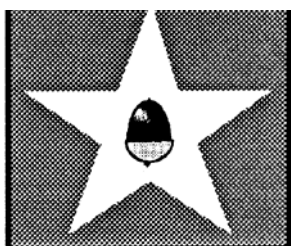


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**From an Era of Threat  
to One of Dangers**

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# INTRODUCTION

## FROM AN ERA OF THREAT TO ONE OF DANGERS

For four decades of Cold War, most of the West's energy in foreign and defence policy was directed to countering a perceived threat of aggression from the communist East, mounted either directly through massive invasion or indirectly through the support of wars of liberation in supposedly (if not always actually) strategically vital areas. The cost in monetary and resource terms was prodigious: so, too, was the cost in human life, particularly to the peoples indigenous to regions of conflict that stretched from Guatemala to Korea. It was thus natural that the end of the Cold War, the collapse of the Warsaw Pact and the subsequent implosion of the USSR were generally greeted with relief and delight. In Europe, the former period of confrontation and uneasy peace (ie, of a mere absence of fighting) would give way, it was generally anticipated, to an era of constructive cooperation and harmony. Peace dividends were declared and swords broken up or (where technically feasible) beaten into ploughshares.

While understandable, indeed largely justifiable, the celebrations may come to appear excessive. Certainly, the threat of an apparently monolithic, implacably hostile and militarily strong Warsaw Pact has vanished. It has, however, been replaced by dangers inherent in the weaknesses and divisions within many former-communist countries and the consequent potential for (and in some cases, actuality of) intra and even inter-state conflict, not to mention "soft" security threats. It would be short-sighted to down-play trouble in central, or more likely, eastern Europe on the grounds that it is developing, in Neville Chamberlain's infamous words, "in a far away country of which we know nothing". While the concept of the global village and such developments as 24-hour financial markets, satellite communications (including television) and the Internet have certainly been overplayed, there is no doubt that the freedom of action of the state is being eroded and interdependence is on the increase and will be more so as plans for the expansion of Euro-Atlantic institutions take effect. With the development of modern communications (in all senses of the word), the ripples from any disturbance spread further and faster than ever before. To switch analogies, western Europeans, even Americans can no more afford to ignore deterioration or chaos to the East than can people at one end of a boat affect to believe that a leak at the other end is no concern of theirs. The spreading financial and economic crises of the summer of 1998 illustrates the point perfectly. What leaks already exist, or are in danger of springing? What are the threats and dangers that emanate from the East to cosy, apparently stable western Europe?

Central and eastern European states, old and new or reborn, are in the early stages of a period of profound economic, social and political change. This period is, virtually by definition, characterised by greater or lesser degrees of instability. It is also likely to last for some considerable time, perhaps for decades in most of the former Soviet Union. In the West, it is hoped that the result, everywhere, will be a transition to, and consolidation of, democracy and market economies. Success is not inevitable, however. Indeed failure is possible in many countries, likely in some and all but inevitable in a few. The transitional phase will see several threats and dangers emanating from the eastern part of the continent to trouble the somewhat smug and self-satisfied West. These will be prolonged and worsening in those countries that do not make it through.

In conditions of economic hardship and political turbulence, where the forces of law enforcement are weak and tainted by corruption, incompetence and, in some cases, by their association with the old regime or reactionary forces there has been a steep rise in criminality. Much of this is directed by organised crime syndicates. The affluent West provides lucrative markets for their narcotics trade. They will sell armaments, even, when they can get hold of them, weapons of mass destruction or the materials and expertise to make them, to anyone with the money to buy: the Aum Shinrikyo sect, for instance, shopped in Russia for the makings of Sarin nerve agent with which it launched its botched attack on the Tokyo subway.

Since the end of the Cold War, there have been wars of secession and succession affecting former Yugoslavia, civil and/or secessionist wars in Albania, Moldova, Georgia, Azerbaijan, Tajikistan and Russia (ie, Chechnya) and (in effect) an interstate war between Armenia and Azerbaijan. None of these conflicts has yet been settled. There is potential for intra-state conflict throughout the former Soviet Union and in Romania, Slovakia and all of former-Yugoslavia save Slovenia, to name only the most at risk. All of these have the potential to grow in intensity, to involve neighbouring countries, and to spawn terrorism. Many of them could affect western Europe. As with the wars of former-Yugoslavia, mass migration could swell the already significant flow of economic migrants to flood proportions. With entire ethnic groups under threat, such as the Bosnian Muslims or Albanian Kosovars, Europe could even be faced with its own version of the Palestinian problem. Unsound, Chernobyl-type nuclear power stations could become critically unsafe as skilled personnel flee and the supply of spare parts is interrupted: they could even be targeted by terrorists or factions in a civil war (the Serbian foreign minister once threatened to attack the Krsko facility in Slovenia as possible retaliation for NATO air strikes). Growing western economic interests, eg in Transcaucasian and Central Asian energy and raw material resources, could be threatened. The principles of international order and law, so dearly prized in the West, could come under increased attack, especially if a so-called "rogue-state" should emerge from chaos. And as with Bosnia and Kosovo, media pressure will intensify the latent moral pressure on western governments to intervene in the event of their sufferings being replicated in other lands.

Javier Solana, NATO's Secretary General, has recognised that the alliance cannot try to continue as an island of stability and order, protected by collective defence against the fall out from the variegated problems that are afflicting post-communist Europe. In a speech to a NATO symposium in September 1998, he suggested that the "Euro-Atlantic community" has a responsibility for stabilising an area right up to the Russian and Iranian borders, citing the Caucasus and the Balkans as troubled regions from which NATO "cannot remain aloof". He went on to add: "Our security policies must become more proactive. From preventative military deployments to economic assistance, there are many tools we have at our disposal. We are not condemned to be the victims of events that lie beyond our control - we can shape the future." Britain's Strategic Defence Review chimes in well with the Secretary General's thinking. On page 5, it maintains that: "Instability inside Europe, as in Bosnia and now Kosovo, threatens our security. Instability elsewhere, eg in Africa, may not appear to threaten us directly. But it can do so indirectly, and we cannot stand aside when it leads to massive human suffering." On page 7, it goes on: "Our security is indivisible from that of our European partners and allies. We therefore have a fundamental interest in the security and stability of the continent as a whole, and in the effectiveness of NATO as a collective political and military instrument to underpin these interests ..... Our national security and prosperity depend on promoting international stability, freedom and

economic development. As a permanent member of the UN Security Council and as a country both willing and able to play a leading role internationally, we have a responsibility to act as a force for good in the world."

Of course, to live up to these fine aspirations, it is necessary to understand what the future may have in store.

The collapse of communism was of inestimable benefit to millions of people, though it also led to the tragedy of scores of thousands of deaths and the dispossession and homelessness of hundreds of thousands. It has also produced new challenges in its wake. These must be identified and examined. Where will democracy be consolidated and where will the failure, or unacceptably slow progress, of economic, social and political reform result in the threatening radicalisation of politics? What ethnic, national and/or religious conflicts might surface further to destabilise parts of the European continent? This chapter will put forward some general thoughts on these central themes and the rest of the monograph will examine in more detail the situation in and prospects for the countries of the former non-Soviet Warsaw Pact and Soviet Union, together with the implications for the West.

## **PROSPECTS FOR DEMOCRACY**

### **DEMOCRACY AND POST-COMMUNIST EUROPE**

Authoritarian government is not necessarily a barrier to economic progress and rising living standards. A few Asian regimes have proved this (though their exaggerated boasts about "Asian values" look unconvincing in the light of the economic crisis that began to afflict them in 1997). It may also impart peace and order to areas that would otherwise be riven by lawlessness and conflict: many a former Yugoslav or Soviet citizen can be excused for looking back nostalgically to the days of Tito and Brezhnev. It is, however, the peace and order of the graveyard - figuratively of progressive thought and literally of those, like the Tiananmen Square demonstrators, who chafed against the limitations imposed on their human rights. In most of post-Communist Europe today, authoritarianism is now also synonymous with corruption, stagnation, deceit and failure as well as repression. To most people in the region, the prosperity and stability of the West have meant that democracy and the market economy have become identified with progress, success and a higher quality of life as well as personal freedom. Thus, throughout the area, even in parts of the former Soviet Union (less the Baltic States) where the correlation is weakest, politicians, even where they are inclined towards authoritarian solutions, must currently at least profess adherence to democratic ideals.

In the West, much store is placed on the growth of democracy and in the success of economic reforms leading to the market economy that is seen as the pre-requisite and essential underpinning for democracy. It is argued that democracies, especially where functionally decentralised, are inherently less aggressive than authoritarian states with strong, centralised governments. They are particularly disinclined to fight each other. They are also, supposedly, inclined, in internal affairs, towards justice, tolerance and fairness. Thus peace and progress are seen by the West to be identified with the transplanting of these concepts to post-communist Europe. This hypothesis begs at least three questions, however.

- \* Modern history has known few democracies and even fewer that were great powers, so the hypothesis about war has little historical basis. Even so, Britain and France came very close to war over Fashoda in 1898: only French internal and naval weakness persuaded Paris to give way in face of Britain's uncompromising threats. And in 1914, popularly elected parliaments throughout Europe enthusiastically voted for war. Moving on, is it really likely that the restoration of democracy in Pakistan will end a half century of conflict, including three wars, with India over Kashmir? Should the discovery of valuable resources in the Aegean Sea sharpen the issue of ownership, is it really inconceivable that Turkish and Greek democracies could fight over it?
- \* The ease with which democratic ideas and institutions can be transplanted is questionable. The history of western decolonisation suggests that democracy has to be an organic growth: only in India, Malaysia and the Philippines did it survive the departure of the erstwhile colonial masters. For that matter, of all the democracies created in central and eastern Europe after the First World War, only that in Czechoslovakia survived until 1938.
- \* Democracy can be an instrument of repression, at least in the eyes of minorities. Many Basques or Ulster Catholics would endorse that proposition today as would, arguably with more justice, Hungarians in Slovakia or Romania or Gypsies almost everywhere.

What may be true of well-established democracies may not necessarily be true of new ones. Certainly, newly created ones with no, or little, past experience are fragile. Only after the passage of many years and severe trials will it be possible to say with confidence that democracy is consolidated in most countries of post-communist Europe.

## **PRE-REQUISITES FOR DEMOCRACY**

Democracy can come in many guises. A state may be unitary (centralised), a federation or a confederation (with lesser or greater degrees of autonomy being enjoyed by its component regions). Its form of government may be placed in one of two broad categories. In a parliamentary system, parliament is the locus of power and government ministers are drawn from its ranks. In a presidential system, a directly elected president chooses and dismisses members of the government from outside the legislature and is not immediately responsible to that body, though to a greater or lesser extent he is dependent on it for budgets and legal authority for his actions.

Whatever the form of organisation, for a state to be considered a functioning, as opposed to a titular, democracy, certain conditions must obtain.

- \* There must be clearly defined, workable and generally accepted and respected constitutional arrangements for the non-violent creation, control and replacement of governments. This requires the regular holding of free and fair elections with the right of all citizens to participate in the political process without discrimination. It also implies the existence of: legal guarantees of basic civil rights; a strong,

independent judiciary; an efficient and honest civil service; freedom of expression and association; access to a free media providing alternative sources of information and opinion.

- \* Excessive concentration of power and authority at the Centre is usually inimical to democracy. People must be able to feel that they have real influence over affairs in their own area. Thus strong local democracy and a degree of freedom in regional/local government decision making is important. Also essential is the presence of the myriad of official and unofficial interest groups, from trades unions to women's groups, which help to bind people together and thus create a civil society. Horizontal links between citizens must exist alongside vertical links with the government to keep a check on the growth of state power and ensure the responsiveness of government to the people's will. In other words, pluralism in its widest sense (and not just a proliferation of political parties) is essential to democratic development.
- \* The overwhelming majority of voters must share core values and consequently agree on the general direction in which society should be heading: narrowly class, interest, ethnically or religiously, based regimes will inevitably lack legitimacy in the eyes of a significant portion of the population. To put this point another way, democracy relies on tolerance to function properly. There must be no insistence that there is only one valid system of values and beliefs, with all contradictory views being dismissed as pernicious, even unconscionable. The right of the majority to rule is accepted, but that majority must recognise that minorities, too, have rights and aspirations that cannot be ignored. Democratic government requires the consent of all the people and must therefore recognise and cater for the psychological needs of minorities. It must also satisfy their material needs. The broad mass of the citizenry must feel that its economic well-being is being brought up to or maintained at an acceptable standard and that its government will work to improve it.

From the foregoing, it may be deduced that there is no single state of democracy. Rather it is a continuum. How far and how fast any country progresses along it (assuming it does so at all) will depend on: historical and cultural legacies; the development of the economy and political culture, in turn dependent on the evolution of a middle class; its social, religious and ethnic divisions; external influences and pressures; and critically, the choices made by political and economic élites during the transition period.

## **UNEVEN PROGRESS IN THE NEW DEMOCRACIES**

### **The Former Warsaw Pact and the Baltic States**

The regime changes of 1989-91 brought freedom to central European countries.<sup>1</sup> This was not, however, the triumph of democracy over totalitarianism. As Adam Michnik, a Polish philosopher, pointed out, democracy is the institutionalisation of freedom and that had yet to be created. The danger of a drift back to authoritarianism still existed. How far have these states moved along the democratic continuum? To what extent is democracy achieved and consolidated? All claim that the process of transformation is complete. This is not surprising as all are keen to join Euro-Atlantic institutions, particularly the EU and NATO. This "return to Europe", they believe, will provide prosperity and security and thus ensure a bright future. Membership of these Western clubs requires that a state be both democratic and a liberal, market economy. To date, progress towards these ends has been far from uniform as anyone familiar with the history and traditions of these countries would have expected.

