
**BILATERAL AND MULTILATERAL SECURITY
RELATIONS IN THE FORMER SOVIET UNION**

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This paper focuses on some of the military-security developments in the states of the Former Soviet Union (FSU), specifically the range of bilateral and multilateral relationships among these countries that have emerged over the last several years. In examining security developments in this region, it is important to begin with an understanding of the different security perspectives among the newly emerged states in the wake of the collapse of the Soviet Union. On the one hand, there were some states that strongly advocated the preservation of some type of a unified military force (and who, not surprisingly, were among the last to begin establishing their own national armies); foremost among these states were Kazakhstan and Russia. On the other hand, countries such as Ukraine and Uzbekistan seized the opportunity quite soon after they declared themselves independent states to start the process of creating national militaries. Indeed, at this point all of the fifteen countries that had previously made up the Soviet Union (that is, including the Baltic states) have now begun this process. One of the primary reasons for the decision to create national armies is that an army is viewed as a significant effort to confirm and consolidate one's independence as a nation state.

Still, while each of these countries is seeking to establish its own national military force, there are certain reasons for continuing cooperation among these states. In fact, certain factors occasionally even *dictate* the need to develop such cooperation. The most notable of these factors is the requirements for an officer corps. Within the Soviet system, ethnic Russians comprised an overwhelming majority of the overall officer corps; the second largest group were Ukrainians, while the other Soviet republics had only a very few officers, particularly at the highest ranks. Hence, today virtually all of the new states (except Ukraine) are extremely dependent on Russia for providing many of the officers to guide the creation of

their own militaries. Russia also views such an arrangement as beneficial: in part because Russia lacks the housing and military jobs to offer many of these officers, and in part because close cooperation with the other countries can provide opportunities for Russia to shape the way in which the new militaries are established, reinforce certain security and defense industrial dependencies, etc.

Another area in which the other states (again, with the exception of Ukraine) are heavily dependent on Russia is in the availability of training facilities and military schools, given that some two-thirds of such Soviet facilities were located in Russia. This does not mean, however, that these other states have turned only to Russia for training and schooling. For example, in the case of some of the Central Asian states, Turkey has readily offered such opportunities, while the Baltic states have turned particularly to some of their Western neighbors, such as Finland and Denmark.

Finally, a third factor contributing to security cooperation among the FSU countries is the issue of defense industrial interdependency among these states and the overall limited national capability for weapons manufacture. Yet again, Russia possessed most of the arms production capacity in the Soviet Union, and although virtually every one of the states had some defense industrial production, many did not (and do not) have the independent ability to manufacture a given piece of combat equipment or weapon — such as a tank or an aircraft — in its entirety.

In short, none of the other countries of the former Soviet Union is truly able to provide for its own security without some form of reliance on Russia. The only possible exception to this assertion would be Ukraine, and there is some room for doubt about whether even Ukraine can actually do so.

EXPLORING SECURITY ALTERNATIVES

What kind of alternatives, then, have the FSU states had in trying to pursue security issues and relationships? The first are obviously bilateral security arrangements; indeed, virtually all of these countries — with the notable exception of the three Baltic states — have opted to establish various levels of bilateral relations with Russia. It should be noted that Ukraine has recently sought to become more active in this arena, as a competitor

(or alternative) to Russia in some respects, having recently sent a military delegation to several Central Asian states for example, to discuss opportunities for expanded security cooperation. In addition to bilateral relations among the former Soviet states, each of course also has the opportunity to expand its contacts with countries beyond these borders, primarily in Europe, the Middle East, Asia, and the United States.

The second option for security relationships are multilateral ones, which can take several forms. The first of these forms is a multilateral relationship within the framework of the Commonwealth of Independent States (CIS), which is addressed in greater detail below. Another form of multilateral relations is the attempt by each country to establish contacts with a variety of multilateral institutions, including (but not limited to) NATO, the WEU, CSCE, EU, and ECO. However, all of the FSU states have generally found that the attitude of the Western institutions toward accepting them and trying to integrate them was much cooler than the former had either anticipated or desired.

