

**RUSSIA'S POLICY TOWARDS
CAUCASIAN STATES**

1991-94

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C E R T I F I C A T E

Certified that the dissertation entitled **Russia's Policy Towards Caucasian States, 1991-94**, submitted by **Abolfazl Minooeifar** is in partial fulfilment of the requirements for the award of the degree of **Master of Philosophy** of this University. This dissertation has not been submitted for any other degree of this University, or any other University and is his own work.

We recommend that this dissertation may be placed before the examiners for evaluation.

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Dedicated to
My Wonderful Parents with Inexpressible Gratitude
for Everything

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PREFACE

This is essentially a study of the new Russia's policy towards the newly independent states of Caucasus, namely Georgia, Armenia and Azerbaijan. This conflict - torn region continues to be crucial for the Russian state, though it remains problematic for Russian policy-makers. Hence, a study of Russia's near abroad policy vis-a-vis the three Caucasian states is considered essential for understanding Russia's foreign policy during its formative period, 1991-94.

This study comprises five chapters. Chapter I deals with the emergence of Russia's policy and its stages of developments, while different schools of Thought in Russia's foreign policy are brought into focus. Chapter II covers the historical background, ethnic configuration and strategic importance of the region for Russia. The two subsequent chapters deal with new Russia's policy towards Georgia on the one hand and with Armenia and Azerbaijan together in the specific context of Nagorno-Karabakh conflict, on the other. The last chapter contains concluding remarks.

This study is based on published primary sources. These are further supplemented with relevant books, academic articles and press coverages, as well as available Persian sources.

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(Abolfazl Minoeifar)

CHAPTER I

Russia's foreign Policy

An Overview

Russia emerged as an independent state with its own foreign policy as a result of the disintegration of the Soviet Union. Prior to the Minsk proclamation on the formation of the Commonwealth of Independent States (CIS), the Russian Soviet Federative Socialist Republic (RSFSR) had no foreign policy, though it was active in international scene; the requirements of statehood which is pivotal to foreign policy was absent.¹ Nevertheless, the adoption of a declaration on state sovereignty of the RSFSR in June 1990 was an essential step towards achieving statehood. Boris Yeltsin, the elected president of the RSFSR, appointed Andrei Kozyrev as foreign minister in October 1990. However, it was the August 1991 coup, and subsequently the Minsk declaration on the formation of the the CIS which entitled RSFSR, along with other republics, to have its own foreign policy as an independent states recognised by the other states.²

It should be emphasized that in order to analyze foreign policy of a given country, two clusters of factors should be kept in mind. Generally, foreign policy of each and every country is influenced by a number of factors, like location, promotion

1. Mark Webber, "The emergence of the foreign policy of the Russian Federation", Communist and Post Communist Studies (California), Vol. 26, No. 3 (September, 1993), PP.243-245.
2. Ibid.

of security and welfare, past and present historical background, political culture, and so on. But there are countries which are motivated by an ideology or certain ideas, and these influence the formulation of their foreign policy. For instance, foreign policy of the former Soviet Union, and some of Islamic states can be cited as a good example of ideological-oriented foreign policy.³

No doubt, the above mentioned factors perhaps with exception of an ideology had greatly influenced the making of Russia's foreign policy. Russia's location and its huge land, stretching from Asia into Europe is a determinant factor in its foreign policy. Nonetheless, the collapse of the Soviet Union had deprived Russia from some of its important sea outlets. Like its earlier predecessor state, Tsarist Russia, the Russian Federation except in far north is almost a land-locked country. Having access to the warm water of the seas in the south is therefore, one among the major goals of Russian policy-makers today.

But the pursuit of this goal is compounded by the events of the newly independent states of former Soviet Union. Some of these states are in the midst of ethnic conflict. This poses security risks for Russia. The opportunities that those happenings in near abroad offer not only for the intrusion of foreign military powers in their territories, but also that for

(3) Zafar Imam, Soviet foreign policy 1917-1990 (New Delhi: Sterling Publishers Private Ltd., 1991), PP. 1-2.

the spread of ethnic conflict into Russia itself. These possibilities constitute a major worry for Russia. And it therefore affects Russia's foreign and security policy formulation.

More importantly, one of the determinant factors of the Russian foreign policy has been economic compulsions. After the collapse of the Soviet Union, the immediate task before its policy-makers was to address its economic problems. Hence, the creation of favourable condition in relation to other states in order to facilitate economic reforms emerged as one of the priorities of Russian foreign policy.

The role of personalities in formulating Russian foreign policy should be also taken into account. Long before the disintegration of the Soviet Union, Yeltsin as a typical populist opposition leader believed that the best way to develop democracy in Russia was to learn from the U.S., where democracy has existed for two hundred years'.⁴ In fact "Learn from Americans" became more than a motto; it was a substantial part of his platform'.⁵ Little wonder, the influence of Boris Yeltsin, president of Russia, and his western-oriented foreign minister Andrey Kozyrev affected the direction of Russia's foreign policy to incline towards the west.

4. Vladimir Solovoyov and Elena Klepikova, Boris Yeltsin, A Political Biography (London: Weidenfeld and Nicolson, 1992). P. 168.

5. Ibid., P. 169.

However, it should be emphasized that much of the present Russian foreign policy was already operative during Gorbachev era. For this reason, a quick look at Gorbachev's "New Thinking" would help us to understand Russian foreign policy better. The danger of nuclear confrontation and annihilation of the human-kind was the main concern of Gorbachev's "New Thinking".⁶ From this fundamental point he concluded that "confrontation between capitalism and socialism can proceed only and exclusively in forms of peaceful competition and peaceful contest."⁷ Therefore, the total abolition of weapons of mass destruction, emphasize on negotiation, rather than the use of force or threat to use force and the fact that security is a mutual issue and can not be built endlessly on fear of retaliation⁸ formed components of Gorbachev's "New Thinking".

Henceforth, the Soviet foreign policy apparatus proceeded to put the "New Thinking" in practice in its foreign policy. That had led the improvements of relations between the Soviet Union and its adversaries, particularly the U.S.A. Negotiation on arms reduction, withdrawal of the Soviet troops from the

6. Robert Maxwell, ed., M.S. Gorbachev, Speeches and Writings (Oxford : Pergamon Press, 1986), P. 70.

7. Ibid., P.73.

8. Ibid. P.71.

foreign lands, and disengagement from developing countries were among political outcomes of the 'New Thinking'.⁹ Indeed Gorbachev initiated a pragmatic foreign policy which its main concern was promotion of the Soviet national interests rather than international class struggle.

The Russian policy-makers continued, more or less, the Gorbachev's New Thinking in foreign policy.

With regard to the role of ideology it may be pointed out that there is no longer an official ideology such as Marxism-Leninism in the Russian Federation to direct its foreign policy. But there are certain ideas and schools of thought which continued to influence Russian foreign policy. And they deserve attention.

Different Schools of Thought in Russian Foreign Policy

The collapse of the Soviet Union was not anticipated. Therefore, none of the successor states of the former Soviet Union including Russia had drawn a consistent framework for their own domestic and foreign policies. For this reason, there were a lot of debates on the goals and direction of Russian

9. For the Soviet Third world policy under Gorbachev see Zafar Imam, "The implications of perestroika for the Third World, particularly Asia", IN Soviet foreign Policy in Transition, eds., Roger E. Kannet and Deborah Nuffer Miner (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1992), PP.220-224.

domestic and foreign policy among Russian political elites.¹⁰ So having an insight of different concepts of foreign policy put forward by Russian foreign policy elites is of great help while analyzing foreign policy of Russia. It is worthwhile to note that "those who control the instruments of coercion and persuasion, have specialised knowledge, or occupy key formal political positions",¹¹ in Russia is what we mean Russian foreign policy elites.

Soon after the collapse of the Soviet Union, the Russian Federation under the leadership of Boris Yeltsin adopted a very pro-western policy. It caused a lot of debates and criticism against internal and external policies of Yeltsin's government, particularly among deputies of the parliament. Those reactions that broadly, manifested among Russian political elites encompassed three positions on security and foreign policy, namely, western, realist and nationalist schools of Thought.

Westerners

This school of thought originated in Gorbachev's 'New Political Thinking'. But it was modified after the collapse of

10. Consult Judiths Kullberg, "The ideological roots of Elite political Conflict in post Soviet. Russia," Europe-Asia Studies (Oxfordshire, U.K.), Vol. 46, No. 6, 1994, PP. 929-953.
11. William Zimmerman, "Market democracy and Russian foreign policy", Post-Soviet Affairs(Columbia) , Vol. 10, No.2, 1994, P.105.

the Soviet Union and formed the basic concepts and trends of the foreign policy of the Russian Federation.

The advocates of this School of Thought known as westerners, internationalists, atlanticisits, and liberal internationalist, argue that Russia is a part of European - Christian civilisation. Hence, it should promote close relation with the west.¹² Moreover, they propounded the setting up of a society on the basis of the western values, namely democracy and market economy.¹³ Therefore, the integration of Russia in the community of democratic states and world economy is one of the main priorities of the westerners in the context of foreign policy.¹⁴

They consider the western countries as natural ally, not only in international relations, but also in their programme of economic and political reforms. Moreover, they believe that economic transition of Russia is not feasible without support of the western countries. Therefore, the programme of reforms adopted by Yeltsin governemnt put emphasize on aid and economic assistance

12. See Kozyrev's interview in Summary of World Broadcasts (SWB) (Reading, England: BBC Monitoring Service), 3 April 1992, SU/1346, A1/1.

13. See Yeltsin's anniversary speech in Ibid., 14 June 1993, Su/1714, B/1.

14. See Speech by Yeltsin in Ibid., 9 April 1992, Su/1351, C 1/7.

by the western countries as well western oriented international organisations to ensure the success of it.

With respect to security, according to westerners, "Russian interests would clearly be served by its integration into such western alliance structures as NATO and the strengthening of the CSFE... [and] an embrace of the United Nations as a manager of global issues, and acceptance of deeper involvement in it".¹⁵

It should be also noted that the advocates of this school of Thought support negotiation and favour good relations with Russian neighbours particularly near abroad countries, based on international norms of behaviour.¹⁶

The Westerner's view, which dominated over the formulation and conducting of Russian foreign policy under Yeltsin and Kozyrev led to a totally pro-western foreign policy, and as a result evoked serious criticism among other political elites of Russia.

