 200 articles were published in CIS newspapers in support of the proposal, which was also debated at conferences in Russia and Almaty. The EAU, however, never generated a groundswell of public support. For a time both Kyrgyzstan's Askar Akaev and Georgia's Eduard Shevardnadze expressed interest in Nazarbayev's proposal, but both eventually backed away when it became clear that Russia's leadership would not endorse it.

The CIS's other presidents, who were not as willing as Nazarbayev to trade sovereignty for security, were even less enthusiastic. Russia's formal response to Nazarbayev's plan was presented at the October 1994 CIS summit. The response plan asked member states to agree to a six-point program for strengthening the CIS, demanding closer integration of economic, political, and security relations within the CIS's existing institutional arrangements. This counter proposal left little doubt that Nazarbayev's proposal for the creation of a Euro-Asian union was dead, although the Kazakh leader continues to hold out hope that eventually it will be revived.

Over time, Kazakhstan's and Kyrgyzstan's approaches to integration have become more pragmatic. Kyrgyzstan sees the CIS as a source of economic assistance, while Kazakhstan perceives it as a means of mollifying its large Russian minority. The last remaining CIS enthusiasts are Tajikistan, Armenia, and Belarus, all of which are keenly interested in pursuing actively integrative national development strategies. The Tajik government has used the CIS to help hold the state together against the pressure of its several warring factions. Armenia has consistently supported Russia's political integration initiatives because it needs economic and military help from Russia to maintain an advantage in its conflict with Azerbaijan over Karabakh. Belarus understands the CIS mainly as a means for reintegration with Russia. Other than the need that each has to continue to rely upon Russia, however, there is little that unites these three states.

## **THE LATE CIS: HOLDING ON TO SOVEREIGNTY**

This combination of passive resistance by most member states and enthusiasm without resources by others has prevented the CIS from developing into an effective organization. In fact, Russia's continued determination to make the CIS work is the only thing that has kept the organization from dying entirely.

Moscow has been actively trying to resuscitate CIS institutions since spring 1994, but has found little enthusiasm among CIS members for reworking the charter. At the February 10, 1995, summit in Almaty, Russian President Boris Yeltsin pressed hard for new forms of integration and consolidation of CIS member state policies to compensate for the failure of CIS institutions, implying menacingly that there would be other consequences if such measures were not adopted. Since the Russian army was then mired down in Chechnya, Yeltsin's threats were not taken seriously.

Yeltsin made another effort to reform the CIS at a closed-door session held during the March 28, 1997 summit, trying to invigorate CIS institutions by scaling them back. The same meeting saw serious discussion of the need to systemize specialized institutions and to merge specialized committees. Yeltsin was reelected chairman of the Heads of State Council for the fourth time at this summit, after promising that Russia would increase its efforts to treat all CIS members as equals. In the course of the meeting, however, Presidents Kuchma (Ukraine), Shevardnadze (Georgia), Aliyev (Azerbaijan), Nazarbayev (Kazakhstan), and Lucinschi (Moldova) all argued that bilateral relations had proven to be more effective than multilateral ones and contended that the CIS had failed to justify itself as an instrument of cooperation.

The changes that Yeltsin engineered improved neither the effectiveness, nor the popularity of CIS institutions. At the next CIS Heads of State meeting, held in Chisinau in October 1997, none of the documents presented for approval was signed, and Russia was attacked by the other member states. The presidents of Georgia, Azerbaijan, Uzbekistan, and Ukraine all argued that the CIS policy of multitrack integration was hindering, not helping, the development of harmonious relations among the member states. President Karimov of Uzbekistan said that the CIS states had to solve their internal problems and strengthen their individual economies before it would be possible to move toward integration; most attendees held Russia at least partly responsible for those persistent problems. President Aliyev declared that Azerbaijan would support no further integration until the Karabakh conflict was resolved. President Shevardnadze went one step further, saying that Georgia would consider leaving the CIS if Russia did not stop impeding the peace process in Abkhazia.

Yeltsin's failing health dealt a further blow to the CIS. A Heads of State meeting first scheduled for January 1998 was postponed several times before it was finally held on April 29 in Moscow. In an effort to give greater credibility to the ailing Russian leader, it was agreed at that time that Yeltsin would remain chairman of the council until 2000. To a certain extent this demonstration of essentially personal support also was extended to the CIS as an organization. The Heads of Government Council had also delayed its meeting for several months, not for health reasons, but because of an inability to agree on the text of several key agreements that were being prepared for presentation. At the meeting of this council on March 6, members agreed to delegate authority both to the Council of CIS Foreign Ministers and to the Inter-State Economic Committee. This prompted Anatoly Adamishin, then Russia's minister for cooperation with CIS members, to remark, "All this indicates is that the CIS is proceeding to the next stage, a stage of

normal work, and that relationships among the CIS member countries are acquiring an increasingly business-like character."

The April 1998 summit appointed Russian businessman Boris Berezovsky the executive secretary of the CIS. Believing that he possessed the charm and skills necessary to save the organization and to make it more business-like, Berezovsky launched an ambitious program of travel and consultation with CIS leaders, trying to find ways to make CIS functions more clearly defined and mutually acceptable.

Plans were made to hold an interstate forum on reforming the CIS, and a number of working groups were appointed to review the functions of the various councils and to suggest new mechanisms for implementing the decisions of various CIS bodies. Berezovsky focused on two issues: the creation of a functioning free trade zone and a reorganization of the CIS apparatus. He proposed the creation of a Coordinating Consultative Committee that would unite the existing Executive Secretariat, the CIS Inter-State Economic Committee, and thus the whole CIS apparatus. Berezovsky also advocated a dramatic cutback of the CIS bureaucracy and a streamlining of the organization; all administrative structures except those that provide support for the Heads of State Council would be consolidated and the number of CIS employees would drop from 2,340 to 600 or 700.