The final alternative is to attempt to establish multilateral cooperative efforts on their own, efforts that would include several FSU countries but also other countries in the particular region. It is possible to cite at least two examples that fall under this alternative. Among some of the European FSU states, there has been discussion of creating a Baltic-to-Black Sea zone, which has been advocated above all by Ukraine and to a lesser extent by Lithuania, it would include, for instance: Ukraine, Belarus, Estonia, Latvia, Lithuania, Poland, the Czech Republic, Slovakia, Hungary and Romania. Among the problems this particular effort have encountered are: Russia has viewed the idea as an attempt to isolate it from the rest of Europe and the Central European states have proved reluctant to sign on, both because of the possible repercussions in their own relations with Russia and because of their desire to look more to the West than to the East. The other example of a multilateral effort initiated by an FSU state(s) is the one articulated by President Nursultan Nazarbaev of Kazakhstan, to create essentially an equivalent to the Conference on Security and Cooperation in Europe (CSCE) for Asia, or a «CSCA». Here, too, the level of interest has remained at a fairly low level and has to date been confined to some general meetings.

All these forms of bilateral and multilateral relationships have been explored to varying degrees by the states of the former Soviet Union, with

the greatest emphasis placed on the pursuit of bilateral initiatives. Before turning to a more detailed examination of such initiatives, however, I will briefly address the main multilateral security effort pursued to date within the Commonwealth of Independent States (CIS).

THE COLLECTIVE SECURITY TREATY

The most significant effort in the context of multilateral security initiatives within the CIS has been the Collective Security Treaty. Initialed in May 1992, in Tashkent, at one of the CIS meetings, it was originally signed, however, by only six member states: Russia, Kazakhstan, Uzbekistan, Tajikistan, Kyrgyzstan, and Armenia. It is thus readily evident that the agreement is largely one between Russia and the Central Asian states (with the exception of Turkmenistan).

Since that time, Belarus has also decided to join the Collective Security Treaty. This was not accomplished without some difficulties, nevertheless. On one side of the argument was then-Chairman of the Belarusian Parliament (the Supreme Soviet), Stanislav Shushkevich, who opposed joining the treaty on the grounds that it would violate Belarus' commitments to maintaining neutrality and to refusing to participate in military blocs (both of which were fundamental components of Belarus' statement of independence).

Shushkevich found himself opposed by the majority of parliamentarians, then-prime minister Kebich, as well as the foreign and defense ministers, all of whom were stronger proponents of a close relationship with Russia and argued that participation in the Collective Security Treaty was necessary because Belarus simply lacks the ability to provide for its own security and, perhaps even more importantly, because it would allow Belarus to gain economic benefits from Russia (such as more favorable prices on fuel and other commodities). In the end, Shushkevich was ousted from his position and Kebich, as his successor, signed the agreement (albeit with limitations placed on any possible participation of Belarusian military personnel in CIS peacekeeping efforts, for example).

In general, based on those who have signed the Collective Security Treaty, it is clear that the Central Asian states have been the ones who are most interested in pursuing multilateral cooperation and establishing

an effective collective security arrangement. Given the serious conflict in Tajikistan since 1992 and its potential implications for security throughout the region, this interest is certainly not surprising. The one exception, as noted, is Turkmenistan, which has opted to pursue strictly bilateral security relation with Russia. Still, the fact remains that the Collective Security Treaty is largely an agreement on paper, with little progress made in the form of developing a multilateral staff infrastructure. Certainly one of the impediments to such developments is Russia's reluctance to finance these efforts, knowing that as difficult as its economic situation is, the other former Soviet states are in an even less tenable position to finance such security projects.