Euroasianism and Realist School of Thought

According to Macfarlane, Eurasianism provided the subjective basis associated with 'special quality of Russian civilization' for realist school of thought in Russia's foreign Policy.¹⁷

15. S. Neil Macfarlane, "Russian Conceptions of Europe", Post-Soviet Affairs, Vol. 10, No.3, 1994, P.244.

16. Yeltsin's Speech, SWB, 7 April 1992, SU/1349. B/3.

17. Macfarlane, No. 15, pp. 247-248.

The proponents of Eurasianism put emphasis on Russia's distinct location, stretching from Asia into Europe and believe that Russia is neither a western type European nor a purely slavik or Asian country, but that it constitutes a unique "Eurasian structure."¹⁸ Russia is essentially different from the west in terms of collectivism and individualism, as well as ethnic configuration. It is multiethnic in its identity in contrast with the west and "its focus is on collective rather than individual." Moreover, there has been always in Russia an effort to provide a synthesis between the East and the West.

The concept of Eurasianism forms the subjective basis of Realist School of Thought in Russian foreign policy.¹⁹ Thus the realists argue that Russia's foreign policy should be based

18. Olga Alexandrova, "Divergent Russian Foreign Policy Concepts", AussenPolitik(Hamburg), Vol. 44, No. 2, 1993, P.365.

19. In view of Olga Alexandrova, advocates of Eurasianism (Eurasism) while emphasizing on Russian unique Eurasian structure, postulate history as constant struggle among empires, mainly between 'a continental and insular Atlantic Powers', indicating Eurasia and the Anglo-Saxon civilization. So the confrontation between the East and the West, even during the cold war, is essentially considered as a geographical struggle. To Alexandrova Eurasians are influenced by some of geopolitical schools like that of Makinder and Ratzel. See Ibid., P. 367.

on national interests which are different from those of the west. It should be noted that while the realists recognize the importance of good relations with the west, yet they favour to keep a balanced relations with both the East and the West. However, their view of approach to the near abroad countries varies. Some of them are in favour of giving 'top priority to relations with the CIS states' besides a normal political relations with these states, in keeping with international norms. While others argue for a strategic, political and economic relations. Moreover, there is an agreement among them on the status of Russia as a great power and it deserves a 'sphere of influence' in its near abroad.²⁰

Above all, the realists reject Westerners' overemphasis on dialogue and negotiation. They argue that exertion of influence and use of force in foreign policy cannot be dismissed as they are inherent in the nature of international relations.

The Radical nationalist School of Thought

The advocates of this school of thought include nationalists and communitists. They are essentially anti-western. They reject western values and institutions as not only foreign but inimical to Russian culture. As Olga Alexandrova put it "it encompasses the notion of a "Third way", a fundamentally anti-western attitude, an aggressive combination of isolationism and a claim to superpower status and the orientation of all hopes

20. Renee De Nevers, "Russia's Strategic Renovations", Aldephi Paper (London), 289, July 1994, P.31.

to a large, strictly organized and centrally regulated whole, an imperial idea".²¹

In respect of foreign policy, they advocated a 'complete revision of Russia's foreign policy. They also favoured the reintegration of all regions in the republics of the Soviet Union which were populated by Russians or russified people. Moreover, they identified the existence of the CIS only as a transitional phase 'prior to an inevitable reformulation of the empire'.

They considered the Gorbachev's perestroika and economic reforms in Russia under Yeltsin's government as catastrophic. That reduced 'Russia to the status of a beggar nation'. Indeed it was a conspiracy, they argue, that was plotted by Russia's enemies to destroy the country.

In realm of security, cooperation with NATO was regarded as a channel for penetration in Russia by western intelligence agencies.

The proponents of Radical nationalism gained substantial vote in December 1993 election, and formed an opposition against Yeltsin's government within the parliament; that influenced the Russian foreign policy.

Russian Policy toward distant abroad

The immediate task of Russian policy-makers, after disintegration of the Soviet Union was to determine the

21. Alexandrova, n. 18, P.365.

direction of its internal and external policies. As was mentioned before, the main trusts of the Russian foreign policy have their roots in Gorbachev's 'New Thinking' and foreign policy, particularly in his last two years in power. His deideologization of foreign policy and his steering toward pragmatism brought completely new trends to the Soviet foreign policy. In other words, it led to a new phase in the Soviet world relations : friendly relation with the western countries particularly the U.S.A, on the one hand, and disengagement from the third world countries, on the other; a phenomenon that manifested itself, at its best, in supporting the U.S. led military coalition operation against Iraq. ²²

It should be emphasized that the Russian foreign policy more or less, is Gorbachevian. Besides, Russia's historical background and its political culture²³ has also affected its foreign policy.

22. For an overview of the Soviet and Russia's Third world policy see Mohamed M. El. Doufani, "Futile interventions: Russia's disengagement from the Third World", International Journal (Toronto), Vol. 49, No. 4, Autumn 1994, PP. 846-873.

23. For the impact of political culture on foreign policy, see Joshua A. Tucker, "Walking the tightrope: An investigation of the political culture concept and its application to foreign policy analysis", Paradigms (Caunterburg), Vol. 9, No.1 Summer 1995, PP.37-61.

Soon after the demise of the Soviet Union and emergence of Russia, Boris Yeltsin and his foreign minister Andrey Kozyrev enacted the ideas of Westerners. Russia under Yeltsin therefore committed itself to be integrated in the community of the democratic states and the world economy. They repeatedly emphasized the importance of relations with the west, not as an ordinary links, but as one based on 'partnership of values'. As Kozyrev put it, "that gist of our policy is that we are beginning to share, we have set a course towards genuinely sharing, the values of the civilized world and to live according to these values"²⁴

The economic and security concerns of Russia were also very important factors in framing its foreign policy. Kozyrev as architecture of Russian foreign policy with his 'very benign view of the west's intentions' favoured a very close cooperation with them specially U.S.A., to obtain financial support for Russia's economic transformation.²⁵

Not surprisingly that Yeltsin paid his first foreign visit after the formation of the CIS, to Canada, France, UK and U.S. That with the aim to seek economic assistance for Russia's economic reforms. Moreover, he developed personal contacts with some important western leaders. This facilitated the winning of "\$ 24 billion multilateral assistance package adopted by the

24. SWB, n.12, SU/1321, 5 March 1992, A1/1.

25. "Kozyrev offers draft foreign policy guidelines," The current digest of the Post-Soviet Press(Ohio), Vol. 44, No.48, 1992, PP.14-16.

Group of 7 (G7) in July, 1992.²⁶ However, in this search of foreign aid did not spare Russia's eyes from south-East Asia. Yeltsin's visit to Seoul in November 1992 was aimed to obtain aid, advance technology and investment for Russia.

Furthermore, it was argued that in order to facilitate the process of reforms in Russia, the 'confrontation with the west on military issues' should come to an end.²⁷ In this direction, Kozyrev underlined that the democratic Russia no longer saw the west as an enemy. He went further by saying that "It is by virtue of this that opportunities are appearing for a transition to disarmament initiatives".²⁸ Therefore Russia signed the strategic Arms Reduction Treaty (start 2) on sharp reduction of nuclear arms with U.S.A. And as well as a mark of its commitment to end the confrontation with west on military issues, Russia continued the withdrawal of its forces from Germany, Eastern Europe and some of near abroad countries, which Gorbachev had initiated.

Besides, Russia distanced itself from its longstanding friends like Iraq and Serbia when they became an issue in security council as show of full cooperation toward the west.

This pro-western policy faced sharp criticism among Russian political elites - within and without the parliament. They asserted that Russia's government was pursuing a policy of -

26. Webber, n.1, P.259.

27. SWB, Su/1346, 3 April 1992, A1/2.

28. Ibid., SU/1321, 5 March 1992, A1/1.

complete cooperation with the west, even at the cost of Russian national interests. It also neglected its near abroad, and Asian countries like China, South Korea and India, because of its linear approach and 'excessive concern for the western good will'. In consequence, Russian foreign policy began to change toward more assertion, since late 1992. In fact, the Russian policy-makers had to accommodate at least to some of demands of the opponents of the government. This caused a zig-zag move and sometimes contradictory moves on the side of the Russian foreign policy.

There are also other factors involved in shifting Russian foreign policy. The programme of reforms initiated by Yegor Gaidar ended in failure which had also disastrous impact on Russian society. It pushed 40 percent of the population below the poverty line, accompanied with the rise of crime and corruption.²⁹

This discredited the west for their support to Gaidar's economic reform.

That bred "a theory among Russians that the reform is actually the result of a conspiracy",³⁰ to bring Russia to its knees.

Yet the logic behind Russia's pro-western foreign policy was to ensure the flow of economic assistance from the west which

29. Georgi Arbatov, "Eurasia, Letter: A new cold war?", Foreign Policy (Washington), No. 95, Summer 94, p.92.

30. Ibid., p. 96.

fell short of Russian expectation. And much of it "intended to sustain Russia's reform programme was tied either to specific policies, or to purchasing goods from western states".³¹

Moreover, Russians expected in respect to partnership and cooperation with the west to be treated as equal.³² But it did not. Indeed, the western countries did not consider Russia's concerns over issues like military action and extension of sanction against Serbia and Iraq, as well as the conflict in Georgia. As Arbatov put it, that the American behaviour, when it plays the role of 'lone superpower', is humiliating to Russians. They try to ignore Russia while addressing European issues in particularly Eastern Europe.³³

As a result of these developments, Russia's foreign policy gradually began to shift from western conceptual framework toward realist framework. Truly, in the course of time, it became more nationalistic and professional and less western-oriented. The last moment cancellation of Yeltsin's visit to Japan in 1992 and 1993 because of opposition of certain elites 'particularly in military' to concessions to Japan over disputed Kurile islands; the flipflopping on economic sanctions against Serbia in April

31. De Nevers, n.20, p.12.

32. See Andrei Kozyrev, "The Laging Partnership", Foreign Affairs(New York, N.Y.), Vol. 73, No. 3, May/June 1994, PP.59-71.

33. Arbatov, n. 29, P.97.

1993,³⁴ and opposition to the eastward expansion of NATO, can be cited as indicators of the shift.

Yeltsin's visit of Asian countries was directed to bring about a balance of its policy toward East and West. China occupied prominent position among Asian countries with regard to priorities of Russian foreign policy. During 1993 these two governments exchanged high-level delegations to negotiate on borders demarcation, reduction of their military forces, trade and economic cooperation specially in Russian far East.³⁵

However, the Kurile islands dispute continued to throw its shadow on Russo-Japanese relations. Nevertheless, high level political contacts continued, and the volume of mutual trade between the two grew by over 50% in 1992.³⁶ In October 1993, Yeltsin visited Japan on the heels of his attack on Russian Parliament with tank fire and his expulsion of deputies from the assembly. In this visit, Yeltsin confirmed the existence of territorial issues between the two countries but they did not reach any agreements in this regard. Yet, they signed dozens of

34. Franklin Griffiths, "From situation of weakness: foreign policy of new Russia" International Journal, Vol. 49, No. 4, Autumn 94, P. 704.