Progress has been most rapid in the creation of democratic institutions, the easiest part of transition as it merely requires legislation. In all the states under consideration, revulsion against the lack of freedom and economic failure which characterised the communist regime led legacy parliaments or constituent assemblies to create new constitutions. These constitutions were not, however, created in a political vacuum by politically neutral idealists possessed of detached wisdom and knowledge and pursuing only the long term good of all citizens. They were the creations of divided factions of politically inexperienced former dissidents and of elements of the old regime which, for reasons of expediency, had turned nationalist. Moreover, the process of creating new institutions had to proceed simultaneously with the tackling of the pressing social and economic issues that had helped to destroy communism, all the while with former élites working hard to preserve as much as possible of their economic and political power. In those circumstances, it is not surprising that resulting constitutional and political arrangements are often imperfect, with many containing within them the seeds of future disharmony and/or authoritarianism.

The largely peaceful revolutions that overthrew communism destroyed two states in the area under consideration (ie apart from Yugoslavia). East Germany was subsumed into the Federal German Republic and Czechoslovakia broke up into its constituent republics. All the communist successor states have opted for the unitary model with strong, centralised control in preference to a federal or confederal model. This choice makes sense for countries with now overwhelmingly homogenous populations such as Poland, the Czech Republic and Hungary where awareness and exploration of a common past and culture leads naturally to an identity between nation and state and thus between the political and administrative machines and the community at large. These historic nations have also enjoyed an independent existence in the past and some experience of democracy. Most of the countries in the region, however, contain significant ethnic and/or religious and cultural minorities. Despite this, the state is seen to be identified with and be the property of the dominant national group with minorities being relegated to de facto or even de jure second class citizenship: examples of the former include Roma everywhere, Hungarians in Slovakia and Romania and Turks in Bulgaria, while in the latter category fall most of the Slav (predominantly Russian) minorities in

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<sup>1</sup> For the purposes of this chapter, Central Europe will be the term used to embrace the former non-Soviet Warsaw Pact countries and the Baltic states. Geographers and historians may object to the inclusion of the latter: Tallinn, Riga and Vilnius would welcome it: they too are part of the rush to "rejoin Europe".

Estonia and Latvia (respectively 38.5 and 44.7% of the population). More and more minorities are reacting to discrimination by demanding increased rights and protection. However understandable it is that newly freed and still weak countries should adopt an ethnic and centralist approach to state building, particularly given the collapse of multinational federations in the USSR, Yugoslavia and Czechoslovakia, it is certainly the case that the exclusion of a sizeable proportion of the population from the process is a source of weakness and potentially of trouble. All the emerging democracies of Central Europe have made parliament dominant over the executive branch of government - a reaction to the situation which prevailed under communism. While most provide for the direct election of the president, his powers and room for manoeuvre are limited, though less so in Bulgaria, Romania and Lithuania than in the others. Plainly, this emphasis on elected bodies rather than on individuals, combined with the general establishment of constitutional courts, will complicate the task of any would-be authoritarian leader in attempting to by-pass or even suppress democracy after his election. An important step has been taken in removing the selection of countries' leadership from small groups of people and transferring it to a democratic process governed by clear rules. Moreover, in all states of the region, the process has been tested. In each there has been at least two changes of government since the collapse of communism and the defeated political grouping has yielded power without attempting to defy election results. Nor has violence much marred the political process, save in Romania: while widespread popular demonstrations prompted the surrender of power, two years before elections were required, by the (former communist) Bulgarian Socialist Party in early 1997, these "January events" were relatively peaceful. However, while obviously encouraging, these trends do not mean that democracy has been consolidated everywhere in Central Europe. Indeed Vladimir Meciar has demonstrated in Slovakia that cronyism combined with populism and a judicious amount of political violence can create something akin to an elective quasi-authoritarian regime.

One of the most pernicious legacies of totalitarian rule was the curtailing of the development of civil society. To prevent the growth of potentially rival sources of loyalty and ensure the total subservience of the citizen, the totalitarian state tried to atomise society, isolating individuals from any connection with each other save through the apparatus of the state and the ruling party. All horizontal links, eg, churches, youth or even hobby groups, were either persecuted or bent to the purposes of the regime and were replaced by purely vertical links such as communist trade unions that were merely mouthpieces for the state. Thus, the totalitarian system was like a cloth with only warp and no weft, the integrating role of the latter being supplied by official institutions and fear. It will be many years before civil societies will be fully re-established in the most developed states in the region, Poland, the Czech Republic and Hungary. It will take longer still to establish them in Romania, Bulgaria and perhaps Slovakia where they barely existed before communism. Particularly important is the development of a numerous, strong middle class which is not dependent on the regime for its existence. Throughout Central Europe, the process of transition has produced small strata of the very rich. Some are genuine entrepreneurs, most are criminals who are succeeding in converting their gains into legal forms of wealth and/or politicians or their friends and former members of the *apparat* and the *nomenklatura* who have appropriated for themselves the bulk of former state property. Are these, plus some managers and professionals, officials (usually corrupt), mafiosi and small businessmen (café owners and the like) the basis of a new middle class that will provide the basis of a flourishing, law governed market economy and democratic society? Or might not the very wealthy become a ruling

oligarchy that will reduce democracy to a sham and use political power to consolidate its economic position and perpetuate a modified version of the, for them, comfortable old ways of economic management? In those countries lacking any tradition of democracy, this process could well be helped by the fragmented, factional, personality rather than policy dominated nature of political parties. This appears to be the picture emerging in Slovakia (though the recent elections give some grounds for optimism) and it could be seen elsewhere.

The move from central planning towards a market economy is proving painful for the vast majority of Central Europeans. In Poland, GDP only recovered its 1990 level (admittedly as measured by dubious communist statistics) in 1996, while the Czech Republic, Slovakia, Hungary and Romania were still approaching the 1990 figure: Bulgaria and the Baltic States still have a long way to go, with the former, and Romania, reverting to around 7% negative growth in 1997. Only the Czechs and Slovaks have succeeded in reducing inflation to single figures, with the Poles at 15% and all the others between 21% and 36%: Romania, Bulgaria and the Baltic States all suffered two to three years of very high inflation before bringing it under control. The Czech Republic and the Baltic States have avoided high unemployment (a sign of incomplete economic restructuring) but all the others have endured rates of 10-16% for the past six or seven years (two for Romania), though official statistics often underplay the problem. The pain has produced gain in Poland, the Czech Republic, Hungary and, to an extent, Slovakia in that their transition to the market is nearing completion: in the latter, however, prime minister Meciar has ruined the financial system and used it to distort a fundamentally shaky economy in order to enrich his friends and political allies. The Baltic States are well on their way, but Romania, and particularly Bulgaria, are lagging considerably. However, progress in privatisation and price and trade liberalisation is relatively easily accomplished (though the mere fact of privatisation does not ensure competent management in the long term interests of firms). Producing the clear, well-ordered legal, taxation and financial framework essential to the working of an ordered capitalist economy is another matter. All countries in the region have some way to go in these areas and Bulgaria and Romania have hardly started.

All over Central Europe, those who enjoyed privilege and prosperity under the communist regime have, by and large, succeeded in preserving, and indeed enhancing their advantages. Ordinary people have suffered much and often continue to do so. While a quarter to a third of the population of each country (less in the Baltics) looks back nostalgically to the old regime, the majority suffer willingly, feeling that the gain of freedom from political oppression has offset the pain of economic transition. Their preparedness to continue doing so will depend on there being real prospects of improvement in their living standards, on the development (or in some cases, the mere restitution) of social protection and perhaps on the narrowing of inequality. The prospects for successful transition states, Poland, the Czech Republic, Hungary, probably the Baltics, possibly Slovakia, are good, though there will be a difficult balancing act between completing the transformation from robber-baron capitalism to reasonably regulated, working market economies and the desire of the majority for more socially orientated policies: there is conflict between the interests of economic élites and politicians who desire re-election (few governments have yet achieved this feat) and the requirement to satisfy criteria for admission to the EU adds further complications. In Romania and Bulgaria, success is less likely. There, seven years of neglected or botched reform and quasi-authoritarian limitation of democratisation (the latter a trait shared by Slovakia) have created resentment and disillusion which complicate the task of reform. Moreover, there are strong political and economic forces

opposed to radical restructuring. By the late summer of 1998, the reforming governments swept to power in late 1996 and early 1997 respectively were in deep trouble and running out of steam. Further stagnation or painfully slow change seem likely. A return to authoritarianism is possible, helped by the weakness of and divisions between progressive political parties and the traditional low political expectations and submissive mentalities of the people. Would-be authoritarian leaders could well play the nationalist card to win support, a traditional recourse in both countries, which would bode ill for the future of Hungarian, Roma and Turkish minorities and for relations with neighbouring states.

Continuing progress towards democracy and market economies, even in the more successful transition states, is dependent on economic growth and a perception that life will improve for most citizens. A repetition of the Great Depression of the thirties could stimulate an authoritarian reaction everywhere in the region. On that previous occasion, democracy survived only in Czechoslovakia. Would today's fledgling democracies fare better, given that the reform process has already inflicted a comparable degree of hurt everywhere? Such an economic disaster was unthinkable two years ago, but recent developments in Asia, especially in Japan, and now in Russia, coupled with the over-valuation of the American stock market, suggest that the world has not been immunised against such a disaster.

#### **The Former Soviet Union (less Russia and the Baltic States)**

However long, slow, difficult and painful the road to democratic and economic transformation may be for Central Europeans, it is far, far more arduous, problematic and uncertain of success for the countries of the former Soviet Union (less the Baltic States). This is partly due to their history. None has experienced anything other than a fleeting and precarious independent, national existence for over a century, often nearer two, if ever. None has any experience of democracy or living memory of a market economy, for all were subject to tsarist autocratic and then Soviet totalitarian rule. (As a partial exception, Bessarabia, now the bulk of Moldova, and Bukovina spent the inter-war years under the Romanian flag and western Ukraine was part of Poland.) Moreover, their experience of communism was in its most virulent, Soviet variety and it lasted for seventy years. Thus all face not only the problems of transition in exacerbated form but also those of nation and state building. The latter task is greatly complicated by the fact that, in most cases, the borders of the new states were arbitrarily drawn by the Soviet government, often with the divide and rule principle in mind, and many placed significant ethnic groups in "foreign" republics or other regional entities.

Having an unwanted independence thrust on them overnight the five Central Asian republics, essentially Soviet colonies with very limited national consciousness, were totally unprepared to go their own way. All have essentially continued the Soviet model of government. Turkmenistan and Uzbekistan are dictatorships with all the apparatus of the Soviet police state. Kazakhstan and Kyrgyzstan are authoritarian, though both maintain a pretence of democratic checks on government. Tadjikistan, a partial exception, has an uneasy coalition arising from a stalemate in the country's five year long civil war. None of the prerequisites for democratic development are in place in any of them. Government is chaotic, corrupt and nepotistic. Where political opposition exists it is suppressed or barely tolerated so long as it is ineffective. There is no free media. There is no nascent middle class. Rather society is divided along clan, regional and ethnic lines with Islam also being a major political force in Tadjikistan. Clan-based mafias dominate economic activity and their wealth and power grows with the spread of narcotics production. The economies of the region were harder hit than most by the break up of the

USSR. The resultant economic dislocation combined with massive inflation and mismanagement produced a prolonged slump. Macroeconomic stability was in sight by 1997 (save in Tajikistan) but little or nothing has been done to start a transition to the market, apart from allowing the privatization of small businesses, and financial-sector reform is yet to be attempted: only Kazakhstan has demonstrated a modicum of reforming zeal. Three of the Central Asian states have the potential to become rich. Kazakhstan and Turkmenistan, and to a lesser extent Uzbekistan, are rich in oil, gas and other raw materials. If the right political, legal and economic conditions could be created for both extraction and export from this remote and landlocked region - and these are big "ifs" - some people believe that the result will be the growth of a propertied middle class that will demand real freedom and democracy. A more likely outcome would be rule by a rich kleptocracy, as in Nigeria, with probably the best result that could be hoped being an Asian style development of an autocracy that uses growing prosperity to stifle complaints about lack of democracy. Pessimists will point up the latent and not-so-latent problems of the region to predict a future which will include conflict over resources, borders and class, ethnic and religious issues as well as possession of political power and modes of government.

Prospects for the development of democracy and free market economics look little better on the south western side of the Caspian Sea. President Aliiev has established authoritarian rule in Azerbaijan and has filled the government, officialdom and jobs carrying economic power with his relations, cronies and supporters. Armenia and Georgia have strong executive presidents whose power stems from somewhat dubious direct elections (and has twice been challenged in the latter case by assassination attempts). While there is no foreseeable prospect of any political liberalisation in Azerbaijan, there are real and successful attempts at democratic institution building in the other two. Current conflicts will hamper progress, though, perhaps for a long time. Armenia's support for Nagorno-Karabakh, the Armenian enclave in Azerbaijan, has resulted in a bitter confrontation with Azerbaijan (and Turkey) and will be difficult to settle. Georgia has been riven by civil war and armed struggles with Abkhaz and Ossetian separatists, conflicts which are currently in stalemate and show no signs of resolution (not least because of Russian interference). Prospects for economic and social development vary. All suffered catastrophic inflation in the early nineties but have since achieved macro-economic stabilization. All suffer from the distortions and inequities which stem from all-pervasive and massive corruption and mafia activity. All are likely to be held back by the diversion of resources to the preparations for and conduct of their various armed conflicts. All are subject to interference from their huge but disorganised and somewhat directionless northern neighbour, Russia. Azerbaijan is beginning to profit from its oil wealth. Most of the profits, however, will go to the ruling elite rather than to the modernization of the country's largely state-run, Soviet-style economy as a whole and thus to the improvement of the ordinary people's lot: Nigeria is the likely and depressing paradigm for Azerbaijan's future development even if its oil reserves actually live up to Azeri hype. Both Armenia and Georgia have largely destroyed the shackles of the Soviet command economy and liberalized. Both are still in a parlous plight but the latter will at least benefit from being a transit route for early oil from the Caspian region. It will be a long time, however, before either economy will be able to create and sustain the middle class which is so essential to the sustainment of democracy.