BILATERAL SECURITY ARRANGEMENTS WITHIN THE FORMER SOVIET UNION

As is already evident from the preceding discussions, virtually all the countries of the former Soviet Union have reached bilateral military-security agreements with Russia. These agreements have covered, first and foremost, the continued service of Russian officers in the other new national, while still retaining their status as officers in the Russian military, and the provision of schooling and training at Russian military establishments for members of the other national militaries. In the case of the officer corps service, one of the main questions becomes: how long will both sides be interested in preserving this arrangement? It appears that for at least some of the countries, it could only last until the end of 1994, while for others agreements have already been reached to continue the arrangement until the turn of the century.

It is important to note that, as a whole, the bilateral arrangements that have been worked between Russia and the other former Soviet states do not offer mutual defense commitments. In other words, in the event one country is attacked by a third party, the other (most probably Russia) is *not* required to come to the defense of the country that was attacked; rather, it is committed only to conducting *consultations*. This provides further evidence (in addition to the absence of a collective security infrastructure) that Russia remains somewhat reluctant to shoulder too much of an open-ended burden in defense matters that it fears might not necessarily be in its direct interest.

The desire on the part of the other countries to have military-security cooperation with Russia is fairly self-evident, given some of their personnel and financial constraints noted above. Perhaps a more challenging question to answer is: what are, in fact, Russia's motivations in reaching these bilateral agreements? Part of the explanation lies in the fact that Russia cannot offer its military officers already living in Russia adequate housing and employment opportunities. These difficulties are only compounded by the need to complete troop withdrawals from Germany and the Baltic states. Thus, to the extent that officers can be usefully employed elsewhere in the FSU, and still retain the benefits of being a Russian officer, this arrangement reduces the demands (and even the potential for instability) on the Russian leadership significantly.

Another motivation for Russia's actions, which may represent a more cynical interpretation, is that the Russians are also interested in maintaining a certain level of military presence in many of the states of the «near abroad» (FSU). By having agreements to allow Russian officers to serve in these countries, the ability to maintain this presence is made easier. In fact, over the last several months, representatives of both the Russian military and political leadership have discussed the idea of creating as many as thirty military bases in the former Soviet Union. They recognize that such arrangements would not be welcome in the Baltic states, nor would the current leadership in Kiev allow such bases to be established in Ukraine (although the Crimean leadership's attitude to this would be quite different). Where the Russians have already succeeded is in Georgia: according to a recent bilateral agreement between these two countries, Russia will establish at least three military bases there. (It should be noted that this solution was certainly not Eduard Shevardnadze's first choice: he sought assistance from a variety of Western governments and international institutions, but in the wake of their unwillingness to commit resources and forces to preserve his country's integrity, he was forced to turn to Russia for help. One of the latter's conditions was the creation of these bases).

The existence of a network of military bases in the «near abroad» obviously gives Russia the potential, should a conflict arise in any of these areas, to keep the conflict further away from its own borders. A less benign interpretation is that, if Russia decides to pursue imperialist ambitions

— claiming some of the Soviet Union's former territory for its own — these bases will clearly facilitate such efforts.

AREAS OF UNREST IN THE FORMER SOVIET UNION AND THE PEACEKEEPING MISSION

For all its negative consequences, one of the accomplishments of the communist system was to keep the manifestation of nationalist sentiments under wraps. But, with the advent of President Gorbachev's policy of *glasnost*, it became possible to express these sentiments more freely. Since the first overt manifestations of nationalism in Alma-Ata in December 1986 (precipitated by Gorbachev's failure to observe the unwritten rules of symbolic power-sharing between ethnic Russian and the indigenous population), this area of the world has witnessed increasing numbers of conflicts and civil wars. Today, ethnic tensions are further fueled by socio-economic difficulties caused by the collapse of the command economy and the absence of a working market economy to replace it.

A brief examination of current conflicts in the FSU provide an opportunity to view the various types of military-security solutions that have been tried to date. In the case of the long-term dispute between Armenia and Azerbaijan over Nagorno-Karabakh, attempts to resolve the confrontation have largely been pursued under the auspices of the CSCE, although there have been some bilateral mediation attempts as well (for, example, by both Russia and Turkey).