35. See Eungen Bazhanov and Natasha Bazhanov, "Russia and Asia in 1993", Asian Survey (Berkeley, Calif), Vol. 44. No. 1, January 1994, PP. 90-91.

36. Ibid., P. 92.

documents aimed at the promotion of economic and other forms of bilateral cooperation.³⁷

The relation between Russia and South Korea remained active at both political and economic level. Moscow was interested to promote its relation with prosperous Korea as a source of capital and technology.

Yet, it should be remembered that there have been disagreements between Russia and America on some issues concerning some of developing countries like India, Iran, Libya and Iraq. Though, these issues were economic oriented, not ideological like the Soviet era, still it troubled their relations.

For example, Russia's plan to sell India advanced rocket engines for financial gains resulted in American pressure on Russia to cancel its deal with India on the ground that it would violate the ban on transfer of long-range missile technology. Russians submitted to the American pressure and abandoned the deal. This provoked sharp criticism against Yeltsin's government by his opponents. Americans also put pressure on Russia to stop selling advanced military equipments including several submarines to Iran, but Russia did not yield to American demands.³⁸

37. Ibid., P. 92

38. It is worth noting that Russia has tried to regain its share in lucrative arms marketing. They have been searching among rich developing countries like China, India, Iran, Malaysia and so on, which are able to pay the price of weapons.

Moreover, Russia threatened to veto security council's proposal to expand the sanctions against Lybia.³⁹ However, Russia's motive was not to defend Lybia, but to get back \$ 4 billion debt that Libya owed it. The same argument can be true in the case of Iraq in which Russia was in favour of partial lifting of the sanction against it.

To sum up, it may be said that Russian foreign policy toward developing countries, more or less, was continuation of Gorbachev's foreign policy; abandoning developing countries in order to remove irritant issues in Russia's relation with the western countries specially U.S.A.

Since late 1993, Russia as a result of change of its external and internal policy pursued a more assertive foreign policy. Yet, Russia is not prepared to challenge the west in the Security Council for fear that this might endanger its relation with them. Therefore, some scholars argue that the shift in foreign policy of Russia toward the west mostly occurred at the verbal level. In other word, "The language in which Russia's foreign policy towards the west is defended has been changed, but the policy remains largely intact."⁴⁰ But Russia's policy toward the eastward expansion of NATO is a good example of a shift in Russia's foreign policy at least with regard to Europe.

39. Paul Marantz, "Neither adversaries nor partners: Russia and the west search for a new relationship," International Journal, Vol. 49, No. 4, Autumn 1994, P. 728.

40. Ibid., P. 735.

For Russia, Europe has been a source of threat throughout much of its history. To address its security concerns in Europe, the former Soviet Union entered in military alliance with Eastern European countries under Warsaw Pact against NATO.

The dissolution of the Warsaw Pact removed that and created a vacuum in Eastern Europe. The desires of some of the former members of Warsaw Pact like Hungary, Poland, Czech Republic and Slovakia by applying in joining NATO in order to meet their security concerns compounded Russia's security fears.

However, Russia's attitude towards NATO till first half of 1993 as shown by the reaction of Yeltsin and Kozyrev was vague and ambivalent. For instance, Yeltsin during his visit to Poland endorsed the right of Poland as a sovereign state to join NATO, though later on, he reversed his opinion and in a letter to NATO, he suggested "a joint NATO-Russian guarantee for the security of the East central European states"⁴¹

But it seems from late 1993 onward a consensus has emerged among Russian political elites against the eastward expansion of NATO. It should be noted that none of political elites in Russia including nationalists seriously talk about NATO as a real military threat.⁴² Moreover, NATO is no longer considered as a threat in the military doctrine of Russia.

41. De Nevers, n.20, p.66.

42. See Alex Pravda, "Russia and European Security: The delicate balance", NATO Review (Brussels), No. 3, May 1995, P.19.

Therefore it seems that 'political and psychological factors' have determinant roles rather than military consideration in Russia's opposition to the eastward expansion of NATO.

In order to meet Russia's concerns about its security and preventing it from isolation, NATO proposed the partnership for peace (PFP). In PFP all former members of the Warsaw Pact and former Soviet republics could cooperate with NATO, and join it in the long term if they meet certain conditions required for NATO's approval of their membership.⁴³

Nevertheless, Russia, though satisfied with the postponement of eastward expansion of NATO⁴⁴ warned its former allies of Warsaw Pact that they had no right to join NATO at the cost of Russian security concerns and instead called for promotion of economic cooperation between Russia and Central Eastern European countries.

This indeed asserted Russian vital interests in central Eastern Europe as its sphere of influence. And it dismayed Eastern European countries when they saw it in the context of Russia's heavy handed deal with Chechnya.

43. See George A. Joulan, "NATO's Military contribution to partnership for peace: The progress and the challenge", NATO Review, No. 2, March 1995, PP.3-6.

44. SWB, SU/1884, 1 January 1994, E/1.



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Russia's Policy Toward near abroad

The collapse of the Soviet Union and emergence of the new independent states posed a new challenge to Russia's policy-makers. The first question before its foreign policy decision-makers was how to shape new relations with these new states. It is worth noting that Russian foreign policy apparatus had enough expertise to conduct Russia's foreign policy towards distant abroad. But there was no precedence in Russia to deal with the new sovereign states in near abroad. Therefore, in the absence of expertise it took Russia six months to establish a department to tackle with near abroad countries in its foreign ministry.⁴⁵

In the early period of Russian foreign policy, Russia adopted a very moderate policy toward the near abroad based on developing cooperation, negotiation and compromise to resolve any disagreement that arise among them. They were in the view that the rights of Russian speaking people in near abroad should be preserved through international organisations according to international law not by the use of armed forces. The Westerner's moderate attitude toward near abroad provoked sharp criticism on the side of some political and military elites. They asserted that Russian western-oriented foreign policy neglected Russia's interests in near abroad.

But by mid 1993, there was a sharp change in Russia's policy toward near abroad. In other word, a consensus appeared between Russian political and military elites on Russia's vital

45. De Nevers, n. 20, P. 19.

interests in the newly independent states of the former Soviet Union as its sphere of influence. It is worth to note that according to a survey conducted in 1993 so far as East-West relations is concerned, the orientation of the Russian elites to political economy is important.⁴⁶ On the contrary, according to the Zimmerman's findings, there was no correlation between orientation to political economy and Russia's policy toward near abroad. In other word, Westerners (market democrats) in response to the questions like, whether they regarded 'the defense of Russian abroad in the former Soviet Union, as very important foreign policy goal', or whether they thought 'the national interests of Russia extend beyond its current territory' and so on, did not differ much with other elites.⁴⁷

As a result of the consensus among political and military elites on near abroad, Russia's foreign policy gained a new assertiveness towards these newly independent states. No doubt that Russia as the main successor state of the former Soviet Union has political, economic and security interests in near abroad. Besides, psychological motivations are also involved in shaping Russia's policy toward the near abroad countries. In fact, it seems that Russia is not prepared to shed its imperial awareness and accommodate itself with new situation in the former territory of the Soviet Union.

As mentioned, Russia has economic interest in near abroad. The collapse of the Soviet Union balkanized the highly

46. See Zimmerman, n.11. PP. 103-126.

47. Ibid., P. 121.

complementary and 'integrated economic system' of the USSR. The disruption of economy has had a great impact on Russia as well as the near abroad economies. In fact, it has complicated the process of reform in the CIS states. Access to ports and raw materials,⁴⁸ markets, transport facilities including rail and motor transport, gas and oil pipelines, main electric transmission lines and so on is essential to Russia's economy. There have been many attempts by Russia and some other CIS countries to boost economic cooperation between themselves, yet nothing concrete has come out. For instance, a treaty was signed to set up a ruble zone by Russia, Kazakhstan, Belarus, Uzbekistan, Armenia and Tajikistan. In September 1993, a Treaty on the Creation of Economic Union was signed by the CIS countries on establishment of a common market and uniform customs and monetary area (49).

48. It should be noted that many of mineral deposits like maganese, Uranium, bismuth, titarium and so on, "that are needed in modern production and that cover 70 to 100 percent of the Russian economy's corresponding requirements were situated outside Russia". See O. Rybakov, "prospects for the development of Russia's economic relations with states of the commonwealth", Problem of economic transition (Armonk, N.Y.), Vol. 37, No. 9, January 1995, P. 33.

49. See Andrei Zagorski, "Reintegration in the former USSR?", AussenPolitik, Vol. 45, No. 3, 1994, P.264, and also Zagorski, "Developments in the CIS: Challenge for Russia." AussenPolitik, Vol. 44, No. 2, 1993, PP. 149-150.

But as of now, it has not become a reality and the parties to the treaty, introduced their own currencies. It should be stressed that Russia had found hard dealing with all the CIS countries with diverse interests. This has given rise to bilateralism between Russia and near abroad countries.⁵⁰ Thus Russia has signed agreements on cooperation in economic and other fields with some of near abroad countries on bilateral basis, which has been more successful than multilateral agreements.

More importantly, the eruption of conflict in near abroad adjacent to Russia's borders is of political and security concern to Russia. In this regard the possibility of spill over of conflict to Russia has posed a security threat to its stability. In realm of security one of the main goals of Russian policy toward near abroad is protecting of borders of the former territory of Soviet Union from foreign intrusion and the so called Islamic fundamentalism. Besides access to Russia's military bases located in near abroad is of great importance to Russia.

Russia has taken responsibility of patrolling of much of the CIS borders. In fact "Russia has decided that rather than patrolling its borders with neighboring CIS states, it is preferable to strengthen the outer border of the CIS".⁵¹ During 1993, Russian forces were active in conflict-torn regions of

50. Ibid., P. 265

51. John W.R. Lepingwell, "The Russian military and security policy in near abroad", Survival(London), Vol. 36, No.3, Autumn 1994, P.84.

near aboard on peace keeping missions - missions which led Russia to demand from the United Nations to recognize Russia's peace keeping mission there.