Like the Central Asian states, Belarus displayed hardly even tepid enthusiasm for independence in 1991. It continued to be run by old-style communists who, by and large, made little effort to reform the country's political system or even, for that

matter, to establish a separate national identity. It is thus not surprising that a communist populist took the presidency in early 1994. Since then, President Lukashenka has established an elective dictatorship. Using a controlled media, unreformed KGB and manipulated referenda, he has rewritten the constitution and stifled all opposition, political and legal. He has used his power neither to improve the country's economy nor to further the cause of true independence. On the contrary, he has wrecked an already tottering economy by encouraging ruinous inflation and the restoration of the failed Soviet system of central planning and has single-mindedly pursued reintegration with Russia. The latter policy probably owes much to his desire to become a major political player in Russia and has achieved success of sorts with a Russian agreement in principle to union - an agreement that shows little sign of being put into practice as Russia, with horrendous economic problems of its own, has little desire to shoulder Belarus's as well. Besides, with Belarus being dependent on Russia in a whole variety of ways, not least for 90% of its energy requirements and 70% of its market, it is safely in Russia's sphere of influence and can be pulled in closer, if need be, at any time. There is no realistic prospect of Belarus joining the ranks of democratically and economically reformed states in the foreseeable future, nor of it seeking meaningful independence.

By way of contrast, both Moldova and Ukraine eagerly grasped at freedom from the USSR in 1991. In both, however, the business of establishing full sovereignty and independence was, and to some extent still is, problematical. In the former, the Romanian speaking majority of Moldovans was thankful to leave the Soviet Union and in 1994 voted decisively against joining Romania. The predominantly Slav population to the east of the Dnestr, however, declared independence in turn and has, with Russian support, created the generally unrecognised, wholly corrupted "state" of Transdnestria. Ukraine, despite much scepticism in both East and West, has succeeded in establishing its sovereignty and a clear international identity. Nevertheless, in recent years social consensus has declined, economic dependency upon Russia remains very high and economic reform has ground to a halt.

The process of state-building has been carried through in Moldova and Ukraine. Both have strong executive presidencies which are nevertheless quite effectively balanced by the need to carry their parliaments with them. Largely free and fair elections have been held and governments peacefully changed. This does not mean that democracy has triumphed. The rule of law is still weak, especially in Ukraine, corruption is all-pervasive and it is easy for interested parties to manipulate or bypass the democratic system (aided by growing apathy and distrust of political parties and government). The economic basis for flourishing democracy is entirely absent. They have managed macroeconomic stabilisation after undergoing bouts of hyperinflation, but real GDP is still well below the 1990 level, even taking black market activity into account. Economic reform has made little progress and is not likely to accelerate given the former communist strength in the legislature and the power of regional and sectoral clans. People are generally disillusioned by huge disparities in wealth, with the successful few seen to be so through crime and/or corruption, by the failing social security system (a product of difficulty in collecting taxes) and, in Ukraine anyway, by the unlikelihood of improvement. The late summer financial and economic crisis in Russia will assuredly affect both Moldova and Ukraine. Over half of the former's trade is with Russia and about one third of the latter's, and both depend on Russia for most of their energy requirements. In December 1997, a poll in Ukraine revealed that 79% of the population thought they were worse off than in Soviet times, 65% thought they would be the same or worse off a year hence, over half had no trust in either government or the parliament and

32% favoured union with Russia. In Ukraine at least, failure is equated with the move to capitalism and democratisation. This bodes ill not only for the future of reform but for its *de facto* independence. More than once Russia has tried to use its energy muscle to constrain the country's freedom of action and is determined to acquire (in exchange for forgiveness of debts) large chunks of strategic sectors of the economy. It is at least possible that, instead of regarding Russia's economic and political turmoil as highlighting the need for faster and more radical reform, people will instead reason that it proves the need to stop the reform process and return to the old ways. If the same sentiment prevails in Russia, anti-reformers could come to power in both countries and seek salvation through integration of the two economies and a restoration of the command economy.

### **Russia**

Since the demise of the USSR, Russia has had two multi-party parliamentary elections, two national referenda, one election for the presidency and others for assemblies and presidents/governors in most of the federation's regions. These contests were free, if not entirely fair. Largely unconstrained campaign financing and media bias favoured the "party of power", especially in the crucial presidential election, as Boris Yel'tsin and his new, super-rich backers used their wealth and control of the media to limit the success of communist and nationalist opposition. There have also been electoral irregularities towards the same ends. Despite these caveats, however, most analysts agree that Russia has made significant, indeed, given the country's history and traditions, remarkable progress towards the creation of a democratic process. This does not mean that democracy has finally triumphed, though: far from it.

The constitution of 1993 was created by President Yel'tsin in the aftermath of his bloody suppression of Soviet-legacy parliamentary opposition (in effect, a presidential coup executed in the name of democracy). It was barely endorsed by a referendum generally believed to have been flawed. This constitution gives the directly elected president as much power as was enjoyed in the past by Soviet leaders. He is Commander-in-Chief of the armed forces and possesses his own, personal, presidential guard. He can appoint and dismiss the prime and other key ministers. He has his own personal presidential administration with more power and influence than the official government. He cannot be controlled by a parliament that he can dissolve at will, whose legislation he can veto and which can be bypassed through rule by presidential decree. (In theory, he can be impeached, but the procedure is lengthy and difficult, requiring a two-thirds majority of both houses of parliament and also of Russia's 89 regional governments. Yel'tsin's survival in post despite ill-health that makes him manifestly unfit to govern is a testimony to the invulnerability of the presidency.) Neither is the weak judiciary (appointed by him) a check on his power. Nor is he effectively checked by an assertive and well informed public: the myriad institutions of civil society exist only in embryo form and political parties (with the important exception of the Communist Party) are weak, ill-organised, unstable, mostly unprincipled and very much the personal factions of their leaders with no life of their own. The fate of democracy, in other words, really lies in the president's hands, in his will to see it developed and consolidated rather than stifled. So far, it has not been put to the crucial test - a presidential election in which the incumbent is defeated. Perhaps significantly, it was widely believed that, had the poll gone against him in 1996, President Yel'tsin and his multi-billionaire backers would have attempted to use force to overturn the electorate's decision.

The economic and social development of Russia has done nothing to help the consolidation of democracy: quite the reverse. The system of central planning has been destroyed but a working market economy has not taken its place. Most of the trappings are there, to be sure, but in such a deformed and corrupted state as to be both economically and socially ruinous. Over 70% of firms have been privatised, with all the key and lucrative businesses falling into the hands of a small, corrupt, usually criminal financial-political oligarchy. These men have not used their immense financial and political power to further Russia's economic transformation and revival. Rather industry and agriculture have been allowed to stagnate while they devote their energies to theft and speculation to amass yet more personal wealth, wealth that is not used to invest in Russia's future but is salted away abroad: since the fall of communism, there has been a capital outflow of at least 250-300 billion US dollars while those same oligarchs and officials pleaded for foreign direct investment and IMF loans to boost the Russian economy. The conditions which have allowed this kleptocracy to flourish are, of course, inimical to investors and to growth. Commercial law is a mess and the legal system offers no protection against those with influence (or against the enforcers hired by them). Burgeoning mafias demand protection money from vulnerable businesses and corrupt officials demand huge bribes. The taxation system is arbitrary and capricious, penalising those who lack political clout while hardly touching those who possess it. No wonder that Russia, for all its potential, has attracted less FDI than Hungary, Poland or the Czech Republic.

Inflation in Russia averaged 435% per annum in the period 1992-95. When eventually adopted, macro-stabilisation measures did not result in an upsurge of economic activity. The artificial, suspect nature of that stability and the deformed structure of the economy and the legal system prevented that. Even before the financial and economic crisis of summer 1998, when the chickens of robber-baron capitalism came home to roost, Russia's economy was stagnating at about half of its 1989 level. Moreover, a very tight monetary policy combined with the government's inability or unwillingness to collect taxes from recalcitrant regions and cronies in the business world led to wage and pension arrears that stretched for months on end and a growing mountain of government and inter-enterprise debt. As a result, about three quarters of goods and services were being paid for in kind or promissory notes and debt servicing was accounting for almost one half of government expenditure. These are but a few examples of the plight into which Russia has been plunged by its leaders. Those that pay the price of economic mismanagement and neglect, theft of state assets and endemic crime and corruption are not, of course, the rich and powerful but ordinary people. It is not surprising, therefore, that, even before the 1998 crisis, over two-thirds of the population expressed dissatisfaction with Russia's market economy and about three quarters with its democracy. There is a general, and not unfounded, belief that the country is run by the criminal, the corrupt or the self-seeking concerned only with their own power and prosperity; that robber-baron capitalism will not and cannot tackle pressing socio-economic issues; that Russia was wrong to embrace blindly a western capitalist-democratic ideology which disregards traditional social values. This pervasive perception, when coupled with the immense power vested in the presidency, bodes ill for Russia's development along liberal economic and political lines. If, as was suggested earlier, democracy is a continuum, Russia has stalled at its earliest stage. The analogy with Germany in the 1920s is apposite (and often made by Russians themselves). Weimar Russia may be ripe for plucking by a populist authoritarian promising law and order, social justice and a restoration of the country's power and prestige. Perhaps all that is lacking are a really acute crisis and, to take advantage of it, the necessary charismatic leader with an

appealing political programme and an effective organisation behind him to rouse a despairing, cynical, apathetic populace.

Muddling along and coup or revolution are not the only scenarios for Russia's future. Disintegration is also possible. The country is huge, covering eleven time zones and containing almost 150 million inhabitants (80% of them Russian but with over 100 nationalities in all). It is also a federation with 89 constituent units, a confusing mixture of only nominally ethnic republics, *krais*, *oblasts* and autonomous *oblasts* and *okrugs*. Since the end of rigid Soviet centralism, many regions have been striving for a measure of real autonomy, with three having threatened secession and one, Chechnya, having fought a war for independence. Most are run by *ex-nomenklatura* bosses who have not been transformed from bureaucrats into democrats. They tend to run their territories like autocrats, riding roughshod over the constitution, the rule of law and democracy whenever it suits them. Political, fiscal and, as revealed by Chechnya, military weaknesses have prevented the Centre from imposing its will. Now it would be unwise to underestimate centripetal forces in Russia: Russian nationalism, fear of foreign domination, the fact that less than a dozen regions are net donors and the others depend to a degree on handouts from Moscow, the sheer geographical illogicality of some regions trying to break away. It is quite plausible, however, to imagine a growth of separatism, particularly in peripheral areas. Already there is mounting dissatisfaction within several regions about the unequal treatment of federal entities and those that are resource-rich are wondering about the desirability of supporting others. Nor, with the notable exception of the CPRF, are there any truly national political parties. Increasingly, regional presidents and governors owe their positions, and in many cases their loyalty, to their locality rather than to the Centre, and they often control the army and other power organisations in their fiefdoms. If the central government is seen to be pursuing disastrous policies, or if a power vacuum appears in Moscow (for instance with another confrontation between president and parliament that is not, as in October 1993, quickly resolved), then centrifugal forces could triumph over the centripetal. Even if, as is on balance more likely, the country stays together, it will probably be as a looser federation with the regions, particularly the wealthier ones, enjoying a significant level of autonomy and control of local material resources and even trade relations (Sverdlovsk oblast' has already appointed its own regional minister for foreign trade).

The most likely prospects for Russia's development seem to lie somewhere between the bad and the horrendous: as a recent *Krasnaya Zvezda* editorial put it, "we can live badly or very badly". One thing only is clear. Russia will not become a western-style democracy and market economy in the foreseeable future. It may continue to evolve as, in the words of liberal reformer Grigori Yavlinskiy, a quasi (or pseudo)-democratic oligarchy with corporatist-criminal characteristics. Perhaps as likely, an attempt may be made to establish, possibly with the aid of force, a statist, probably authoritarian, regime which may try to renationalise at least the commanding heights of the economy, impose wage, price and currency controls and perhaps even return to a large measure of central planning and autarky (a return to Lenin's "new economic policy" of the early twenties). In either of these cases, it is unlikely that full, centralised control could be reimposed by Moscow: the means of coercion have become too brittle and unreliable and the instruments of state too corroded. The worst case scenario is another civil war in which no outcome could be safely predicted, though partial disintegration of the federation (and its nuclear forces) would be quite likely.

Whatever the direction of Russia's internal development, in external affairs it is likely to be both anti-western and chauvinist. The West will be made the scapegoat for Russia's ills. Fearing a Russian revival, it will be said, the West is trying to keep Russia down. Western misdeeds will include: failing to aid Russia's ailing economy; attempting to force inappropriate reform medicine down Russia's throat; blocking arms and nuclear technology sales; stealing Russia's markets; endeavouring to turn Russia into an economic colony, a provider of cheap raw materials and a market for dumping; inciting Ukraine in particular and other CIS states against Russia; trying to limit Russian influence in the Transcaucasus and Central Asia with a view to controlling energy sources and transit routes; encouraging Balts and others to repress Russian minorities (a total of about 25 million outside the federation); establishing military and political hegemony through the expansion of NATO and the crushing of such Russian friends as Serbia and Iraq; perhaps even encouraging the disintegration of the Russian state. These and other such accusations will probably find a receptive public, as may even assertions that Russia will be better off and more respected, more capable of defending its interests if it rebuilds, in some form or another, the old USSR and restores its military power. When preparing the deal with post-Yel'tsin Russia, other governments should be preparing to deal with a xenophobic, populist, possibly fascist regime. The post-communist, post-Cold War honeymoon is coming to an end.