The conflict in Tajikistan, which broke out in mid-1992, has been the only example of peacekeeping activities being pursued under the rubric of the CIS Collective Security Treaty. Here, Russia has pushed for the other Central Asian signatories — Kazakhstan, Uzbekistan, and Kyrgyzstan — to contribute to the peacekeeping effort. The reasons for this approach are largely symbolic. In fact, Russia is providing some 90 percent of the financing and roughly 20 000 troops dedicated to peacekeeping in Tajikistan, the other three countries (Kazakhstan, Uzbekistan, and Kyrgyzstan) are supplying less than 1500 men. Still, at a time when Russia's motivations for its involvement and activities in the FSU are being questioned, the value of such symbolism is not to be dismissed.

In the case of conflicts in Georgia (both in the regions of South Ossetia and Abkhazia) as well as in the Dniester region of Moldova, Russia has been quite active in pursuing bilateral peacekeeping solutions with the given countries. Question about the neutrality of Russian forces participating as peacekeeping in these areas have legitimately been raised in these instances, but in short Georgia and Moldova have found that Russia provides effectively the only solution; no other countries appear to be willing to become involved in peacekeeping there.

Finally, Russia has experienced its own instances of domestic conflict and has sent some of its troops into regions of the North Caucasus as peacekeepers. Indeed, it should be expected that Russia's North Caucasus area will be the site of many cases of instability for the foreseeable future, fueled both by ethnic tensions and socio-economic difficulties. Anticipation of such instability is clearly a primary reason for the Russian leadership's decision to base its most mobile forces (currently being created) in this region; these forces will be the ones called upon to serve in peacekeeping roles.

Peacekeeping is obviously the primary focus for resolving all of these conflicts, both within particular countries and across what are now international borders in the Former Soviet Union. In that respect, these new states are seeking the same solution as most of the rest of the international community: from the former Yugoslavia to Somalia to Rwanda, everyone expects peacekeepers to solve the problems. Still the FSU's (and, namely, Russia's) approach to peacekeeping differs in an important way from other peacekeeping efforts, for example under the United Nations' auspices, an approach which has raised Western concerns about these activities. Specifically, the main difference is that the peacekeeping forces established in each of the areas comprise the belligerent parties. Thus, for example in the case of the unrest in Abkhazia in Georgia, the peacekeeping troops have been Georgia, Abkhazian, and Russian.

One of the apparent reasons for Russia's involvement in peacekeeping operations is the desire to obtain international recognition that it is still an important player on the world stage (although this recognition has not been as favorable as Russia apparently had expected). Furthermore, during the course of the last year, the Russian leadership has appealed to the United Nations to finance these peacekeeping operations. In other words, Russia wants the UN to give it the mandate and support for peacekeeping

in the former Soviet Union; these activities, Russia suggests, can be carried out under the auspices of the Commonwealth of Independent States, as an international organization.

In addition to the factor of international recognition, other possible motivations for Russia's interest in peacekeeping can also be identified. Certainly at least some forces within Russia are interested in using the guise of peacekeeping to return to Moscow's control at least parts of what had been the Soviet Union. Second, it must be recognized that no one else in the international community has yet displayed a willingness to assume this responsibility in the FSU, which further reinforces Russian attitudes that this area represents its legitimate sphere of interest. Third, given the lack of adequate border protection between Russia and many of these states and the relative close proximity of these conflicts to Russian territory, there are clearly concerns about the possible spill-over effects from these conflicts into Russia if they are not contained. Finally, the fact that 25 million Russians live outside the borders of the Russian Federation provides the leadership with another motivation for playing an active role in peacekeeping: protecting its diaspora.

The challenge for the Western community of nations lies in finding a balance between, on the one hand, recognizing that Russia does have a legitimate right to be concerned about areas of instability on and near its borders and, on the other hand, not allowing it to have a completely free hand to do whatever it pleases without risking international reaction.

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