The presence of Russian military forces in the newly independent states is justified by Russian leaders, on the ground that it would prevent the emergence of a 'security vacume' in Russia's sphere of influence or near abroad. Besides, Russia's assertion on "military presence in the near abroad was strengthened by a decree, signed by Yeltsin in April 1994 which authorised the military to begin negotiation to establish rights to maintain up to 30 military bases and facilities outside Russia".⁵² Apparently, Russia has already made use of its military forces in near abroad to exert pressure in the interest of Russian ambitions, particularly regarding those countries which were assertive with respect to their independence.

Russian policy toward the near abroad countries has also an ethnic dimension. Though, in the early phase of Russia's foreign policy, it appeared that Russian policy-makers were relatively indifferent with respect to the fate of Russians, but in the course of time Russian policy gained assertiveness toward near abroad. Indeed, one of the priorities of Russian foreign policy in near abroad is the protection of Russians living abroad.⁵³

52. Ibid., P. 74, quoted from ITAR-TASS, 7 April 1994.

53. See "Kozyrev offers draft foreign-policy guidelines", The Current digest of the post Soviet Press, n.25, P.14.

After the collapse of the Soviet Union, there were 25 million Russians residing outside Russian Federation in the newly independent republics of the former Soviet Union.⁵⁴ The fate of these Russians has already affected Russia's relation with the new republics, and it will be a determinant factor in their relations for time to come.

Soon after independence, the near abroad countries introduced new measures regarding citizenship and language. That threatened the position of Russians in their countries. The introduction of new language policy, as a manifestation of nationalism in the newly independent states made indigenous language as official, while majority of Russians living there did not know those languages.⁵⁵ With regard to law of citizenship, Estonia and Latvia appeared to be very restrictive. They "have adopted citizenships laws that effectively consign Russians and other non-titular who arrived since 1940 to the category of resident alien".⁵⁶ Therefore many Russians in Estonia and Latvia were deprived from participation in election according to the new citizenship laws.

It should be noted that, in some of the newly independent states, as a result of the rise of nationalism, resentment

54. It is based on 1989 census held in the Soviet Union.

55. See William D. Jackson, "Russia after the crisis-Imperial temptations: Ethnics Abroad", Orbis (London), Vol. 38, No.1, Winter 1994, P.4

56. Ibid., P. 5.

against Russians was increasing. Broadly speaking, hostility against Russians is high where economic disparity is common, and Russians usually occupy better positions. Moreover, the conflict ridden regions of the former Soviet Union, where Russia covert or overt is involved provides a good ground for hostility by titular nationals against Russians living there.

In reaction to these development, Russians in the near abroad organized themselves to defend their rights. In Baltic states, they threatened to secede and join Russia. In some other regions where Russians formed majority, they formed strong secessionist movements and even received support from Moscow. This is the case with Trans-Deniester and crimea respectively in Moldava⁵⁷ and Ukrain. Some of Russians also migrated from those troubled areas to Russia or some other safe places. This, in turn, alarmed Moscow of a 'Russian mass migration' toward Russia, an event that Russia with its fragile economy could not bear.

Russia has tried, while protecting Russian rights in near abroad, to make use of Russian speaking people to extract concessions from the near abroad countries.

57. For secessionist movement in Moldava and the role of Moscow, See Anneli Ute Gabanji, "Moldava between Russia, Romania and Ukrain", Aussenpolitik, Vol. 44, No.1, 1993, PP.98-107.

The Russian support for greater autonomy for Crimea complicated the Russian-Ukrain relations which was already troubled over the division of Black Sea fleet and the lack of determination on the side of Ukraine to cooperate with the CIS. Besides, Russia has tried to exert pressure on Ukraine through reduction of fuel delivery. The election of Leonid Kuchma as new president of Ukraine, as it was perceived, did not bring an essential change in the Russian-Ukrain relations.

In Moldova, the 14th Army of Russia was very active to support the independence of Trans-Dniester republic, though Yeltsin and Kozyrev were not in favour of its secession. But the 14th Army served Russia's interest in protecting Russian speaking people in Moldova and preventing it from integrating in Romania.⁵⁸

Regarding Baltic states, Russia made conditional the withdrawal of its troops from their territory,⁵⁹ with the improvement of Russian minorities' positions in Baltic states. The reduction of energy delivery was also used as an economic means in Russia's interest.

The Russian majority of Kazakhstan population was determinant in Kazakhstan's close relation with Russia. Even the president of Kazakhstan has suggested the formation of 'Eurasian

58. Ibid.

59. In practice the withdrawal continued according to the negotiated time table.

Union with Russia.⁶⁰ So far as Russia's policy toward near abroad is concerned, it has supported central Asian countries conservative regimes to reinforce stability, prevent ethnic conflict and as well protect the CIS borders against foreign intrusion.

While stability served Russia's interests in central Asia, instability in caucuses was appropriate to Russia.

60. See Lepingwell, n. 51, P. 79.

CHAPTER II

Russia and Caucasus

Caucasus is a land located between Caspian and Black Seas. Located there are now three independent states, Georgia, Armenia and Azerbaijan with a total population of 15,719,933.¹

Its ethnic composition is very diverse and complicated. However, the main ethnic groups residing there are Georgians, Armenians and Azeris. According to 1989 Soviet census Georgians were 5,395,841, Armenians 3,404,353 and Azeris 7,019,739,² and each one of three constitutes a majority in its republic. However, it is worth noting that each of these ethnic groups form a minority in other republics,³ along other ethnic minorities such as Ossetes, Abkhaz, Greeks Kurds, Lezghins, Avars, Tatars, Tats, Tskhurs, Assyrians, Jews, Udins, and Turks;⁴ and most of them have their own native languages.⁵ Generally speaking, the

1. Paul B. Heneze, "The demography of the Caucasus according to 1989 Soviet Census data", Central Asian Survey (London), Vol. 10, No. 1-2, 1991, P. 149.

2. Ibid.

3. After the outbreak of armed conflict between Armenians and Azeris over Nagorno-Karabakh many Azeris and Armenians migrated to their respective country.

4. Heneze n.1, P. 150.

5. See Ibid., PP. 164-68.

languages spoken in the region can be classified as: Caucasian, Turkic and Indo-European.⁶

It should be emphasized that the region is not only divided along ethnic and lingual lines but also on the basis of religion. Georgians and Armenians are Christians while Azeris are Muslims. Moreover, the Christians of Caucasus are divided principally between the Monophysite Armenians and Orthodox Georgians,⁷ and the Muslims are Shiites and Sunnis.

The diversity of the people of Caucasus resulted in rivalry among them and, as a consequence it attracted outside powers to champion the cause of a specific group or religion. This is particularly true with regard to the Russians.

Though Russia's south-ward expansion started from early 19th century, it came in contact with the region as a result of clash between rival ethnic groups that appealed for Russian support in mid-sixteen century.⁸ This was the time of the European overseas colonial expansion in all over the world. Russia as a land-locked country had no strong tradition of naval forces and therefore proceeded to occupy the lands adjacent to its territory to reach an outlet towards warm water of seas and

6. Muriel Atkin, "Russian expansion in the Caucasus to 1814", in Russian Colonial expansion to 1917, ed. Micheal Rywkin (London: Mansell Publishing Limited, 1988), PP. 142-43.

7. Ibid., P.143.

8. Ibid., P.139.

oceans in the South and Far-East'.⁹ In fact, Peter the Great was sharing the common idea among the then European powers that the state would be strengthened by expansion. Furthermore, he was willing to establish colonies and trading centres on the pattern of European overseas colonies.¹⁰

The Russian expansion into the Caucasus compounded with decline of the Persian empire under Safavid dynasty. Russians came to realize the importance of the region vis-a-vis the Ottoman Empire. Indeed The Russian governor of Astrakhan stressed in his reports to the emperor the strategic importance of Transcaucasia (Caucasus) for future conflict with Turkey'.¹¹

Russia's drive toward south in Caucasia gained new strength under Catherine the great. She was willing not only to continue the mission of Peter the great, but also she found new tasks for Russia's expansionist policy, bringing civilization and christianity to the so called barbarous people of the regions¹² in other words, Russification of the non-Russian peoples which later on became an official policy under Alexander III.¹³

9. Zafar Imam, Soviet foreign policy 1917-1990 (New Delhi: Sterling Publishers Private Limited, 1991), P. 11.

10. Atkin, n. 6, P. 147.

11. Hough Seton-Watson, The Russian empire 1801-1917 (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1967), P. 60.

12. See Atkin, n. 6, P.153

13. For policy of Russification during Tsarist Russia See Watson, n. 11, pp.485-505.

Russia's imperial ambitions confronted with harsh reactions of Iranian and Ottoman empires. They frequently fought each others over the Caucasus and the region circulated among them.

In 1783, as a result of the treaty of Georgievsky, Russia emerged as Georgia's protectorate.¹⁴ But, in 1795 Georgia, for a brief period was recaptured by Iran under Aqa Muhammad Khan, the head of Qajar dynasty. In 1800 Georgia was annexed by Russians, and they began to rule it directly. It may be said that this was the decisive step in Russia's expansionist policy in Caucasus.

In 1804 a war broke out between Iran and Russia which ended with the victory of Russians, and conclusion of the Gulistan treaty (1813), in which Iran recognized all Russia's territorial claims in Caucasus.¹⁵ Therefore, Khanates of Ganjen, Karabakh, Shirvan, Shakki, Baku, Derbent and Talesh were annexed to Tsarist Russia. The Russo-Ottoman war (1806-1812) also came to an end with the signing of the treaty of Bucharest under which Russia kept the western Georgian principalities but restored to the Ottomans the Pashalik of Akhaltsekhe and the other captured Ottoman positions. Sukhumi was supposed to be returned to the Ottomans as part of this agreement, but the Russians chose not to yield it because of its strategic importance.¹⁶

14. See, Atkin, n. 6, P. 159.

15. Ibid., P. 180.

16. Atkin, n.6, P. 180.

In 1828, as a result of another Russo-Iranian war, Russia occupied Yerevan and Nakhichevan, and according to Turkamanchay treaty the border between the two countries was determined on the Araxes river.¹⁷

Apart from Iran and Ottoman empire, the people of caucasus resisted Tsarist Russia's domination. In fact, it took Russians many years to consolidate their power in Caucasus. One of the most known resistant movement was a religious one headed by Kazi Mulla and Iman Shamil. They united the people of northern Caucasus and waged a holy war against Russians. But they were suppressed and Russia consolidated its rule over the whole Caucasus.