## **THE LURKING DANGER OF FASCISM AND AUTHORITARIAN CORPORATISM**

### **The Defeat of Authoritarianism?**

For some two decades, authoritarianism has been in retreat world-wide. In the 1970s, military regimes gave way in Greece, Portugal and Spain and democracy is now pretty well consolidated in these countries. In the 1980s, most Latin-American countries transitioned to civilianised, constitutional government and while democracy is not consolidated yet its prospects look tolerably good. Similarly, some Asian regimes, shaken by economic crisis, are apparently in the process, or on the verge, of transition. Perhaps most striking, if only because of the rapidity of the process given impetus by the contagion effect, authoritarianism has collapsed or is on the defensive throughout the former communist world. The failure of both right wing military and communist dictatorships to solve their societies' problems has placed anti-democratic forces on the defensive and undermined their self-confidence. This will give emerging democracies a breathing space in which to continue their transition, currently incomplete almost everywhere. Consolidation will take at least a decade, more probably a generation, before it will be complete. However, as long as the challenge remains weak and fragmented and the framework of representative institutions remains intact, the prospects for consolidation are good. Gradually, under pressure from the electorate, injustices and errors can be rectified, rights enlarged and pluralism developed. A new generation of businessmen, political activists and soldiers may grow up with the notion that democracy can be a source of strength and opportunity. Perversely, this process may not be greatly hindered by the slowness of the process and the persistence of economic and social problems. It may be that the failure of alternative models and ideologies will have lowered expectations of what the state can really do to improve the lives of individuals. More realistic understanding of the limitations of government may bring people to accept gradualism, helping democracy, the least bad system, to triumph by default.

This is the hopeful scenario for the political development of post-communist Europe, and for some of the countries reviewed it is the most likely. Others, however, could follow a different course. Where civil society barely exists, social and/or ethnic cleavages are very deep and expectations, both material and psychological, remain (and are encouraged to be) unrealistically high, it may prove impossible to create a social consensus and generate a sense of legitimacy for a democratic system.

### **The Attractions of Fascism and the Corporate State**

Clearly, in several former Warsaw Pact and Soviet countries, conditions are, or could easily become, conducive to the growth (or in some, the revival) of fascism or the corporate state. Particularly, though not exclusively, in the less successful transition states, many people are coming to view liberalism in politics as anarchic and in economics as primitive, *laissez-faire* capitalism that enables the greedy, corrupt and the outright criminal to trample over honest folk. Much support could be gathered by a charismatic leader and a movement which promises to curb narrow, selfish interests that profit at the expense of the social whole, that dedicates itself instead to improving the lot of all of society, restoring law and order and social justice. Nor would such a collectivist philosophy be unwelcome to people who have a limited tradition of individualism, who have been used to certainty and are now uncertain about their future. Order, control, protection and promises about a better tomorrow through collective effort can have a great appeal in a time of hardship and insecurity which the individual feels powerless to influence. Another Great Depression could produce this situation even where it does not already exist.

It may be argued that such a movement sounds suspiciously similar to the socialism that has been discredited by the failures of the communist period. Three points can be made in reply.

- \* For many, it was not the ideals and ideas of socialism that were at fault, only the mode of their introduction and practice under the former regimes. Indeed, even with all their faults, the old days and ways, with all the attractions of full employment and a welfare state, can still find their supporters. Only in the Czech Republic and Poland is there clear majority support for the new political and economic order. In most transition states, most people are actually ambivalent, either condemning both the old order and the new alike or finding positive features in both. In Hungary, in 1996, there was still a clear majority that was more positive about (goulash) communism than democracy and the market. In Russia, even at the high-water point of democratic progress, the immediate aftermath of the 1996 presidential election, only 38% of voters were positive about change and 60% said they preferred the previous system. Ukrainians were even more negative than Russians (though it will be interesting to see the results of post-summer 1998 crisis polls to see if this is still true).
- \* A fascist movement could, like the National Socialist German Workers' Party before 1934, reject dogmatism and class-based or internationalist ideas and appeal to the whole of society as a single nation with promises of economic progress and social justice which incorporate many genuine socialist notions. As the careers of Mussolini, Franco and Salazar, not to mention Hitler, have discredited the term "fascism", the movement would seek to dress up its ideas in

modern guise, presenting them as a third way between communism and capitalism. This bill could be filled admirably by corporatism, where interest associations act as intermediaries between their members (individuals, businesses, groups with common interests) and the state. These associations are monopolistic within their area of activity, hierarchically organised and coordinated and membership is compulsory. Recognised by government, they negotiate on behalf of their members, achieve stable compromises which benefit both their members and the state and then use their control of their members to deliver the deal. It is entirely possible for a corporatist state to be democratic in political organisation. Most Scandinavian countries and (especially) Austria are currently organised along these lines and they appear content with their balance between democracy and governability. Much more than pluralism, however, corporatism, structured, formalised, disciplined and hierarchical as it is, lends itself to authoritarianism. It is easy to imagine some former-communist countries moving in this direction, maintaining a facade of democracy, an external image of pluralism, without actually disturbing more traditional power relationships.

- \* Finally, and perhaps most importantly, fascism can comfortably march in step with religion (as in Franco's Spain, Tiso's Slovakia and Pavelic's Croatia) and with nationalism. Indeed, it is not only compatible with nationalism but usually exploits it for all it is worth.

Nationalism, like fascism, tends to emphasise that it is the community within which the individual fulfils himself. The individual subordinates himself willingly to the group in the interests of the common good and responsibilities. Anxious, disorientated people tend to gather together to gain confidence and a sense of identity when old habits, customs and ideologies - the cement of societies - are broken. In much of post-communist Europe, given the history of the region, nationalism could well help to fill the ideological vacuum left by the collapse of communism, providing the new principle by which people live. Where democracy and the market come to be perceived as having failed, nationalism there is more likely to be fascist or populist than liberal in content. The idea that national unity will produce social harmony, justice and also national power and respect has a potentially overwhelming appeal in several states. It is an idea that has already been exploited by former elites desirous of retaining their political dominance in radically altered circumstances. Presidents Kravchuk of Ukraine, Yel'tsin of Russia and, in extreme form, Milosevic of Serbia are but three of the better known examples of communist party bosses who have been shrewd enough to switch to the nationalist horse in order to stay in the saddle. Others have been replaced by the nationalist dissidents they had formerly persecuted, like Slovakia's Meciar, Croatia's Tudjman or Georgia's first president, Gamsakhurdia. The dangers that nationalism poses to the stability of individual states and regions will be outlined in the following sections.

## **ETHNICITY AND NATIONALISM AS A SOURCE OF CONFLICT**

### **THE ROOTS OF CONFLICT**

The victory of the West in the Cold War has removed, at least for now, the clash of ideologies over fundamental values and the threat of Soviet-Russian hegemony as the principal threats to peace in Europe. It has not, *ipso facto*, guaranteed that the former-communist states will develop along liberal democratic and economic lines. Democracies can revert to authoritarianism, particularly when they are growing and struggling as the fate of Weimar Germany so clearly illustrates. However wrong-headedly, at least to believers in capitalism, free markets may not seem to deprived populations to be the best means to meet their material needs and aspirations. Moreover, simultaneously with the overthrow of communism and the move, often faltering and incomplete, towards democratisation and the market, post-communist Europe is witnessing the reawakening of ethnic tensions. One of the great disappointments for Marxists was the failure of proletarians everywhere to see that their true interests would best be served by unity in the class struggle. Instead, people would persist in stressing the primacy of ethnicity or nationality, as defined by language, culture, sometimes religion, and historical memory (sometimes mythical), as a unifying factor which cut across class lines. The resultant political force of nationalism changed the face of Europe in the nineteenth century and helped to destroy the Ottoman, Austro-Hungarian and Russian multinational empires in the wars of the early twentieth. It was instrumental in destroying Austria, Czechoslovakia, Poland and Yugoslavia before and during the Second World War and of resurrected Czechoslovakia, Yugoslavia and of the USSR after the Cold War. Its powerful drive is not yet spent to the East of the old Iron Curtain.

In the West, the memory of the terrible consequences of ultra-nationalism and the process of European integration (itself a product of the Second World and Cold Wars) has combined with growing affluence to take the aggressive and oppressive sting out of nationalism: (though troubles in Northern Ireland, the Basque country and Corsica and the strength and activities of French, German, Austrian and other far-right parties serve as a reminder that chauvinism and racism are not dead and buried). By and large, patriotism has become a benign and no longer exclusive assertion of national values and is hardly more likely to inflame passions (at least amongst the middle classes) than gender, green or even animal rights issues. The last fifty years have not seen a comparable evolution to the East. The imposition of the communist straitjacket after 1945 (the twenties for the Soviet Union), uncompromising remote control of the Warsaw Pact from Moscow and the demands of the Cold War prevented the resurfacing of old antagonisms or, in some cases, canalised them in directions useful to the regime. Their fundamental causes were not eliminated. These bacilli, to use a metaphor, were deep frozen. The thaw which followed the end of the Cold War, the Pact and the USSR itself has allowed those bacilli to revive, potentially as virulent as ever, to trouble the area once again.

As the table illustrates, many of the post-communist countries (quite apart from the Yugoslav successor states) are an ethnic mosaic. This is due partly to their historical development as parts of former multinational empires and partly to the Soviet legacy (Stalin arbitrarily delineated or redrew borders within the USSR and, with his allies' approval at Yalta, with its western neighbours and he had deported to Central Asia about 3.3 million members of allegedly disloyal nationalities). Today, the following countries, in which the titular nationality is in a bare majority, must be considered multinational states: Estonia, Latvia, Kazakhstan, Tajikistan and Kyrgyzstan. Others with one or more significant majorities include: Slovakia, Romania, Bulgaria, Ukraine, Belarus, Moldova, Georgia, Uzbekistan and Tajikistan. If different religions and cultural factors were also included, the picture would become yet more complex.

The mere existence of a minority, even a large one, does not necessarily imply conflict, of course: it merely indicates potential. For nationalism to be mobilised as a political force which can threaten intra- or inter-state conflict, certain conditions must be met in whole or in part.

- \* Most basically, there must actually be an ethnic or national consciousness and a leadership to organise and direct political activity. Thus, for example, the tiny (153,000) Gagauz population in Moldova laboured successfully to achieve territorial autonomy. On the other hand the estimated 4-5.3 million Roma in post-communist Europe have nowhere organised themselves nationally, let alone internationally, despite severe discrimination and often persecution: gypsy consciousness hardly exists above clan level and the degree of linguistic and religious assimilation is very high.
- \* Above all, a minority must perceive a threat to its material and/or psychological well-being and aspirations: the former include not only such basics as food, shelter and health care but also fairness in employment, social security provisions and taxation; the latter include at a minimum a sense of freedom from oppression and the unfettered practice without disadvantage of the group's traditional language, religion and culture and as a maximum the right to territorial autonomy. Of all the countries in the table, perhaps only Poland and the Czech Republic do not have at least one minority that feels threatened (and that excludes the Roma). The break-up of multi-national states creates opportunities for some ethnic groups, but it also creates feelings of fear and insecurity in others. Demands for self-determination can be defensive in purpose, given the aspirations towards dominance in others. This is the case with the Abkhaz and Ossetians in Georgia, the Armenians in Nagorno-Karabakh and some of the various nationalities in the ethnic patchwork of former-Yugoslavia.
- \* Ancient hatreds are not necessary to arouse political nationalism. The breakups of Yugoslavia and Czechoslovakia were less a result of long-standing enmities than of economic considerations and the assertion of primacy by one of the constituent nations. On the other hand, common historical grievances, particularly where blood has been shed, make its mobilisation much easier.
- \* It is also easier where a minority is largely concentrated in a given territorial area, especially where that area is contiguous to an independent state of the same nationality where sympathy and support may be found. As will be shown below, these conditions make several countries vulnerable to ethnic conflict.

There is much that post-communist states can do to defuse actual or potential confrontations with minorities. Unfortunately, there are also formidable obstacles in the way. Most newly independent, or at least newly and truly sovereign, states are suffering significant stresses in the process of state building. Added to these, at least in some, are the pains involved in adjusting to a market economy, especially where economic backwardness means that resources are insufficient to meet the material aspirations of the whole population. This may tempt populist governments

to favour the majority group economically, especially in times of recession or slump. There is also the problem of a struggle for power between former and new political elites, a competition in which either may seek to exploit nationalism to strengthen its power base and, often, the strength of the state over society. In states with a low political culture where the costs of economic transformation are borne by the disadvantaged, nationalist intolerance is a powerful weapon in the armoury of political entrepreneurs.