Work along these lines moved forward while Berezovsky remained in this post, but the changes he proposed encountered broad resistance. In particular, the presidents of Turkmenistan and Uzbekistan opposed restructuring because they had no wish to strengthen the CIS administration. Many feared that Berezovsky wanted to use the executive secretaryship to build himself a position of power; President Lukashenko of Belarus in particular seems to have objected to Berezovsky personally rather than to the position as such. Not surprisingly, the CIS staff was strongly against the proposed personnel reductions and also objected to Berezovsky's market approach to economics. Others objected to Berezovsky's proposal that the representatives be seated hierarchically at summit meetings according to their countries' contributions to the organization.

Disagreements over Berezovsky's proposals, especially those for organizational changes, caused a CIS summit to be rescheduled several times in early 1999, until President Yeltsin made the disputes moot by firing Berezovsky in March 1999. While several CIS leaders maintained that the Russian president did not have the authority to do this, they seemed in fact to approve of the dismissal. Berezovsky's firing was confirmed at the April 2, 1999, summit in Moscow, where he was replaced by Yuri Yarov, a low-key former Russian deputy prime minister. Substantiating the charge that the CIS presidents objected to Berezovsky himself rather than to his proposals, the council adopted what essentially were Berezovsky's plans for reorganization of the CIS apparatus, although they only endorsed reducing its staff by half. They also accepted the amendments that Berezovsky had proposed to make the CIS protocol on the Free Trade Zone more effective.

## A NEW KIND OF UNION

A political union by definition requires contracting national governments to delegate power to some kind of supranational institution. The European Union's experience with integration demonstrates the reluctance with which even secure and well-established national governments will delegate power to a supranational body. Experience also suggests that successful political unions rarely include members who may pose direct threats to the independence of other member states. In successful unions members are reassured by the degree of leverage that they acquire from the supranational institutions, rather than fearful that such institutions are a disguised form of one member's hegemony. The development of the CIS has been severely hindered by the imbalance of power among its members. In the EU, France and Germany serve as two power centers, with Italy and England also playing major roles. This configuration has allowed even small member states to matter in the EU by forming coalitions around at least one of these four larger states.

The situation in the CIS is not a comparable one. There is no state or group of states in the post-Soviet space that can counterbalance Russia in a supranational decision-making body. The Soviet experience constantly reminds the new elites of the CIS that Russia could effectively usurp their independence in any supranational body in which it is the only major power center. Russia's understanding of that same Soviet experience, however, equally reminds it of the costs that Russia might incur by ceding its own sovereignty to a supranational body. Fear that the other members of such a body could take more from Russia than they would contribute has made Russia try to prevent the CIS from developing into an organization in which sovereignty is yielded equally.

In addition to a remarkable degree of mutual suspicion, the CIS states share a profound reluctance to part with any of the sovereignty they so recently have gained. The newly independent states are slowly developing new kinds of cooperative institutions and associations, but they remain nearly as reluctant to yield sovereignty to smaller bodies as they have been to yield it to the CIS. Russia has been moving slowly to develop its union with Belarus, despite Belarus's official enthusiasm for the merger; even in Belarus, though, the ruling elite seems to be developing a greater appreciation of its own sovereignty. The "deep integration" of Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Belarus, Tajikistan, and Russia has yet to develop into an effective union, while the economic union agreed to by Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Uzbekistan, and Tajikistan has not lowered the customs barriers that have risen between these states. Economic competition among the members and the region's acute shortage of capital greatly limit the ability of this union to function. The same is true of the GUUAM union, which Georgia, Ukraine, Uzbekistan, Azerbaijan, and Moldova would like to be used to limit Russia's ability to be a gatekeeper for transportation and trade.

These smaller unions were formed with greater enthusiasm and clearer need than was the CIS, yet they seem to suffer from the same inability to create workable institutional bases of integration. This supports theoretical arguments that new states have more difficulty

coming together in successful multilateral groupings than do older states. If the CIS states were to face a shared external challenge, this might provide sufficient incentive for integration, but for now most threats to the internal stability of the post-Soviet states lie either within the borders of each state or within the CIS. Even such external threats that do exist, such as the Afghan civil war, do not affect the entire CIS.

At the same time, though, the inability of these states to integrate politically does not mean that any of them can afford to abandon entirely the goal of integration within the CIS. They may embrace this goal to varying and ever diminishing degrees, but the post-Soviet states still occupy a shared economic and security space. The political institutions of the CIS, especially those that provide for regular meetings of the heads of state, prime ministers, and foreign ministers, make it easier to regulate life within this common space. These regular multilateral sessions also help each of these states to hold their own in bilateral encounters with Russia.

Changing economic circumstances may well alter the balance in future bilateral relationships, and the passage of time will continue to erode the common elite culture that the present leaders still share from Soviet times. The appearance of new elites in the member states will increasingly mean that leaders will not even share a common language, and if they do, it is just as likely to be English as Russian. In present circumstances, the CIS serves an obvious purpose in providing regular meetings of the member states' presidents and other elites, even if these meetings accomplish little of formal consequence. As the many legacies of the Soviet Union continue to disappear, however, the purposes of the CIS will continue to dwindle and eventually to disappear.