Russia's frontiers in Caucasus was stabilized in the first quarter of 19th century. Although, there were attempts on the side of Russians to penetrate into the contiguous region, but these attempts proved fruitless.

In fact, Britishers felt anxious over the Russian drive toward the southern seas and were determined to save their interests in Asia, and arrest the Russian expansion. In this regard, it was suggested that Caucasus could serve as a barrier protecting Asia from Russia's aggressive march towards the South.¹⁸ The idea was never realized and Caucasus remained

(17) See Watson, n.11, P. 290.

(18) Haidar Bammate, "The Caucasus and the Russian revolution, from a political viewpoint", Central Asian Survey, Vol.10, No.4, 1991, P.3.

under Russian occupation. Indeed, it served Russia as a base camp from which to carry out her ambitious projects,¹⁹ in the region particularly with regard to Iran and Turkey. However, it came to a halt with the outbreak of the October revolution and the collapse of Tsarist Russia.

Caucasus after the October Revolution

With the revolution and subsequently the eruption of civil war compounded foreign intervention, while the Russian empire was in the process of disintegration. In fact, with the weakness of the centre and the rise of nationalist fervor in Russia's peripheries, the centrifugal forces took upper hand in the affairs of their respective native lands. This was also true in case of Caucasus.

On 22 April 1918, an independent Transcaucasian Federal republic was proclaimed,²⁰ consisting of independent states of Georgia, Armenia and Azerbaijan respectively under Menshevik, Dashnak and Mussavat parties. But soon the divergent interests of constituent entities of the Transcaucasian unity brought an end to the federation.²¹ Georgia proclaimed its independence

19. Ibid., P.5.

20. E.H. Carr, The Bolshevik Revolution 1917-1923, Harmondsworth, Middlesex: Penguin Books, 1966. I, P. 346.

21. See Richard Pipes, The formation of the Soviet Union: Communism and Nationalism 1917-1923, revised edition, New York: Atheneum, 1964, PP. 193-194.

on 26 May 1918, and Armenia and Azerbaijan followed suite two days after.²²

As mentioned before, there has been rivalry among Georgians, Armenians and Azeris notwithstanding the facts that they were strongly intermixed with one another⁽²³⁾ in Caucasus, while the ethnic frontiers dividing these three national groups were in many places ill-defined.²⁴ These, compounded with economic disparities, bred the national animosities among these new independent states.

Soon after the withdrawal of Turks who had occupied the greater part of Armenia and Azerbaijan,²⁵ Armenia and Georgia entered a war over land dispute.²⁶ In 1919 and 1920 Armenia also fought with Azerbaijan over the Karabakh and Zangezur regions.²⁷ These animosities was exploited by the Bolsheviks to dominate the region where Bolshevism had no popular support except in some industrial areas like Baku where oil industries had attracted a lot of Russian and non-Russian migrants.

22. Ibid. Also Carr, n. 20, P. 347.

23. Christopher J. Walker, Armenia the Survival of a nation (London:Croom Helm, 1980), P. 244.

24. Carr, n. 20, P. 344.

25. On Turkish assault on Armenians and their massacre consult Walker, n. 23, PP. 243-62.

26. Ibid., PP. 267-268.

27. Pipes, n. 21, P. 210. And also Walker n. 23, PP. 277-279.

It should be noted that with industrialization of Russia and discovery of oil during the later half of 19th century and other mineral resources like manganese had added a new dimension to the strategic importance of the Caucasus. Richard Pipes and Stephen Blank opine the importance of Caucasus for Russia was, in the first place, economic.²⁸

Anyhow, the Soviet government was determined 'To arrest and reverse the disintegration of the Romanov domions'. Therefore, the doctrine of national self-determination including the right of secession was introduced with regard to the nationalities question.²⁹ Although, when the Bolshevik power was firmly borne upon the non-Russian nations, with some exceptions, the idea of self-determination lost its function, which was to bring the shattered Russian empire together. The Bolsheviks created an administrative system that gave symbolic recognition to nationhood, in the form of a federal structure, and allowed the various national groups to preserve their linguistic and cultural indenty.³⁰ So far as Caucasus is concerned, Stalin

28. Pipes, P. 217, and also see Stephen Blank, "The Transcaucasian Federation and the origins of the Soviet Union, 1921-1922", Central Asian Survey, Vol.9, No.4, 1990, P.35.

29. For this part see, Carr, n. 20, PP. 259-281.

30. Amy Knight, "The Political Police and National question in the Soviet Union", in The Post-Soviet nations, Perspectives on the demise of the USSR, ed. Alexander J. Motyl, (New York: Colombia University Press, 1992), P. 170.

then commissar of nationalities, master minded the forced Sovietisation of the region which his close associates namely Orjonikidzeh and Kirov had carried out.

When the Red Army captured in 1918 the north Caucasus where the independent republic of the North Caucasus had been proclaimed,³¹ and as well dealt the defeat of the White army, the Bolsheviks had no difficulty to capture Baku in April 1920, the capital of Azerbaijan where the British troops withdrawal from Azerbaijan had made easier. Soon after their take over, the Bolsheviks declared an Azerbaijan Socialist Soviet Republic.³²

Then it was the turn of the conquest of the Armenians, who were the most Russophile people in Caucasus, particularly with regard to the constant atrocities against them by Turks, their traditional enemy. In October 1920, once again fighting broke out over a frontier dispute, between Turks and Armenians.³² It was a golden opportunity for Bolsheviks to Sovietize Armenia. In late November, the Red Army crossed the border and overthrew the Dashnake government which had already been defeated at the hand of the Turks and Armenian Socialist Republic was proclaimed in the late November. Considering the rapprochement of Bolsheviks and Kemalists (in Turkey), it was argued by some of

31. For detail, see Bammate, n. 18, PP. 14-26.

32. Carr, n. 20, P. 350, and also see Pipes, n. 21, P. 227.

33. For further information, see Walker, n. 23, PP. 306-313.

scholars that there has been a collusion between Russians and Turks against Armenia.³⁴

The fall of Georgian Menshevik republic at the hand of Bolshheviks was the last instance of forced Sovietisation for nearly twenty years.³⁵ Soon after the proclamation of the Soviet Armenia, Orjonikidze did not lost time to seize Georgia even in open violation of 1921 Russo-Georgian Treaty in which Soviet Russia had recognized the sovereignty of Menshevik Georgia.³⁶ on 21 February, the Red Army crossed the borders toward the Georgian capital, and on 25 February, Tbilisi witnessed the proclamation of Georgian socialists Soviet Republic.

Lenin concerns over Caucasus in general and with regard to Georgia in particular, and his fear of popular resistance against Bolsheviks made him to favour policy of concession in relation to the Georgian intelligentsia and small traders,⁽³⁷⁾ and a slower, more cautious, more systematic transition to socialism³⁸ in Caucasus. But these precautions were never considered by Stalin then commissar of nationalities and his associates in Caucasian particularly, Orjonikidze. They

34. For example, see Pipes n. 21 PP. 231-232. And also in Walker, n. 23, PP. 275-276.

35. Carr, n. 20, P. 354.

36. Pipes, n. 21, P. 334.

37. Carr, n. 20, P. 354.

38. Pipes, n. 21. P. 341.

arbitrarily ruled over Caucasus 'through extraordinary organs' and even bypassed the local communist parties and regular governing agencies.

The formation of the Transcaucasian Federation can be cited as good example of their style with regard to Caucasus. In spite of opposition by local communist parties and governments specially in Georgia and Azerbaijan, the federation was proclaimed on 12 March, 1922. As Stephen Blank mentions that 'they manipulated the process of federation to make it seem as if it came from the bottom up, in order to persuaded Lenin of their policy's rightness.' Lenin's correspondence on the subject..... indicates his reservations about them and their propensity for russification old regime behaviour'.³⁹ Yet he authorised the creation of the federation.

It should be stressed that the policy of divide and rule followed by Stalin in Caucasus was continuation of Tsarist Russian policy towards nationalities. For instance, the Armenians' resistance against confiscation of funds of the Church by Tsarist government, was broken when "the Armenians' enemies, the Moslem Tatars of Azerbaijan, were encouraged to attack Armenian fellow citizens and sack their property",⁴⁰

39. Blank, n. 28, PP. 37-38.

40. Watson, n.11, PP.500-501. See also Audrey L Altstadt, "Nagorno-Karabagh - apple of discord in the Azerbaijan SSR", Central Asian Survey, Vol.7, No. 4,1988, P. 70.

After the October revolution, the ethnic enmity in Caucasus played an important role. With regard to the lack of popular support of Bolshevism in the region and even in Baku where the communists took control of the Soviet of Baku, as Pipes argues, "The reason must be sought in their effective exploitation of the national animosities".⁴¹ When the Azeri Muslims revolted in March 1918, the Armenian Dashnaks massacred Azeris for three days with support of Russians. According to a Soviet historian, the event "consisted without any doubt of the exploitation of two national tendencies against a third national tendency".⁴² It should be noted that in the same year Azeris revenged with support of Turkish army in Baku.

Furthermore, it is worth noting that, the arbitrary rule of Stalin was manifested in drawing artificial boundaries among the constituent republics of the Soviet Union, specially in Caucasus. This artificial boundaries which were inherited by the newly independent states has already caused a conflict between rival ethnics i.e. Armenians and Azeris; and it can engender border conflict in conflict prone areas of the former territory of USSR, where these artificial borders exist.

For example, the question of Karabakh originated in the 'Soviet nationalities policy in historical prospective'. The region located completely inside Azerbaijan territory populated mostly by Armenians, is claimed by republic of Armenia. During

(41) Pipes, n. 21, P. 199.

(42) Ibid, P. 200.

the short period of independence, the two states repeatedly fought over Karabakh. After the October revolution, creation of an autonomous oblast was considered by the communist party of Azerbaijan staffed mostly by Russians and Armenians⁴³ and Kirov as first Secretary of the Azerbaijan communist party.

The Azerbaijan communist party set-up a commission without any Azeri member, to study the feasibility of creation of the Autonomous oblast. Consequently, Karabakh was removed from direct rule of the Azerbaijan government and an Autonomous oblast was proclaimed by decree of 24 July 1923.⁴⁴ More importantly, "the borders of Nagorno-Karabakh were drawn so as to ensure an Armenian majority in the ethnically mixed region".⁴⁵ Therefore, it left a constant source of disagreement and conflict between the two republics in Caucasus.

The Caucasus new Soviet republics joined USSR as constituents of the Transcaucasian federation in 1922. In 1937, with amendments of the constitution of the USSR, the Transcaucasian federation was dissolved and Georgia, Armenia and Azerbaijan became direct members of the USSR.