**Minorities In The Former Soviet Union And Warsaw Pact (a)**

Country	Population ('000)	Year	Minorities (%)
Poland	38,612	1996 (b)	German 1.3; Ukrainian 0.6; Belarussian 0.5
Czech Republic	10,331	1991	Slovak 3.1; Polish 0.6; German 0.5; Roma 0.3; Hungarian 0.2; other 1.0
Slovakia	5,368	1995	Hungarian 10.5; Roma 1.5; Czech 1.1; other 0.8
Hungary	10,374	1990	Roma 4.0; Serb 2.0; Slovak 0.8; Romanian 0.7; German 2.6
Romania	22,730	1994	Hungarian 8.9; German 0.4; Roma 1.8
Bulgaria	8,340	1996	Turk 8.5; Roma 2.6; Macedonian 2.5; Armenian 0.3; Russian 0.2; other 0.6 (c)
Estonia	1,462	1997 (d)	Russian 30.3; Ukrainian 3.1; Belarussian 1.8; Finnish 1.1; other 2.2
Latvia	2,480	1996	Russian 32.5; Belarussian 4.0; Ukrainian 2.9; Polish 2.2; Lithuanian 1.3; other 0.9
Lithuania	3,707	1997	Russian 9.4 Polish 7.0; Belarussian 1.7; Ukrainian 1.2; other 1.1
Russia	147,501	1997 (d)	Tatar 3.8; Ukrainian 3.0; Chuvash 1.2; Bashkir 0.9; Belarussian 0.8; Mordovian 0.7; other (Chechen, German Udmurt, Mari, Kazakh, Avar, Jewish, Armenian) 8.1
Ukraine	51,700	1995 (d)	Russian 22.0; Jewish 1.0; other 4.0 (Belarussian, Bulgarian, Hungarian, Moldovan, Poles, Tatars)
Belarus	10,300	1995	Russian 13.0, Polish 4.0; Ukrainian 3.0; Jewish 1.0; others 1.0
Moldova	4,500	1997 (d)	Ukrainian 13.9; Russian 13.0; Gagauz 3.5; Bulgarian 2.0; Jewish 1.5; others 1.6
Georgia	5,160	1997 (d)	Armenian 8.1; Russian 6.3; Azeri 5.7; Ossetian 3.0; Greek 1.9; Abkhaz 1.8, Ukrainian 1.0; other 2.1
Azerbaijan	7,431	1995 (d)	Russian 5.6; Armenian 5.6; Lezgin 2.4; other 3.7
Armenia	3,742	1995 (d)	Azeri 2.6; Kurdish 1.7; Russian 1.6
Kazakhstan	16,500	1996 (e)	Russian 37.0; German 4.7; Ukrainian 5.2; Uzbek 2.1; Tatar 2.0; other 7.1
Uzbekistan	23,468	1997 (e)	Russian 8.3; Tajik 4.7; Kazakh 4.1; Tatar 2.4; Karakalpak 2.1; other 7.0
Tajikistan	5,946	1997 (f)	Uzbek 25.0; Russian 3.5; other 6.6
Turkmenistan	4,229	1997 (f)	Uzbek 9.2; Russian 6.7; Kazakh 2.0, other 5.1
Kyrgyzstan	4,513	1997 (f)	Russian 21.5; Uzbek 12.9; Ukrainian 2.5; German 2.4; Tatar 1.6; other 6.7

Notes

- a) Data culled from Statesman's Yearbook 1998-99 and CIA World Factbook 1995.  
b) 1990 estimate: ethnic minorities are not identified in the census.

- c) The 4.5% of the population that is Pomak (ethnic Bulgarian Muslim) should perhaps be considered a minority.
- d) Minorities as per 1989 census.
- e) Minorities as per 1991 official data.
- f) Minorities as per 1995 estimate.

Most post-communist countries see strong, centralised control in a unitary state as a pre-requisite for progress. Throughout the region, however, there is a yearning among nationalities, great and small, historic or only newly conscious, for independence or national unification, for the right to fulfil their own destinies as nation states or at very least as autonomous entities. Given that the ethnic map of the area is a mosaic, such aspirations can only be satisfied in one of three ways. Either the often arbitrary post-First and/or Second World War borders will have to be redrawn; or multi-ethnic unitary states must be built through the integration of minority groups, creating a common national consciousness; or states must evolve along federal or confederal lines, giving a large measure of local political autonomy to significant minorities where they are geographically concentrated. There are great, in some cases possibly insuperable obstacles to evolution of any of these lines.

- \* No country shows the slightest sign of being prepared voluntarily to give up territory, either to another (making it a stronger rival) or to create a new state, although many, on the contrary, have more or less strong (and more or less loudly voiced) ambitions that can only be realised at a neighbour's expense. All seem to be determined to stress their respective claims, whether based on legal grounds (ie, on international treaties), on historical ownership (however interpreted) or on ethnicity.
- \* The history of attempts to build multi-ethnic states in the region, states where a common consciousness of community, interest and therefore allegiance transcends ethnicity, is littered with failure. The Ottoman, Austro-Hungarian, Tsarist, Soviet, Yugoslav and Czechoslovak versions all failed. Other states with significant minorities have, at least until now, been lukewarm at best to any other means of ensuring loyalty than attempts at assimilation. There is every indication that even small, unhistoric national minorities are, for the most part, unwilling either to be assimilated or to give their wholehearted loyalty to a centralised, unitary state. Nor does transition to democracy significantly change this attitude as long as it merely enshrines the dominance of the majority group, even where basic human rights are observed.
- \* As a corollary, most majorities are unwilling to sacrifice the perceived advantages of a strong, centralised, unitary state in favour of a federal, never mind confederal solution or even the granting of separate recognition and therefore special treatment and rights to minorities. In theory, consociational democracy should be the answer for countries that are characterised by sharp religious, ethnic or regional cleavages: ie, a combination of shared decision making by representatives of all major interests where issues are of common concern (eg foreign, defence and monetary policies) and subsidiarity, autonomous decision making on matters pertaining to all other issues.

In practice, such a Swiss, Belgian or (a less happy example) Lebanese-type solution to the problem of creating national unity seems to have little appeal for majority groups in post-communist states. They fear, often with some cause, that concessions are likely to be mere precursors to further demands and eventually to disintegration where minorities are strong and/or have a rival focus of loyalty in a neighbouring state. By and large they are determined to maintain central control and if that can only be achieved through the coercion of minorities, so be it.

Increased international integrationist tendencies and globalisation do not spell the end of nationalism, least of all amongst those who have never, or only intermittently, enjoyed freedom. Nationalism is rather a parallel growth, a decisive structural framework for political, economic and social life for the foreseeable future. It is likely to be the cause of continuing tensions in many countries and will probably lead to secessionist movements in some. The result could well be an oppressive backlash by the state, perhaps going as far as forced exchanges of populations or expulsions. Nor is victimisation conditional on unrest within a minority. It can be provoked by simple atavistic hatred, desire for revenge for perceived past wrongs or by the desire of political elites to find scapegoats for present failures and socio-economic tensions. The sad developments in former Yugoslavia and the Transcaucasus may be merely the start of a trend, however peaceful things may seem just now.

## **POTENTIAL FOR CONFLICT**

### **Poland and the Czech Republic**

In 1938 and 1939, Hitler had exploited the grievances, real and imagined, of the German minorities in Czechoslovakia and Poland to undermine these states and provide a pretext for invasion. After 1945, with the agreement of the victorious allies, over 3 million Germans were expelled from the former and 3.3 million from the latter. These acts of what is now known as ethnic cleansing went far towards turning the two countries into homogenous nation-states, a process also helped in Poland's case by the (theoretically voluntary) transfer of 530,000 Ukrainians, Belorussians and Lithuanians to the USSR and by the repatriation of over 2.6 million Poles from the Soviet Union and Germany. Today, neither country faces a serious minority problem. The approximately one million strong German minority is likely to be satisfied with a proposal for Silesian autonomy. The 13.2% of Czech citizens who described themselves as Moravians in the last census were reflecting a regional consciousness and not hostility to the state: neither is the small Slovak minority dissatisfied with the status quo.

### **Slovakia, Romania and Hungary**

Post-war Czechoslovakia had initially hoped to rid Slovakia of its Hungarian population. In the event, only 165,000 left, some expelled and others exchanged for 600,000 Slovaks. Today, there are about 600,000 Hungarians, 10.5% of Slovakia's population, living in the south of the country, mostly in lands contiguous with Hungary. With the demise of Czechoslovakia and thus the removal of the moderating influence of Prague, Slovak nationalism is no longer restrained. There is no support amongst Slovaks for granting special group status and rights, never mind local political autonomy to their erstwhile (pre-1918) oppressors. Despite the vague protection afforded to minorities in the 1995 Hungarian-Slovak basic treaty,

the Magyar minority is subject to restrictions in its use of its native tongue and in other ways.

In Ceausescu's Romania, the over 1.6 million Hungarians were subject to harsh repression as part of the dictator's appeal to Romanian nationalism to maintain his regime. This situation hardly improved until the election of the reforming Constantinescu government in late 1996. The strong, united Hungarian political movement demands a liberalisation of language and education laws and political autonomy in the three districts in north-central Transylvania where Magyars are still in a majority. Like the Slovaks, however, Romanians show no inclination to pander to the old enemy, far less run the risk of weakening the unitary, centralised state. The signing of a basic treaty with Hungary is probably seen in Romania as a reason not to pursue reform rather than as a prelude to it, whatever interpretation Budapest puts on it.

Hungary was the major loser after the First World War in terms of population. The Treaty of Trianon placed one third of its people in other countries, most of them in Romania and Slovakia but also a significant minority in the Serb province of Vojvodina. Recovery of the lost territories was the major preoccupation in the country and led it into a fatal alliance with Germany in the Second World War, defeat in which led also to the loss of further land to Ukraine. Since 1989, however, successive Hungarian governments have followed a generally moderate line which has renounced irredentism and sought merely to promote, through diplomatic means, the welfare of Magyar minorities in neighbouring countries. Leading by example, Hungary has recognised its minorities as contributors to state building and has given them full legal protection (including, uniquely, the Roma). This example has not been followed, except in the country's basic treaty with Ukraine which has satisfactorily settled the position of the 163,000 Magyars there.

In both Slovakia and Romania, ethnic polarisation shows more signs of growing than lessening, despite semi-democratisation. Disputes over language, education and demands for power sharing or autonomy are likely to continue to sour inter-ethnic relations and create potentially destructive tensions which can be exploited by unscrupulous populist politicians. Should the human rights position worsen, or even not improve, for the Hungarian minorities in Serbia, Slovakia and Romania, a dangerous situation could be created. Increasingly intolerant nationalism in these countries would be likely to lead to increasing radicalisation of the minorities, each process exacerbating the other in a vicious spiral. Armed resistance, even secessionist, movements could resort to IRA/ETA-like terrorist campaigns, provoking reprisals and further repression. This could, in turn, lead to unofficial or even official support being given to the "freedom fighters" by Hungary in the form of safe havens, money, arms and perhaps volunteers. A position analogous to that in the Palestinian-Lebanon-Israel triangle could evolve with all the attendant possibilities of inter-state conflict.

### **Bulgaria**

Even after the departure of several hundred thousand Turks following independence in 1878 and the expulsion of another 150,000 in 1945, Bulgaria retained a Turkish minority of about one tenth the total population - a perpetual reminder of the centuries-long Turkish yoke. By and large, this minority was accepted, but its rights were grudgingly and inconsistently recognised and often abused. From mid-1980s until its fall, the communist Zhivkov regime played the nationalist card in a sustained attack on the Turks' cultural identity, and that of the 200,000 Pomaks (Muslim Bulgarians). Over 300,000 Turks emigrated to

Turkey and the 100,000 or so that returned after 1989 were not welcomed back. Currently, the minority's position is secure, its long-standing resistance to assimilation tolerated. Fear of a Muslim threat persists, however, indeed is growing, as a result of other Balkan developments. The Turks are seen as a likely fifth column in the event of Turkey's attempt to rectify its borders (however improbable this may seem outside Bulgaria). Another nationalist backlash is not improbable if hesitant, incompetently executed reforms fail in Bulgaria and a scapegoat has to be found.

While Bulgaria has recognised the existence of a Macedonian state, it does not recognise the existence of a Macedonian people as distinct from Bulgarians. The desire to recover this area, taken from it in 1878, prompted Bulgaria to fight alongside Germany in the two world wars and is not dead today. Should Macedonia prove to be a failed state, breaking up as a result of internal contradictions (especially the disaffection of the 23.1% of the population that is Albanian) and Greek and/or Serbian pressure, Bulgaria might well be tempted to join in any partition.

### **The Baltic States**

Acquired by Russia in the eighteenth century, the Baltic states enjoyed a brief independent existence between 1919 and 1940 before being illegally annexed by the USSR. Their peoples resisted Russification and harsher attempts at Sovietization and are now determined to re-establish their national identity. In Lithuania this is not very problematical. Almost 80% of its population is Lithuanian, with only 12.3% being east-Slav and 7% Polish (the result of acquisition of the Vilnius region). Accordingly, the country has felt able to adopt a liberal attitude to citizenship and no non-Lithuanians were excluded by law when independence was achieved. Thanks to considerable Soviet period immigration, Estonia and Latvia have much larger east-Slav minorities - 35.2% and 39.4% respectively, the overwhelming majority being Russian. Worried about possibly becoming minorities themselves in their own state and desirous of restoring continuity with the pre-occupation period, both countries regarded Soviet immigrants as foreigners or stateless persons who were denied full citizenship.

Russian nationalists frequently rail against the injustices suffered by their fellow countrymen at the hands of discriminatory Balts. Apparently favourable circumstances notwithstanding, they have so far been unsuccessful in their efforts to mobilise much resentment either at home or within the Baltic States. The wretched condition of most of Russia's population has dramatically reduced interest in the problems of expatriates and the latter are happy to share in the economic recovery and growth of their host nations which contrasts so markedly with the failure of Russia itself. The future could easily hold trouble in store for the Baltic states, however. A revival of Russian nationalism and power would sooner or later result in attention being focussed in that direction. The Estonian and Latvian discrimination against their east-Slav minorities is understandable, but that will not necessarily make it indefinitely acceptable to those minorities, to Russians or even to western countries. Latvians seem now to have recognised the danger: a referendum in October endorsed proposals to relax laws on citizenship. Moreover, and at least as important, the geostrategic location of all three Baltic states is of critical importance to Russia, including, in Lithuania's case, as a land link with the Russian exclave of Kaliningrad *oblast*. Even if Moscow does not again seek their reincorporation, it will insist on a *droit de regard*.