Although, with creation of the USSR, the constituent republics lost their sovereignty, yet during 1920s, the New Economic Policy (NEP) compounded with the policy of nativization

43. Altstadt, n. 39, P. 65.

44. See Ibid, P. 67.

45. Ibid, P. 67.

favoured by Lenin, encouraged indigenous culture and the use of native language.⁴⁶ In fact, there was an attempt to promote educational standard of the people through their native tongue. Moreover, it was suggested that the administration of the non-Russian republics should 'be composed the manners, customs and language of the local population'.⁴⁷ It should be noted that, during 1920s, even non-communist writers and nationalists were tolerated, though religious places like church and mosques were attacked.

By the early of 1920s, Stalin as general Secretary of the party had begun consolidating his power. Apart from Stalin's character, the abandonment of the NEP and the adoption of first five year plan that focused on the rapid industrialization and collectivization of agriculture dealt a blow to the policy of nativization. In fact, the central economic planning brought about political centralization which left hardly any autonomy to the union republics.⁴⁸ The opponents of Stalin were brutally suppressed by political police and many people were liquidated

46. Ronald Suny, "State, civil society, and ethnic cultural consolidation in the USSR—Roots of the national question", in From Union to Commonwealth: Nationalism and Separatism in the Soviet republics, eds. Gail W. Lapidus, Victor Zaslavsky and Philip Goldman (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1992) PP. 28-29.

47. Merle Fainsod, How Russia is ruled, Rev. ed. (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1970), P. 362.

48. Suny, n. 46, P. 29.

and thousands were jailed, specially the old Bolsheviks and nationalists.

The policy of nativization was substituted by the policy of Russification. The Russian language became compulsory in all schools, and the Russian culture was regarded as the most advanced culture that was to be promoted.⁴⁹

After Stalin's death, with Khushchev political and legal reforms, there were some concessions to the non-Russian minorities and a relative national expression reappeared.⁵⁰ Furthermore, a native political elites benefited a limited political autonomy in their titular republics, a course which was also continued under Brezhnev. In other words, a kind of patronage network emerged in the Soviet Union⁵¹ where, the national elites won over the support of their patron in the

46. See Gerhard Simon, Nationalism and Policy toward the nationalities in the Soviet Union, from totalitarian dictatorship to Post-Stalinis Society, trans. Karen Forster and Oswald Forster (Boulder: Westview Press, 1991), PP. 148-155.

50. See Knight, n.30, P.177.

51. Regarding elite behaviour and emergence of the patronage - clients network see John P. Willerton, Patronage and Politics in the USSR (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1992, PP.5-42.

center while maintaining stability, keeping some restraints on nationalism, and showing economic growth, in their respective republic⁵², could remain in power for a long period. This gave rise to corruption among the party aparatchiks in the form of illegal activities directed towards private economic gains which was known as the "second economy".

This situation among caucasian states was alarming, during 1960s. The growth of corruption led Brezhnev to bring Haider Aliev in Azerbaijan (1969), Eduard Shevardnadze in Georgia (1972) with police backgrounds and Karen Demirgian in Armenia (1974) to curb the rising tide of corruption and nationalism.⁵³ Though, there was success in some fields,⁵⁴ there was no structural change in the system and patronage network. In other words, it was only a circulation of elite. The very political network and patronage, and client relation became a barrier against Gorbachev's reforms.

52. Suny, n. 46, P. 31.

53. Ibid.

54. On Aliev's patronage network and its relation with Moscow See Willerton, n. 51, PP. 191-222.

Caucasus during Gorbachev era

The succession of Mikhail Gorbachev as General Secretary of the Communist Party and the introduction of his programme of reforms had great impact on nationalities problem in the Soviet Union. Though, at the end of the Brezhnev era there were signs of tension among nationalities simmering to the surface,⁵⁵ were indicating the acuteness of nationalities problem in the Soviet Union which it had initially no place in Gorbachev's program of reforms. For a long time the Soviet officials kept saying that the nationalities question had been solved. Gorbachev also along with the official line underlined the great achievements of the Soviet Union on nationalities problem⁵⁶, and asserted that national question had been solved. In fact, it was only in the course of time that Gorbachev realised the intensity of the nationalities question in the USSR.

As Gorbachev proceeded to implement his reforms the old nationalities grievances reemerged sometimes in the form of violence and murder which posed a real challenge to the process of reforms. As a matter of fact, decentralization of the Soviet political system compounded with democratization of the society and introduction of competitive election provided a good

55. See Theodore H. Friedgut, "Nations of the USSR: from Mobilized participation to autonomous diversity", in Alexander J. Motyl, n. 50, PP. 201-202.

56. See 27th Congress of the Community party of the Soviet Union, (New Delhi, Allied Publishers, 1986) P. 68.

ground for national fronts to become a basis for the rise and development of civil society⁽⁵⁷⁾, in the absence of any political party. Moreover, the economic stagnation of the Soviet Union and material shortages also contributed to dissatisfaction of the nationalities with the present order which was expressed in the language of nationalism not only among non-Russians but also among Russians themselves.⁵⁸ The rise of nationalism, ethnic conflicts, strikes and disorders across the Soviet Union in turn deteriorated the economic situation of the country, that bred the demand for economic and political independence among the republics of the USSR. However, it should be emphasized that Gorbachev's attempts to rely not solely on the communist party, legitimized the existence of institutions based on an autonomously defined national and social identity,⁵⁹ which facilitated the disintegration of the Soviet Union.

The first violent response to the Gorbachev's perestroika that aimed at the reforming the party came from Alma-Ata, when Din-Muhammad Kunaev, the General Secretary of the Khazakh communist party was replaced by a Russian. However, the Caucasus once again was the hot bed of nationalism and ethnic conflict.

57. Galina Starovioteva, "Nationalities policies in the period of perestroika: some comments from a political actor", in Lapidus, n. 46, P. 115.

58. See Friedgut, n. 55, P. 209, and also see Suny n. 46, PP. 35-56.

59. Ibid., P. 210.

In 1988 a mass demonstration took place in Karabakh, in which the Armenians of the region demanded to join their autonomous oblast to Armenian republic. It was followed by huge Armenian's march in the streets of Yerevan supporting the cause of Karabakh Armenians. Moscow was shocked by the number of Armenian demonstrators marching in Yerevan, one of the most Russophile people in the USSR. As time was passing the situation continued to deteriorated. As a result of spreading rumors on killing two Azeris by Armenians, on 28 February, 1988, some Azeris attacked Armenians residing in Sumgait a city 22 miles away from Baku which left 26 Armenians and 6 Azeris dead.⁶⁰ It was allegedly a planned massacre engineered by the authorities in both Baku and Moscow, that was carried out by hooligans recruited from the jails.⁽⁶¹⁾ The riots continued for three days to punish Armenia that was insisting on independence, then the military forces dispatched to the city to curb the unrest. It appeared that Moscow while permitting the riot and conflict, if not provoking them, had resorted to the old tsarist policy of divide and rule, particularly when the fervor for independence and anti-Russian sentiment intensified.

60. Summary of World broadcasts (SWB) (Reading, England: BBC Monitory Service, 22 March 1989, SU/0106.

61. For an interesting detail of the events in Sumgait and Moscow's role in it, see Igor Nolyain, "Moscow's initiation of the Azeri-Armenian Conflict", Central Asian Survey, Vol. 13, No. 4. 1994, PP. 541-563.

The inter-ethnic caused an exodus of refugee from both Armenia and Azerbaijan, where many Russians also left the troubled area for Russia or some other safe places.

In December 1988, following the breakout of the earthquake, the member of Karabakh committee, which had been formed by Armenian intellectuals to support the cause of Armenians in Karabakh, were arrested and for a short time there was an ease in Karabakh unrest. But once again thousands of Armeninans marched and protested the internment of the members of the Karabakh committee. As a result they were released by the authorities.

As unrest was continued, in January 1989, the Soviet government established a special Administration committee, which was directly responsible to Moscow, to run the Nagorno-Karabakh region.⁶² The act was considered by Armenians as a transitional phase for joining Karabakh to Armenia, while Azeris, which were already displeased with Moscow over the removal of their leader Haidar Aliev in 1987, saw it as Kermlin bias in favour of Armenians. After one year the committee was dissolved and Nagorno-Karabakh was returned to Azerbaijan, which led to the Armenian's disappointments from Moscow. It should be noted that internal developments of both Armenia and Azerbaijan and their nationalist fervor evolved around the karabakh issue. With

(62) See Peter Rutland, "Democracy and nationalism in Armenia", Europe - Asia Studies(Oxfordshire, U.K.), Vol.46, No.5, 1994, P.844.

formation of national movements in both republics and introduction of competitive election, communist parties, particularly in Azerbaijan accommodated themselves with nationalist slogans in order to get elected.⁶³

However, in the absence of any prospect for peaceful solution to the Nagorno-Karabakh question and Gorbachev's lack of determination to solve the problem, there was an increase in the frequency of clashes between large groups of people using knives and guns, home made explosives and molotov cocktails.⁶⁴ In fact, a guerrilla warfare was underway in the region by Karabakh Armenians, with unofficial support of Armenia, against Azerbaijan government. The nationalist movements of both sides i.e. the popular front of Azerbaijan (PFA) and the Armenian Pan-National Movement (APM) were very active in mobilizing and organizing the people.

In January 1990, PFA supporters attacked the communist party and government buildings as well as the border posts between Iran and the Soviet Union, allegedly to overthrow the Soviet government in Azerbaijan. Moscow dispatched troops to suppress Azeris, in which 143 people were killed.⁶⁵ The General Secretary of the party was replaced and order was restored.

63. For Armenia see *Ibid.*, PP. 847-48, and for Azerbaijan see Geoffrey Ponton, The Soviet era, Soviet Politics from Lenin to Yeltsin (Oxford: Blackwell, 1994), PP. 238-240.

64. SWB, 13 July 1989, Su/0507.

65. See Ponton, n. 63, PP. 237-240.

With the rise of nationalist movements which were increasingly in favour of independence, Gorbachev came out with a proposal on a new union treaty which was to give more autonomy to the constituent republics. A nation wide referendum was held, in which six republics including Armenia refused to take part in it.⁶⁶

In the aftermath of the referendum there was escalation of conflict in Karabakh, in which Azeris took upper hand. It was alleged by Armenians that, Moscow was siding with Azerbaijan to punish Armenia for boycotting the referendum. Furthermore, when the August coup occurred in the Soviet Union, Ayaz Mutalibov the General Secretary of the Azerbaijan communist party supported the coup, no wonder that after the failure of the coup Moscow tacitly tilted towards Armenia.