### **Belarus, Ukraine and Moldova**

Annexed in the early eighteenth century, Belarus became the most Russified part of the Tsarist empire. Its unexpected, and by most of its population, unsought independence in 1991 has not been followed by any significant burgeoning of a separate national consciousness. Nor is this due merely to the integrationalist policy of its current populist, unreconstructed, communist-authoritarian ruler. A Lukashenka. Economic and political union with even today's Russia is desired by most of its citizens. Only Russian fear of adding all Belarus' massive economic problems to its own prevents Russia from effectively reincorporating the country.

The situation in Ukraine is more complex. The five western *oblasts*, which were only incorporated into the USSR as a result of Stalin's deal with Hitler in 1939, are Uniate Catholic, westwards looking and staunchly nationalist. The Russian minority (22%) is concentrated in central Ukraine and the Crimea, acquired towards the end of the eighteenth century, and in the East. There is, however, no "us and them" sentiment dividing it from Ukrainians (save, to an extent in Crimea which is two thirds Russian and was part of Soviet Russia until 1954). Long shared Orthodox religion, culture and history and inter-marriage have effectively united the people. The process of building the national identity of a sovereign and independent Ukraine has been proceeding successfully but has not been dependent on or accompanied by hostility towards Russians (the Russian state is another matter). Should Ukraine fail to develop as an economically viable, law-governed state, on the other hand, there is no sharp ethnic division to keep most of the country from contemplating some sort of union with Russia. This would be particularly true if Russia should turn itself around and become a success story, though such a development would not be an essential precondition. Russian nationalists, never really reconciled to separation, would welcome such an east-Slav union (including Belarus). The prospect of some sort of confederal arrangement, with all that that would entail for the geostrategic position in central and eastern Europe, cannot be lightly dismissed.

Russian until 1918 and Soviet from 1940 until 1991 (save for four wartime years), Moldova is 64.4% ethnically and linguistically Romanian. This demographic fact did not incline the population towards union with Romania, which even four years after Ceausescu's death did not look an attractive proposition. In a referendum in March 1994, 95.4% of the 75% of the electorate that voted opted for sovereign independence (with "Moldovan" declared to be the national language). The breakaway, so-called "Transdnestrian Republic" did not participate. That region, situated on the East bank of the Dnestr, had been transferred from the Ukrainian to the Moldavian SSR by Stalin and comprised 40.1% Moldovans, 28.3% Ukrainians and 25.4% Russians. It had declared its own, separate existence in 1990 and, with the essential help of the Russian 14th Army, maintained it by force of arms in the civil war of 1991-92. Ostensibly, it was fear of union with Romania that drove the predominantly Slav population to break away, but the removal of this fear has not persuaded its corrupt and self-seeking leadership to abjure secession: like the tiny Gagauz region (with 3.5% of the total population of Moldova), Transdnestria has been promised territorial autonomy and the right to self determination should Moldova ever change its political status.

An intensely nationalistic Romania completed its unification in 1919 with the occupation of (hitherto Hungarian) Transylvania and (hitherto Russian) Moldavia, southern Bessarabia and northern Bukovina. The latter two regions were brought into the USSR by Stalin. A further attempt to restore the inter-war borders would, even if approved by the Moldovan people, lead to renewed confrontation with Transnistria and also with Ukraine which currently owns the other two areas.

### **The Transcaucasus**

Christian Georgia sought Russian protection against its powerful Muslim Ottoman and Persian neighbours and in consequence became part of the Tsarist Empire at the end of the eighteenth century. Administrative assimilation not only did not lead to cultural assimilation but actually allowed stable conditions for the full flowering of a Georgian sense of nationhood. Georgian nationalism helped to bring down the USSR and, through its divisions and intolerance, the unity of Georgia as well. South Ossetia, whose autonomy was arbitrarily ended by Tbilisi, struggled for freedom to join North Ossetia (part of the Russian Federation). The autonomous republic of Abkhazia likewise accomplished *de facto* secession, expelling much of the Georgian majority population in the process. The Adzhars (including Islamicized Georgians) are also restive. These internal struggles gave Russia an opening to exploit to restore its influence in Georgia through first encouraging secessionists and then deploying peacekeepers to maintain order.

Like Georgia and for similar reasons, Christian Armenia was absorbed into the Tsarist Empire. Here, too, nationalism developed in the nineteenth century, though the Armenians were a more cosmopolitan people and about one third lived in a diaspora, mainly in the Ottoman Empire, Russia, Georgia and the Turkic-Shiite Muslim Azeri lands to the east. The latter settlements created a legacy of conflict that troubles the region today. Politically unorganised until the early twentieth century, it was hostility to the Armenians that acted as the catalyst which created an Azeri sense of national identity. With the break up of the Soviet Union, old enmities flared up anew, with intercommunal violence in Azerbaijan. The focus of conflict rapidly concentrated on Nagorno-Karabakh, the 77% Armenian-inhabited autonomous enclave created by Stalin within Azerbaijan, whither fled the rest of the country's Armenians. In their efforts to resist massacre and ethnic cleansing, the Armenians have established *de facto* independence for Nagorno-Karabakh (now including some hitherto Azeri-inhabited land). An uneasy stalemate now exists, but Azerbaijan is unreconciled to the loss of almost a quarter of its territory. Currently, it can do no more than blockade Armenia, in which it is aided by Turkey from the southwest, but armed struggle is all but certain to be renewed at some future date.

Ethnic and religious intermingling characterises the North and Trans-Caucasus: there are no fewer than 28 distinct ethnic groups inhabiting often arbitrarily defined and redefined administrative entities as a result of Tsarist and Stalinist divide and rule policies and the wartime Stalinist deportation of several entire peoples and their subsequent rehabilitation and return. Moreover, 24% of the Iranian population is Azeri, living in lands contiguous with Azerbaijan. These facts alone ensure that the region will be riven by conflict for some time to come. The issues mentioned above are only those that have surfaced: others are stirring. Even if the West could remain indifferent to the suffering that this will entail, it cannot lightly ignore the consequences for its economic interests. The oil and natural gas riches of the Caspian Basin and Azerbaijan (and other mineral wealth) need outlets to the sea if they are to be exploited. For both security and political reasons, pipeline routes through Afghanistan and Iran are not favoured, especially by the USA. Nor does the West wish to rely on routes through unpredictable Russia, particularly through the troubled North Caucasus. That leaves the Transcaucasus as the remaining, unpalatable alternative. Of course Russia, too, has major interests in the area, which it sees as being in its sphere of influence. Its economy and political leverage would benefit greatly if trade has to pass through its territory. It has geostrategic concerns as well, the Transcaucasus being a strategically vital and vulnerable back door to Russia and it fears the spread of both Turkish and Muslim

fundamentalist influence through the region and into both the North Caucasus and Central Asia. (There are about five million Muslim Caucasians living in Turkey but with strong contacts remaining with their kin in Russia, a country for which they have little love.) The possibility of a clash between Turkey (a NATO member) and Russia brought on by their rival positions over the Armenian-Azeri conflict or other interests cannot be dismissed.

### **Central Asia**

In the second half of the nineteenth century, Russia conquered Central Asia for a mixture of prestige, security and economic reasons. The tsars treated the area in the same way that other European powers treated their colonies, as lands to be exploited economically but distinctly alien. There was no attempt at russification. Nor was there any national sentiment to combat as loyalties were limited to the tribal, the clan and the local. It was Stalin who defined the "nations" of the region and delineated their borders, as elsewhere with the principle of divide and rule in mind. Thus the countries of Central Asia are artificial entities and even today traditional sub-national loyalties are very significant. That said, the concept of ethnicity is still important and is likely to become more so in the future.

The table makes it clear that all the Central Asian states are multinational. The indigenous peoples are mixed together in the border areas, there are substantial numbers of east-Slav settlers and there are the remnants of the "disloyal" nationalities that Stalin forcibly resettled there (3.5 million Germans, Chechens, Ingush, Crimean Tatars, Meskhetian Turks, Karachai, Kalmyks, Balkars, even Greeks). In Kazakhstan, the titular nationality accounts for only about 42%, with east-Slavs totalling around 43%. The respective figures for the other countries are approximately as follows: Kyrgyzstan 52.4% and 21.5%; Tajikistan 64.9% and 3.5%; Uzbekistan 71.4% and 9%; Turkmenistan 77% and 7%. (The emigration since independence of Russians and Germans in particular make these percentages rather unreliable.) There is clearly potential for inter-communal and inter-ethnic conflict: indeed civil war raged for a year in Tajikistan before the current, uneasy truce and the Fergana valley, divided between Kyrgyzstan, Tajikistan and Uzbekistan, has seen some fighting. Three factors may well combine to turn Central Asia into a region of conflict.

- \* Overpopulation is already creating economic and social problems. Where ethnic groups are intermingled, there will be competition for scarce resources, a problem which may be exacerbated by refugees. Resource issues could also lead to inter-state conflict, particularly where borders are not clearly demarcated or are disputed: a particularly likely cause of trouble could be a decision by poor Tajikistan and Kyrgyzstan to exploit the fact that they are the principal sources of water for the region.
- \* Three Central Asian states border on Afghanistan and all have large numbers of ethnic kinsmen over the border: indeed, there are more Tajiks in Afghanistan than there are in Tajikistan. If and when the Taliban succeeds in establishing firm control of Afghanistan, there might be an attempt to spread Islamic fundamentalism to the north. This could happen even without foreign support. There is already a religious revival in the region, a development which its secular leadership professes to fear if only to provide an excuse for

suppressing internal discontent. Even if the threat of radical, political Islam is exaggerated for effect, repression may produce a self fulfilling prophecy. In a region where authoritarian rulers resist political and economic liberalisation for fear of social disruption and a challenge to their leadership, such a development would indeed undermine stability.

- \* Anti-Russian sentiment has been growing since the 1980s - a not uncommon reaction against the (now former) imperial masters. This has led to increasing emigration of skilled technicians and managers, itself economically harmful. Growing nationalism, especially if it were to take on an Islamic hue, would accelerate that trend. Russia does not want, cannot afford, the "return" of up to 20 million expatriates from Central Asia. It wants to safeguard them in place, not least because they might provide an excuse for interventions. Russia quickly repented of its post-Soviet attitude that Central Asian independence relieved it of a burden. The economic potential of the area and the value of providing the sole or main export route have revived interest. So too have geostrategic calculations. Russia fears an Islamic threat from the south and the growth of Turkish influence amongst the predominantly Turkic speaking peoples of the region and is determined to hold the line on the old Soviet frontier if that is possible. These calculations persuaded Moscow to commit troops to Tajikistan's civil war, to maintain border guards in that country and Turkmenistan and to make heavy-handed efforts to use the CIS and bilateral agreements to bring Central Asia back under Russian economic and military domination.
- \* Turkey, Iran, Pakistan, India and China all have religious, cultural and economic ties/interests in the region. Their involvement certainly complicates its problems and could well exacerbate them.

### **Russia**

Russia faces an identity crisis. The nature of its historical development makes it far more difficult than with any other country to point to a historical border on a map and say "this is Russia: everything beyond was an imperial possession". Ukraine united with Russia for protection against the Poles in 1654 and by the end of the eighteenth century, Russia had expanded at the expense of Poland and the Ottoman Empire to include all of Belarus, most of Ukraine and the Volga and North Caucasus lands. Given this long historical association and linguistic, cultural and (largely) religious homogeneity, it is not surprising that most Russians cannot adjust to the idea of separation. Russian explorers reached the Pacific coast of Siberia in 1637 and over the following centuries (in a process somewhat analagous to the Americans realisation of their "manifest destiny" to occupy the lands of the West) colonists established control over the 30 or so native peoples which were largely hunter-gatherers and nomads. Is Siberia not Russian?

Yet even within today's much reduced Russia, almost 20% of the population is non-Russian. This fact is recognised insofar as the country is officially a federation, and 32 of its 89 regions are national-territorial entities. However, of the 25.8 million people living in these 32 regions, over 12 million are Russian and only 9.8 million are of the titular nationality (ie, 38%). In the Russian part of the federation, 13.3 million (11%) of the inhabitants are non-Russian. There is a new, or in the case of some nationalities like the Chechens and Ingush, a revived, sense of self-

consciousness amongst some of the larger minorities. The National Security Concept published in December 1997 recognises that this is a potential problem and gives a high priority to ensuring unity and political stability through a responsible nationalities policy and coordinating the interests of all the peoples. It also, however, stresses the role of the Russian language and culture, Orthodox religion and the state in maintaining unity. Plainly, there is scope for conflict. Chechnya has already achieved *de facto* separation and other groups may follow the Chechen lead. Dagestan, for instance, is under threat with three of the four largest of its 32 ethnic groups demanding the break up of the republic.

Moscow's authority is at a low ebb. Moreover, the government cannot rely on the Russian military to maintain the power of the centre, or even to keep order effectively. The MoD armed forces are in a state of possibly irreversible decline and nothing is being done about it save the endless issuing of promises of and exhortations about reform. Even the non-MoD Interior and Border Troops are incapable of executing any demanding mission (as Chechnya revealed). Conventional military power will not be able to check centrifugal tendencies or successfully to wage local, let alone regional war. It is possible that a government fearing loss of control may resort to the desperate expedient of using weapons of mass destruction against separatists or their outside supporters as the only means left for re-establishing its position.

Nationalist movements are not the only, probably even the main, threat to the unity of the Russian Federation. As was explained earlier, regional separatism has a growing appeal for many Russians too. It will undoubtedly be given a considerable boost by the economic crisis that is deepening as these words are being written. In the long run, there may be reason to fear a resurgence of Russian nationalism, especially for Balts, Ukrainian nationalists, Transcaucasians and Central Asians (particularly Kazakhs). The fate of the over 25 million Russians whom the collapse of the USSR has made expatriates may yet be an issue. In the short run, though, there is more reason to fear Russian weakness and the instability and opportunities to which it gives rise.

## **IMPLICATIONS FOR EUROPEAN SECURITY AND NATO**

### **POTENTIAL FOR CONFLICT IS LIKELY TO BE REALISED**

Most post-communist countries face three fundamental, mutually reinforcing problems which threaten their development into progressive, relatively prosperous, peaceful states. These are: developing modern economies which can ensure adequate social provision for all citizens; creating a civil society and a stable political system which has legitimacy in the eyes of the whole population; finding a satisfactory answer to the problems of ethnicity. Unfortunately, all of these problems have to be tackled and solved simultaneously for transition to be successful. Given the destructive legacy of communism, the transformation required has no precedent (save perhaps some disheartening ones in post-colonial Africa and Asia). For many countries, this is likely to be an insurmountable mix of challenges, at least in the short to medium term: the further east one looks, the more pessimistic the prognosis. The consequence of failure is likely to be the revival of old conflicts and the surfacing of new ones, mainly intra-state but with plenty of potential for inter-state conflict as well.

Factors which inhibit governments and peoples in the West from threatening or using force to resolve internal or external problems are less likely to be operative in much of the former-communist world.

- \* As has been argued above, the restraining influence of liberal democracy is likely to be ineffective or absent in much of the arc of instability that sweeps from the Baltic States through the Balkans, the Transcaucasus and Central Asia and now includes Russia and Ukraine as well.
- \* Prosperity can (but not necessarily will) lessen a propensity towards internal conflict. It generally also blunts enthusiasm for adventurist foreign policies through fear of harming living standards and economic progress. The prospects for satisfactory economic progress in which all the population share are, however, poor in many post-communist states. If it is not achieved, the likely result is the radicalisation of politics and the emergence of populist, probably authoritarian and nationalist regimes. Thus, rather than acting as a brake, economic conditions are more likely to be a spur to intra and inter-state conflict. This is particularly the case where the blame for distress can be shifted (however implausibly to objective observers) onto the shoulders of a minority and/or an adversary state. Scapegoating and externalising problems has always been a favourite recourse for governments wishing both to conceal their ineptitude (or worse) and at the same time to rally popular support: Presidents Milosevic and Yel'tsin are but the latest in a long line of inglorious pastmasters. Conflict may also be resource driven, especially where borders are open to question. Caspian oil and Central Asian water are obvious possible bones of contention, for instance.
- \* The sanctity of frontiers is absolute in the minds of Western lawyers, politicians and diplomats content with the *status quo*. This is not so to the East. Current borders throughout post-communist Europe are the product of the *diktats* of the victors in the two world wars or of administrative fiat in communist dictatorships. In consequence, they lack moral validity in the eyes of those nationalities which perceive themselves as having been unjustly treated. Revisionism is not a taboo subject for them, even if they do not choose to bring it up at this time. Nor, within societies relatively unsophisticated politically, harbouring national grievances and swayed by prejudice and emotion, is there quite the same moral repugnance towards the use of force that is to be found in western Europe today. Developments in the Balkans and the Caucasus make this abundantly clear.
- \* Even the lack of military and economic muscle does not necessarily deter a resort to arms. In regions characterised by change and instability it is relatively easy to miscalculate an opponent's strength and determination, not to mention the likely reactions of outside powers in a situation where the distinction between aggressor and victim is not clear-cut and geopolitical considerations do not define policy. As so often in the past, the lure of the short, victorious war or the belief that all peaceful avenues are closed may prove greater than the fear of war itself.

Historically, state building has usually been a violent process. Have circumstances changed so radically that this will not be true in post-communist Europe? Enough evidence has been adduced above to suggest that, in many cases, intra-state conflict is likely to happen. Increasing numbers of ethnic groups and nationalities (many hitherto unknown to all but specialists in the West) are inclined to resist perceived economic exploitation, cultural domination, political marginalisation or outright oppression. Moreover, there is a growing trend for minorities to increase their demands from simple observance of their human rights to the achievement of group rights ranging from local territorial autonomy to outright independence or union with kinsmen in another state. Whether armed conflict is initiated by state repression or by dissidents, it is likely to develop into a vicious spiral: action and retaliation lead to worsening quality of life for both sides, hardening of attitudes and increasing political polarisation as hardship and military struggle bind each side together and increase the power of extremists, making compromise more and more difficult. This is a pattern that has been replicated many times, most recently in Kosovo. Such insurgencies or civil wars can spread within a country or to another through contagion and/or demonstration effects, as has happened in Yugoslavia and the Caucasus. Contiguous states may be drawn in in other ways too. Neighbours may suffer from spill-over effects such as refugee flows, hot pursuit of guerrilla bands or terrorism. They may seek active involvement, hoping to liberate their kin from oppression either by direct military intervention or by providing arms, money, propaganda support and bases for guerrilla or terrorist operations. And one country's difficulties can easily be a predatory neighbour's opportunity.

## **THE RESPONSE OF THE WEST**

### **A Variety of Options**

Unresolved national, ethnic, religious and economic issues could well produce conflict within and/or between some states and will probably or all but inevitably do so in others. The West can respond in several ways: by refusing to get involved, merely containing any armed struggle, preventing its spread while waiting for it to burn itself out; by admitting countries at risk into western clubs and then helping them to eliminate the fundamental causes of conflict; by preventive action to nip conflict in the bud, suppressing symptoms and winning time to find a solution before it gathers a momentum which will make a peaceful, political settlement impossible; by armed intervention when a conflict is getting out of hand to create conditions in which a settlement can be negotiated between or imposed on the combatants.

In considering western policy options below, attention will be concentrated on the European Union and NATO as the only international organisations with the economic, political and military power to act decisively. The Pan-European Council of Europe and OSCE and such regional groupings and the WEU as the Council of Baltic Sea States are certainly capable, to a greater or lesser extent, of exerting moral force, but their practical ability to influence conflict is very limited or non-existent.

### **Eschewing Involvement, Merely Practising Containment**

In theory, ignoring a conflict which does not directly affect western geostrategic and/or economic interests is an attractive option. After all, most can be localised and should not lead to a general European war. The aims of warring parties are likely to be limited to the resolution of specific grievances rather than the achievement of regional domination. An ultra-nationalist Russia might not fit this

pattern, but it is years, possibly decades, away from the political, economic and military revival that would support hegemonistic ambitions. No western power is likely to use proxies or to intervene itself in order to pursue ideological ends or regional mastery. There are currently no entangling alliance systems to drag countries into wars that do not obviously concern them, as happened in 1914: it would take a considerable feat of casuistry to present NATO, an organisation dedicated to preserving the *status quo*, in this role. Really, only disputes involving Russia pose an international security problem: others are local.

In practice, the twin policy of non-involvement and containment is unlikely to prove sustainable in many cases. Several of the potential conflicts outlined earlier have economic, geostrategic and hard or soft security implications. Even where these factors do not loom large, the moral factor will do so. With atrocities, ethnic cleansing and the like being the stock in trade of the media, with television being particularly influential, there will be growing pressures on governments to "do something". The moral dimension forced some countries, and eventually the NATO alliance itself, into ever-deepening involvement in first the Bosnian war and then in Kosovo. Feelings of guilt stirred by these crises and others such as Rwanda and the Congo will make it difficult to adopt a hard-hearted, *realpolitik*, approach, at least to conflict within Europe.

### **Enlargement of the European Union and NATO**

Will admission to western clubs eliminate the potential for conflict in and between new members? It has been argued that the inclusion in the European Union of at least all central European states (including the Baltics) will help to remove the principal causes there: there is, of course, no prospect of extending membership further east in the foreseeable future. The prosperity that membership is assumed to bring in its wake would satisfy material aspirations of populations and the precondition for membership that human rights be observed would, combined with the force of western example, satisfy the psychological. It is certainly true that, as with the southern European transition countries of the seventies, the prospect of admission to the EU influenced the central European ones of the nineties to opt for more or less liberal political and economic models. However, this proposition begs important questions. The EU itself is in the throes of transition. It is attempting simultaneously to deepen (with such controversial projects as monetary union and the creation of a common foreign and security policy) and to widen. Sceptics point out that deepening could fail catastrophically with the collapse of EMU and the renationalisation of economic and security policies. Even if it does not do so, it is not easily compatible with widening to include states that are hardly ready (some economically, some politically) to join the existing union, never mind a deeper one. In any event, enlargement is not now expected to begin before 2005-06 at the earliest and Lithuania, Latvia, Slovakia, Romania and Bulgaria (ie, with the exception of the former, the most troubled countries of the region) are not included in the first tranche. Thus, even if the EU can help to solve economic problems, it will not do much in the short term. Its impact on minority problems may not be profound either as those countries which have the most acute cleavages show little desire for an accommodation and anyway minorities are increasingly demanding not merely observances of basic human rights but the more ambitious goals of at least a degree of autonomy.

As well as the EU, all the central European states aspire to join NATO. Given that membership, as with the EU, is dependent on democratic credentials and satisfactory relations with neighbours, will it help to reduce internal and external tensions? Certainly, some applicants believe that the most fragile and threatened

democracies need a stable security framework within which they can work out their problems. They hope that, just as NATO helped the consolidation of democracy in Spain, Portugal, Greece and Turkey and possibly prevented the latter two from coming to blows over Cyprus and the Aegean, so the alliance will be instrumental in solving their problems. There is, however, no obvious reason why belonging to NATO should help to end a country's minority problems any more than it has done in Turkey, or for that matter the UK and Spain. The analogy also fails on the issue of borders. Neither Spain nor Portugal had border disputes and NATO membership did not dissuade Turkey from invading northern Cyprus in 1974: nor, for that matter, did it prevent Greece from following its own, hostile policy towards Macedonia (and friendly one towards Serbia) despite NATO policy. NATO is an organisation which exists to preserve the *status quo*, limiting and managing change where this proves impossible. It is argued that enlargement will help to achieve this aim by moving the frontier of stability eastwards, eliminating a strategic vacuum in which trouble could occur by internationalising security policy and preventing dangerous rivalries from creating new Bosnias. But will new members, carrying with them baggage of historical grievances and current problems that most old members have left behind, really be prepared to give up perceived national interests? Hungary's basic treaties with its neighbours and Poland's with Lithuania might suggest that this is so, as might some countries' rather grudging and minimalist concessions to minorities on human rights issues. The suspicion must remain, however, that, the Helsinki Final Act and more recent agreements notwithstanding, not all the frontiers of central and southeastern Europe are regarded as immutable by all the countries of the region. Revisionism may not be dead: only sleeping. With enlargement, the Greco-Turkish problem may not be the only problem internal to NATO. Too many such problems, with members taking different sides on them, could gravely weaken the alliance as the Bosnian question at one time threatened to do. There would be a real possibility of a renationalisation of security policies with a consequent weakening of alliance unity. The absence of a major external threat, the cement that held NATO together during the Cold War, could make this more likely.

Fears for the unity and effectiveness of NATO, perhaps combined with a desire to placate Russia, could limit enlargement to Poland, the Czech Republic and Hungary. Even if there were promises of a second tranche sometime in the future to persuade disappointed states to continue with democratisation and restraint in foreign and minority policies, these promises might fail to carry conviction with governments, and even more likely with voters. A scenario illustrates the danger of such a development.

- \* Hungarian minorities abroad, perceiving, however wrongly that their champion now had NATO backing, could become more extreme and pressing in their demands for autonomy. The population of Hungary itself, thinking the same way, could exert electoral pressure on their government to become more forceful in championing the rights of the diaspora. Ultra-nationalists in Slovakia and Romania could gain in strength, partly in reaction to Hungarian demands and partly because of the perceived mistaken and failed westward-looking policies of their governments. The result could be more repressive and not more liberal minority policies. Such developments could get out of control, leading to conflict. Frustrated, suffering from a worsening situation and yet hopeful of help from outside, the Hungarian minorities could resort to an intifada type resistance. Demonstrations and terrorist attacks against the oppressors would inevitably lead to official and/or

unofficial backlash, further polarising communities. Hardening attitudes would lead to the involvement of increasing numbers on both sides and silence the voices of moderation. Escalating violence could lead to guerrilla resistance which could be given covert or even overt support from Hungary. Budapest would, of course, seek to involve NATO, counting on Germany's traditional pro-Hungarian stance.

- \* Bucharest and Bratislava might seek to recreate the post-Trianon anti-Hungarian alliance. Serbia, with its own Hungarian minority in Vojvodina and strongly anti-NATO, might well join. Such a revived "Little Entente" would naturally seek outside backing, and Russia would be the obvious choice. Not only pro-Russian Slovakia and Serbia but even anti-Russian Romania would favour such a move. When the situation is threatening enough, countries cease to be choosy about their allies.

NATO enlargement, in other words, is not necessarily the answer to the region's problems. It could even exacerbate them and threaten the cohesion of the alliance. And, of course, it would do nothing to solve the even more pressing problems of the lands to the east. On the contrary, it would increase Russian hostility and help the revival of Russian nationalism. If, and it is a very big "if" indeed, Russian power were to revive it would be an added incentive to try and give real meaning to that hollow organisation, the CIS. Economic and perhaps military pressure, combined with the exploitation of ethnic problems and the fomenting of coups, could be used to attempt to reassert Russian control over much of the former USSR.

### **Preventive Action**

There is increasing interest in crisis prevention in the West as NATO moves from being a collective defence to being a collective security organisation. Rather than NATO reacting, like a fire brigade, to extinguish conflagrations, the alliance should act to prevent fires from breaking out. Preventive diplomacy, perhaps backed by pre-emptive troop deployments, should be the agenda of the future on the theory that it is better to pay a small price today than watch a conflict flare up and pay a larger price tomorrow to suppress it. The concept has theoretical attractions. It also poses formidable problems.