As it was mentioned, Gorbachev Perestroika and democratization of the society also led to the rise of nationalism in Georgia as elsewhere in the Soviet Union. The national identity and drive for independence was strong in Georgia. It should be kept in mind that the demand for independence was not limited at republican level, but some autonomous regions within the republics also demanded more autonomy or even cession as it was in the case of Nagorno-Karabakh. Georgia also was facing the same problem within its territory. The Abkazians living in an autonomous republic

66. On the new Union Treaty, See Ibid., PP. 168-171.

in Georgia, demanded secession from Georgia. Moreover, South Ossetians which formed another autonomous republics also wanted secession to join North Ossetia in Russia.

In November 1989, a demonstration by Georgians against the secessionist movements in Georgia among other issues, was brutally suppressed with clubs and and toxic gas. It left 20 people dead and some others injured.⁶⁷ Though, Moscow ordered an investigation into the massacre, but it did not answer who took the decisions locally and in Moscow.⁶⁸ However, "the involvement of central authorities appears to be confirmed ... when General Rodinov, the local commanding officer, revealed that two politburo members, including Shevardnadze, joined in the decision to impose martial law and use troops to seize the city".⁶⁹

The Tbilisi killings outraged people and intensified the anti-Russian sentiments. In the first competitive election nationalist parties obtained majority in the supreme Soviet of Georgia. It elected ultranationalist Zviad Gamsakhurdia, a former dissident who was in jail for sometime, as new president. His authoritarian regime and tough policy towards minorities

67. See Oleg Glebov and John Crowfoot eds., The Soviet Empire: Its nations speak out (Chur: Harwood Academic Publishers, 1989), P.68.

68. For a good assessment of Tiflis Tragedy, See Speeches of the Congress of People's Deputies, in Ibid., PP. 65-81.

(69) Ponton, n. 63, P. 247.

brought about turmoil not only among minorities but also among Georgians themselves.⁷⁰

Georgian nationalists believed that Moscow was behind the Abkhazians and Ossets so as to subvert the Georgian independence movement. With the rise of violence in South Ossetia, a martial law was imposed by Georgian nationalist government. The act was declared by Gorbachev as illegal and he sent the Soviet troops to South Ossetia to bring peace and calm. But Georgians were in view "that Moscow using the conflict to pressure Georgia into signing the proposed Union Treaty".⁷¹ Amid turmoil in Caucasus, the coup occurred in the Soviet Union, that accelerated the drive for independence among Caucasian republics, as well as the collapse of the Soviet Union.

To sum up, Gorbachev's perestroika had little impact in Caucasus. In fact, it was a challenge to the party nomenklatura which were used to enjoy extra ordinary concessions and toleration of corruption, a phenomenon that was common in all Caucasian republics. Though, Gorbachev proceeded with reforming the party apparatus to implement perestroika, the historical weakness of the communist party in Caucasus compounded with the rise of ethnic-nationalism and conflict as a result of

(70) See Suny n. 46, PP. 39-40, and also Ponton, n. 63, PP. 249-250.

(71) Ponton, n. 63, P. 250.

openness and democratization of the society hardly brought any essential change in the region. In addition, Gorbachev had no solution to the problem of nationalities which had engulfed the whole region. Indeed, he reacted to the problem with a mixture of concessions and suppression that proved fruitless.

Furthermore, it appears that even Gorbachev or certain elements within the leadership resorted to the old Tsarist-Stalinist policy of divide and rule, when the situation turned out of control. This was the case with Caucasian republics where the demographic configuration of the region provided a good ground for that policy. When the Soviet Union was disintegrating the Caucasian republics as independent states were also in turmoil. Georgia was in a state of civil war between Gamsakhurdia and his opponents, while fighting was underway between Armenia and Azerbaijan. Amid this situation they, as independent states, entered a new phase in their relation with Russia, still a great power with strategic interests in the entire region. Whether Russia could deal with them in the frame-work of international norms and practices is an issue which would be studied in the next two chapters.

CHAPTER III

Russia's Policy Towards
Georgia

Georgia is located on the western side of Caucasus and in Russia's southern flank by the shores of the Black sea. It covers an area of 69,700 (sq.km) with a population of 5,400,841 comprising three autonomous regions i.e. Abkhazia, South Ossetia and Ajaria.¹

Though Georgia declared its independence on 9 April 1991, it effectively emerged as an independent state after the collapse of the Soviet Union right in the midst of elite and ethnic conflicts.

The dawn of competitive election in Georgia led to the domination of the nationalists in the new supreme soviet of Georgia which in turn elected a Georgian chauvinist to the post of the chairman of the elected body. Later on, a referendum was held in Georgia which 93% voted in favour of separation from the Soviet Union, and Zviad Gamsakhurdia was appointed as the President of Georgia by its supreme soviet. Georgia appeared having one of the most enthusiastic independent movements with anti-Russian sentiment after the Baltic states in the Soviet Union. The new supreme soviet dominated by nationalists fervour adopted new laws such as prohibiting the conscription of Georgians in the Soviet army. In fact, Georgia proceeded to form its own national guard a year before the fall of the Soviet Union. Moreover, Tbilisi demanded the withdrawal of the Russian

1. See Paul B. Henze, "The demography of the Caucasus according to 1989 Soviet census data", Central Asian Survey (London), Vol. 10. No. 112, 1991, PP. 148-154.

forces stationed in Georgia from its territory. After the collapse of the USSR, the independent Georgia refused to join the Commonwealth of Independent States (CIS), and continued its insistence on its independence and keeping distance from Russia.

However, the nationalist fervour in multi-ethnic Georgia was not only directed against Moscow, but it took the form of aggression against Georgian minorities, particularly under Gamsakhurdia. His attitude toward minorities and his authoritarian rule ushered conflict between the Georgian elites on the one hand, and Georgian military forces and the minorities namely Abkhazians and Ossetians, on the other. In fact, Gamsakhurdia's policy brought about a multi-party civil war in which his government had to fight with Georgian opposition, Abkhazians and Ossetes at the same time. Thanks to the war between Armenia and Azerbaijan, otherwise Georgia under the new President might also have to fight with Armenia, because Gamsakhurdia's anti-minorities policy did not spare Armenians living in Georgia too.

Though Gamsakhurdia was popularly elected to the post of presidency, he in the course of time faced increasingly opposition because of his authoritarian rule. He even alienated his allies in the independence movement. In fact, the Prime Minister Tengiz Sigua and Tengiz Kitovani the head of national guard sided with the opposition and resorted to force Gamsakhurdia overthrow.² Henceforth, in December 1991 an armed

2. See Geoffrey Ponton, The Soviet era, Soviet Politics from Lenin to Yeltsin (Oxford: Blackwell, 1994), P. 253.

conflict broke out in Tbilisi, in which the opposition took the upper hand which forced Gamsakhurdia to flee the country on 6th January 1992.⁽³⁾ Soon after the fall of his government, a military council was formed by the opposition to run the country. The council arranged the return of Edward Shevardnadze to Georgia and appointed him as the head of the military council.

As mentioned before,⁽⁴⁾ the rise of nationalism and secessionist movements was not confined to the union republics of the Soviet Union, but also affected autonomous republics and regions within the union republics. Georgia as one of the multi-ethnic republics of the former Soviet Union had to face the demand for greater autonomy or secession among its minorities, particularly Abkhazians and Ossetes. Indeed, it was the first question before the new government to deal with.

South Ossetia

South Ossetia is an autonomous oblast in Georgia, adjacent to the North Ossetia within the Russian Federation. It covers an area of 1505 sq.m, with a population of 98,527,⁵ comprising Ossetes, Georgians and Slavs. However, the number of Ossetes is 65,195, that is 66.2% of the total population.⁶

3. See The Current digest of the Post-Soviet Press(Ohio), Vol. 44, No. 1, 1992, PP. 14-15.
4. See Chapter 2, PP. 22-23.
5. Henze, n.1, p. 149.
6. Ibid., P. 154.

Ossetes, a people of Iranian origin, largely Christian and one of the most Russified ethnic groups in Caucasus under Stalin auspices, they were divided into two parts - North and South Ossetians. The South Ossetians were joined with Georgia. After Tbilisi's independence, South Ossetians demanded to reunite with their northern brethren. This troubled Georgia's relation with Russia.⁷ Nevertheless, as it was prevalent among ethnic groups, the South Ossetians proclaimed themselves separate republic in September 1990,⁽⁸⁾ which was supported by North Ossetians.

Gamsakhurdia sent troops to suppress the Ossets, but the mission remained unfinished, as Gamsakhurdia was overthrown by Georgians themselves. Nevertheless, there were skirmishes between Ossets and Georgians in which many people were killed and many others fled either to North Ossetia or Georgia. With the ascendancy of Shevardnadze as head of military council of Georgia, he tried to solve the problem through negotiation along with Boris Yeltsin. This led to a cease-fire agreement that was signed between Georgians and Ossetians in June 1992. But it was not lasting. Because certain elements in both Russia and Georgia were not in tune with the peace and were advocating a tough policy against each other. Ruslan Khasbulator's statement as the chairman of the Russian Supreme Soviet is notable in this

7. Julkian Birch, "Ossetia: a Caucasian Bosnia in Microcosm", Central Asian Survey, Vol. 14, No. 1, 1995, pp. 43-44.

8. Ponton, n.2, p. 250.

context. In his statement in June 1992 he called "the ousting of the South Ossetian population from their historical homeland as genocide". He added that if Georgia continued to violate the autonomy of the Ossetes by expelling them from their homeland, Russia's supreme soviet would have to reconsider the South Ossetia's official request for annexation to the Russian Federation.⁹ This was hailed in North Ossetia, while Tbilisi considered it as a declaration of war against Georgia,¹⁰ particularly when Russian combat helicopters attacked on units of the Georgian National Guard and villages.¹¹

However, in the conflict the Russian assumed the role of peace keeping. Yet, their involvement on the side of Ossets had caused a tension between Russia and Georgia. To overcome the dispute, Yeltsin and Shevardnadze agreed to meet and discuss about Ossetia in Dagomys, Russia. In late July 1992, the two leaders reached an agreement on a cease-fire: "withdrawal of Georgian National Guards from around Tskhinvali (capital of the South Ossetia), the setting up of a special commission; and the deployment of a peace keeping force of Russian, Georgian and Ossetian troops".¹² The agreement was also signed by the leaders of the North and South Ossetia, under Russian pressure.