International law is the first obstacle. Its entire thrust is devoted to the subject of inter-state, not intra-state conflict. There are two well-established principles that act as a barrier to intervention in the latter case (save, of course, at the request of the legitimate government concerned).

- \* The first is that countries have no right to interfere with the actions of sovereign states within their internationally recognised borders. That principle is coming into question, though. Increasingly, it is being argued that minorities policies are no longer a purely internal matter, that state repression cannot be tolerated and that the UN Declaration on Minorities must be enforced. Some precedents have been established. One can argue about Somalia in 1993 (where there was no government) or Bosnia 1992-95 (was it a civil war?). But the 1991-92 creation of "safe havens" and air exclusion zones in Iraq and the 1997 intervention in Kosovo, a province of Serbia, are clear examples. However, formal recognition of this new approach will certainly not be achieved in the UN or OSCE. Both China and Russia will prevent that, if necessary by using their power of veto.

- \* The second principle is that internationally recognised borders cannot be altered by force. Western governments accepted only with reluctance the break up of the USSR and Yugoslavia. Secessionist wars are frowned upon: no recognition was extended to the Armenians in Nagorno-Karabakh, the Serbs of Krajina, Slavonia and Bosnia, the Herzegovinian Croats, the Slavs in Transnistria, attempts to create new states in Abkhazia and Chechnya. A good case can be made for opposing border changes. The very fact that forcible change may be accepted as legitimate may either encourage ethnic groups to rise or, for that matter, governments to embark on pre-emptive ethnic cleansing. The success of a self-determination movement in one country may encourage others in the same or other countries, or result in a spill-over effect where the same nationality forms a minority in more than one state. In other words, a change to tolerance of frontier revision through force could result in conflicts throughout much of post-communist Europe and perhaps the emergence of several new, unstable, economically non-viable states as well as multiple legacies of bitterness and, given the ethnic patchwork of the area, new injustices, intolerance and repression. On the other hand, a Canute-like policy of bidding the waves of nationalism to stop is foredoomed. Some states may not be able to resist secessionists or may fail altogether: to say that irreconcilable differences between groups cannot be allowed to result in divorce could simply prolong and worsen conflict. Moreover, there is a western tradition, going back to the Treaty of Versailles and sometimes further, that favours self-determination, albeit the application has been somewhat partial and selective.
  
- \* Perhaps new criteria should be established by which internal disputes and separatists' claims can be judged and new mechanisms created (by the UN? or OSCE?) through which change can be managed. Arguably, these are urgent tasks. They may also be impossible to implement, at least with international consensus. Russia and China are but two of the more prominent countries that are unlikely to support extension of the international community's so-called rights of intervention in the internal affairs of states. What is certain is that a confused, possibly outdated, international legal system and equally outdated international structures will hamper and delay the achievement of NATO consensus and subsequent responses. Rivalry between organisations such as the WEU and NATO and differing attitudes to, for instance the UN or OSCE, might impose further delay or even prevent action.

Preventive measures are obviously dependent on the will of interventionists. Governments must possess the knowledge and foresight to recognise the need for action. They must then be prepared for considerable expenditure and perhaps loss of life to intervene. Convincing electorates that they should make sacrifices in order to prevent a hardly visible crisis from growing to unmanageable proportions will be difficult especially where national interest do not seem to be at stake. Even more problematical is likely to be the achievement of the necessary international consensus for early collective action, given the inevitable differences in perceptions and priorities that exist between governments, not to mention disagreements about the most desirable outcome and the means to get to it. All these factors were

evident during the collapse of Yugoslavia and the subsequent Bosnian and Kosovo conflicts, hindering and retarding action.

For preventive steps to succeed, they must be taken before a conflict breaks into the open, or at least in its initial stage before the parties' attitudes have hardened and become more uncompromising and while both sides are sufficiently uncertain of the outcome and retain sufficient political flexibility to contemplate negotiations and/or mediation: (even then, internationalisation may encourage those endeavouring to change the *status quo* to raise the stakes and refuse compromises in the belief that recognition of their case increases their leverage). Some or all of the problems enumerated above will most likely combine to thwart such a timely intervention. The inevitable conclusion must be that preventive measures will rarely be feasible. This is not to say that they should not be attempted wherever possible. The deployment of UNPREDEP to Macedonia is a rare but so far successful example of what can be accomplished to impart a sense of security and stability to a country under threat and to prevent the spread of conflict.

### **Intervention in On-going Conflicts**

The supposed lesson of the wars of Yugoslav succession notwithstanding, preventive measures are rarely likely to be implemented in good time. Usually, they will only be undertaken when, as with Macedonia, there is danger, clear to all, of an already existing and probably intensifying conflict spilling over into a neighbouring state. Most interventions, other than at the purely diplomatic level, will only become possible when a conflict has been developing for some time, for only then will it be possible to obtain the necessary consensus and some kind of legal mandate for economic or military intervention. The passage of time will produce the required pre-conditions; acceptance of the failure of diplomatic efforts to reconcile the irreconcilable and growing awareness that the crisis will have wider economic or political implications, perhaps including the spread of conflict through demonstration or spill-over effects; a mobilisation of public opinion (once there is a psychologically satisfying division of the combatants into aggressors and victims); a fear amongst governments for their reputations, internal and in the world at large, if they do not act; demands for NATO solidarity, with dire warnings about loss of cohesion and credibility if action is not taken.

Even when there is resolution for action, probably delayed as it will be by inter-alliance politics and differing views on the objectives and conduct of intervention, not to mention opposition from other powers (eg Russia), there is a danger that the means willed will be inadequate. In any multi-national endeavour, there is a tendency to agree only on the lowest common denominator, at least initially. The best solution may be the deployment of irresistible force coupled with insistence on mandatory arbitration, with a time limit and the threat of punishment for parties that do not accept it. This approach was finally adopted over Bosnia in 1995 - after over three years of war and the failures to influence the outcome of diplomatic and economic sanctions, humanitarian aid programmes and UN peacekeeping. It is entirely conceivable that, ever hopeful of success with minimal effort, expense and risk, some governments will insist on a similar, graduated response to future crises. There is a particular danger in relying on economic sanctions as a means of applying pressure. Not only do these hurt peoples rather than leaders (who often profit from sanctions busting) but they are generally ineffective where fundamental issues are seen by the warring parties to be at stake.

Unfortunately, even effective intervention will often fail to resolve a conflict in the sense that, having been victorious, the interventionary forces can depart leaving a

solved problem behind them. That may, though not necessarily will, be the case in the event of repulsing an aggressor in a conventional war. Ethnic conflicts, however, are usually more complex and intractable, the more so the longer they go on. Finding an accommodation that is largely acceptable to the warring parties will be extremely difficult if not impossible. If a settlement is imposed by *force majeure*, one or more parties is likely to feel bitter resentment. Accordingly, any signature on a treaty or agreement extracted by such force will carry no moral validity for such a signatory. Nobody, for instance, believes that Moslems, Croats or Serbs accept the Dayton Agreement as a just and reasonable settlement and that it will therefore be, as it were, self-enforcing. When the correlation of forces that compelled it is changed, for example by the extraction of the interventionists, the war is likely to be resumed. Thus forces will have to be left in place for many years possibly, like the Cyprus peacekeepers, for decades to ensure compliance and create conditions in which the intolerable gradually become tolerable and then accepted.

A resolute reaction to aggression can often exercise a salutary effect on other potential aggressors. Initially, this appears to have been Serbia's reaction to the defeat administered to Iraq in 1991. This caution quickly wore off, however, as western responses to the Bosnian crisis proved confused, timid and far from united. While pleasant to have, laurels cannot be sat on. This is particularly true with ethnic conflicts wherever issues fundamental to the combatants are at stake (sovereignty cannot be shared, so such conflicts may appear as a zero-sum game to participants). Moreover, one party (usually those fighting for self-determination) may actively seek internationalisation of the conflict and foreign intervention while the other may calculate that memories of quagmires and failures like Vietnam and Somalia will combine with lack of interest or unity to dissuade potential interventionists. Moreover, if NATO forces are embroiled in a conflict already, this might encourage another to break out. Forces tied up in one area cannot rapidly be used in another, or to put it another way, one country's or coalition's difficulty may be perceived as another's opportunity. Thus do wars and other conflicts spread. Italy's attack on France and Egypt in 1940 and Japan's 1941 seizure of European possessions in the Far East was driven partly by such a calculation, for example.

### **Implications for NATO Force Structuring**

The end of the Warsaw Pact threat has led all the western powers to make dramatic cuts in their armed forces in order to provide the peace dividends that Cold War victory has earned: between 1990 and 1998, for instance, Britain reduced its military personnel by one third and its annual expenditure on defence by 23%. The eclipse of Russian conventional military power and the belief that its revival will inevitably be accompanied by at least ten years' warning time has been used to justify a sharp drop in the ability to fight in what used to be known as high intensity war. In what many regard as the increasingly unlikely event of inter-state war, the coalition's easy victory over Iraq in 1991 has given rise to the comfortable belief that small forces with the advantage of massive western (mainly US) technological superiority will win quickly and with few casualties. It is supposed that, actually, peace support will be the principal, perhaps the sole, form of military activity for the foreseeable future - and even the demand for that will decline as NATO enlargement pushes eastwards the zone of stability.

There is some truth in such arguments. However, by transforming itself into a collective security organisation, and by extending its remit into what has hitherto been "out of area", into regions of considerable instability, NATO is taking onto its shoulders much wider responsibilities than before. It must be prepared to tackle a wide variety of tasks. Particularly if there is more than one tranche of new

members, it may yet have to respond to an attack on a member or, more likely, to attempts to undermine or destroy a state through indirect aggression (economic and political pressure, coups or insurgencies sponsored and/or supported from outside). Although not legally bound to do so, it may be impelled by geostrategic, economic and/or moral considerations to do the same for non-members (eg, Ukraine or the Baltic States). It may become involved in the whole gamut of operations other than war, from counter-insurgency and peace enforcement through traditional peacekeeping and humanitarian support to preventive deployments.

Many alliance countries are responding to these challenges by considerable restructuring. The old stress on strategically immobile, heavy armoured formations is giving way to power projection capabilities. There is new emphasis on rapid reaction air, land and sea forces with the strategic lift to move them quickly to areas of potential or actual conflict. Forces are trending towards modular construction for ease of force packaging tailored to the situation. Joint and combined headquarters are being created to command and control multi-service and multilateral operations of every type. The British Strategic Defence Review is a good example of an imaginative approach to post-Cold War conditions.

These attempts to optimise the efficiency and cost effectiveness of military structures are praiseworthy: NATO is indeed responding to the changing strategic environment. There is, however, a danger that force levels will increasingly fail to be congruent with commitments, implied as well as legal (a position in which Britain embarrassingly found itself in the mid to late thirties when capabilities were insufficient to honour League of Nations and Locarno Treaty commitments). Certainly the threat of a general European war has gone (a threat which was never likely to materialise as long as NATO kept up its guard, particularly its nuclear one). Today, the small likelihood of a great, catastrophic war has been exchanged for the considerable likelihood of numerous, smaller, localised conflicts. If NATO's new rationale is to be a collective security organisation, it will become involved in many of them and involvement will probably be prolonged: even if, as in Bosnia, the peace enforcement phase is comparatively short, the need for peacekeeping could last for many years. Will the lower force levels that result from peace dividends really be adequate to meet multiple challenges? If NATO becomes overstretched, will there not be a danger of aggressors taking advantage of the fact?

It is not merely the size but also the shape of militaries that might give cause for concern. There is a growing belief, particularly amongst civilians in general and politicians in particular, in the efficacy of technological fixes for military problems. Reliance on airpower and smart weaponry is very attractive to them as it promises televisual success for minimal loss of life. But they cannot resolve all difficulties. They can inflict punishment. They can be used for coercion of states whose regular forces and infrastructure are vulnerable to them. They cannot defeat guerrillas who offer no permanent bases, lines of communication and sophisticated command, control and communications targets for attack but instead rely on the invisibility offered by terrain and by their indistinguishability from the civil population. A long line of conflicts, from Vietnam through Afghanistan to Somalia and Israel's struggle with the Palestinians illustrate the limitations of technology. In unconventional warfare and peace support operations, there is no substitute for ground forces. Moreover, such operations are very manpower intensive.

If NATO, or "coalitions of the willing" from within the alliance and possibly including non-members, are to perform collective security tasks, a psychological shift will be required as much as a military one. Western societies, especially perhaps the

American, have become extremely sensitive to casualties. In many operations other than war, this will be less true of the opposition. What will be regarded as a limited engagement by western powers may be a total war to its opponents. Ethnic conflicts are, or may come to be perceived as, struggles to achieve the most fundamental of aims: liberty from repression or even for the survival of a society. To achieve such aims, peoples have been prepared to endure a level of pain unthinkable to their oppressors. That is why they so often win. They may also be prepared, if it is seen as politically expedient, to inflict more or less random pain on their enemies in the belief that the latter's will is less strong than theirs. If unable to challenge the enemy on the battlefield, where standing up like a man may result in being shot down like a dog, they are liable to resort to terrorism. In the future, this could even take the extreme form of the use of weapons of mass destruction. Societies which will the ends of collective security must be prepared to provide both the means and the psychological fortitude to see their interventions through. How much money will western states be prepared to spend? How many casualties, civilian and military, are they prepared to accept?

Collective security does not work automatically and is not necessarily cheap. On the contrary, it may involve its practitioners in divers and protracted, not to say expensive efforts. While it may be shared, the burden of a collective security organisation such as NATO is becoming can be a heavy one and not easily shed. But is there any alternative?

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