9. The Current digest of the Post Soviet Press, Vol. 44, No.

24, 1992, 16.

10. Ibid., PP. 16-17.

11. Ibid., P. 17.

12. Birch, n. 7, P. 48.

Although, their accord did not solve the problem of the South Ossetia, they succeeded through negotiation in bringing about a lasting cease-fire between Ossetes and Georgians. Yet, the ethnic conflict in Abkhazia and Russo-Georgian differences remained unsolved.

Abkhazia

Abkhazia is an autonomous republic in North-western part of Georgia, beside the Black sea. Its population comprising Abkhaz, Georgians, Armenians, and Slavs (largely Russians) is only 524, 161.¹³ It is worth noting that the number of Abkhaz is only 90,713 or 17.3% of total population.¹⁴

Abkhazia was an independent country at different times in its history. Then, it was respectively occupied by Greeks, Romans, Byzantines, Turks, and finally, it was annexed by Tsarist Russia.¹⁵ With the collapse of the Tsarist empire, Abkhazia enjoyed a short period of independence as a party to the North Caucasus confederation, but, soon it came under Menshevik Georgia.¹⁶ However, the upsurge of nationalist sentiments led

13. Henze, n.1, P. 153.

14. Ibid.

15. On Abkhazia's ancient history and their identity consult B.G. Hewit, "Abkhazia: a problem of identity and ownership", in Central Asian Survey, Vol. 12, No. 3, 1993, PP. 267-75.

16. Ford Ennals and others, "Report of a UNPO mission to Abkhazia, Georgia and Northern Caucasus", Central Asian Survey, Vol 12, No.3, 1993, P. 330.

Georgian Mensheviks to resort to repressive policies against their minorities particularly Abkhaz and Ossets. A fact, which became a ploy for Bolsheviks to propagandize against Mensheviks and destabilise the independent Georgia by manipulating the national feelings of the Georgia's minorities.¹⁷

After all, with the conquest of Caucasus by the Bolsheviks a Soviet Socialist Republic of Abkhazia was proclaimed in March 1921, which was hailed by Abkhazian people as liberation from repressive policies of Menshevik government in Georgia. Abkhazia joined USSR as a union republic in December 1921 which lasted only for 10 years, "until 1931 when Stalin subordinated them [Abkhazians] to the Georgians, and even then they were placed under the administrative rule of Tbilisi only as a part of the Transcaucasian Federation".¹⁸ He also initiated a population movement in which many Georgians were forced to settle in Abkhazia.

During the Soviet era, at different times there have been grievances by Abkhazians against Georgianization of Abkhazia. It culminated during Gorbachev era in the form of demand for secession from Georgia which led to the violent clashes between Georgians and Abkhazians in Sukhumi, the capital of Abkhazia.

(17) See Richard Pipes, The formation of the Soviet Union: Communism and Nationalism 1917-1923, revised edition, New York: Atheneum, 1964, P. 212.

(18) Jhon Colarusso, "Abkhazia", Central Asian Survey, Vol. 14, No. 1, 1995, P. 77.

The inter-ethnic clashes was intensified, when the supreme soviet of Abkhazia voted for independence on 25 August 1990,¹⁹ a move that was rejected by Gamsakhurdia who in response nullified the borders between Georgia and Abkhazia. After the departure of Gamsakhurdia, in August 1992, Shevardnadze dispatched troops to Abkhazia allegedly to release interior minister who was kidnaped by Zviadists in Abkhazia. But later on, the defence minister of Georgia admitted that the goal of the military operation was to put a stop to the secessionist moves of the Abkhazian parliament."¹⁹ However, with the eruption of fighting the Abkhazian militia retreated and within days, Georgian troops were in control of Sukhumi. Soon after, the Russian troops were sent to Georgia ostensibly to protect Russian military bases there, a move which alarmed Georgians.

On 3 September, 1991 a cease-fire accord was signed by Georgians and Abkhazians under the auspices of Yeltsin, which never was observed. Nevertheless, Abkhazians which had gained strength started to regain the lost territory again, which was considered by Georgians including Shevardnadze a result of the Russian support. This further strained the relation between Russia and Georgia, which was demonstrated in clashes between their military forces. In this clashes a Russian helicopter was shot down by Georgian forces causing the loss of 62 lives. Yet, the negotiation between Georgia and Russia over the status of

(19) Ibid, P. 80.

(20) Ennals, n. 15, P. 333.

Russian military bases in Georgia and a treaty of friendship and cooperation which started earlier, continued. In July 1993, another cease-fire agreement was signed between Georgians and Abkhazians in Russia, which lasted till September, when Abkhaz surprisingly attacked Sukhumi and forced Georgians out of the city.²¹ The Abkhazian attack was compounded by Zviadist forces reappearance in western Georgia, which was partly responsible for Georgian's defeat at the hand of Abkhazians.

However, Shevardnadze accused Russia of supporting Abkhazians who were also assisted by volunteers from North Caucasus. Furthermore, he asserted that Georgia suffered defeat only because the strategic interests of a 'major state' should be protected in Georgia.²²

Later on, in December 1993, a peace negotiation was sponsored by the United Nations in Geneva. It led to the signing of a peace accord between Georgians and Abkhazians in May 1994.²³ It should be noted that late in the same year, Georgia joined the Commonwealth of Independent States (CIS) and its collective security system, a step which it had declined to take till then. By doing so, Shevardnadze succeeded in repulsing the advancing forces of Gamsakhurdia with the help of Russian forces. More importantly, Georgia signed a 10-years treaty of friendship

21. The current digest of the post Soviet press, Vol. 45, No.39, 1993, P. 17.

22. Ibid.

23. See Colarusso, n. 17, PP. 92-93.

and cooperation with Russia in February 1994. Under this treaty Georgia agreed to stationing of Russian forces in Georgia,²⁴ though, it was insisting on the withdrawal of Russian forces from the Georgian territory by the end of 1995.²⁵

Russian Policy toward Georgia

After the disintegration of the Soviet Union and emergence of Georgia, Russia's policy toward this new independent republic can be primarily explained in the framework of its policy toward near abroad countries.

As mentioned before, the Russian policy toward its near abroad countries, prominently, the southern flank, has gone through two phases: in the first phase Moscow adopted a relative moderate policy toward them based on compromise and negotiation because of its western-oriented foreign policy. Second phase in Russian near abroad policy emerged by mid 1993 when the reintegrative tendencies became dominant in Russia's policy towards near abroad countries.²⁶ In fact, Russia realized the importance of the newly independent states in terms of economy, strategic location and security. Therefore, there

24. See text of draft cooperation treaty between Georgia and Russia in, Summary of the world Broadcasts (SWB) (Reading, England : BBC Monitoring Service), March 1993, Su/1643, B/1.

25. Colorusso, n. 17, P. 86. Also see SWB, 22 March 1993, Su/1643.

26. See Chapter 1, PP. 22-30.

was a shift in Russian policy from neglecting near abroad countries to active engagement with them in order to persuade or force them to accommodate with Russia's interests. In other words, the gap between nationalist - conservative forces approach on near abroad and that of westerners represented by Yeltsin and Kozyrev get narrowed if not disappeared. Thus, Kremlin began to pursue its strategic interests in near abroad, regardless of niceties of independence. The structural weakness of the new republics compounded with the presence of the Russian minorities and ethnic conflict in some of the republics provided a good ground to Moscow to follow its strategic goals there. Georgia is a good example of how Russia succeeded to alter its behaviour through policy of stick and carrot.

However, it seems that the protection of Russians living in near abroad, which is partly responsible for Moscow's interventionist policy in the former territory of the Soviet Union, is not of primary importance in shaping Russia's policy towards Georgia. The Russian population that was 371,608 in 1979 declined by 8.9%, to 338,645 according to 1989 census, mostly because of out-migration.²⁷ No doubt, that the eruption of civil war and ethnic conflict had further increased the out-migration of already declining number of Russians.

As is known, Russia with its huge landmass is quite a land-locked country. For centuries, one of the aims of Russian

27. See Henze, n.5, PP. 150-51.

expansion and conquest of new land was to reach the warm waters of the south, an aim which was realised during Tsarist period mostly as a consequence of Russo-Ottoman wars. The October revolution which caused the disintegration of the Russian Empire did not change the geopolitical reality, a fact which persuaded the Bolsheviki to revive, by and large, the shattered empire. However, with the collapse of the Soviet Union and emergence of the new sovereign republics, once again Moscow's sea out-lets sharply shrank particularly in republics adjacent to the Black sea, namely Ukrain, and Georgia. In fact, not only access to the Black sea, the legacy of Tsarist Russia but also preserving a dominant position are strategic goals of Russia, which is crucial to Russia's economic and military interests regardless of political and ideological orientation of the Kremlin leaders. It is against this background that one can assess the Russia activities in crimea, and Abkhazia respectively in Ukrain, and Georgia.

However, Georgian defiant government under Gamsakhurdia with its ultra-nationalist orientation was not ready to accommodate Russia's vital interest in Georgia. His authoritarian rule led not only to the rise of ethnic nationalism, but also conflict among Georgian elites, a situation which culminated in armed clashes between them and consequently the overthrow of Gamsakhurdia. It was alleged that opposition groups were supplied arms and ammunition by Russian military

forces in Georgia.²⁸ With the appointment of Shevardnadze as head of the provisional government in Tbilisi, it was thought that he would be accommodative towards Russians, a perception which did not come true, though he tried to amend the tense relation between Georgia and Russia. In consequence, the two countries succeeded to conclude a cease-fire in South Ossetia, but soon with the eruption of armed conflict in Abkhazia, relations of the two governments exacerbated, when Tbilisi accused Russia of assisting Abkhaz separatists.

It is worth noting, that there were some evidence in South Ossetia, regarding Russia's military forces and its peace keeping mission siding with Ossetes in order to put pressure on Georgia. But it is more likely that the conservative forces and nationalists in Moscow and within the military were behind the events, acting independently from the government in Moscow. It may be suggested that, the fact that Moscow did not utilize the conflict to extract concessions from Tbilisi as it did with regard to the Abkhaz conflict supports the said argument. Therefore, this behaviour can be identified with the first phase of Russia's policy toward the near abroad that was mostly based on the westerners school of thought, supporting a moderate policy towards the new independent states.

However, the events in Abkhazia went in different way indicating the Russia's assertion to follow its own national

28. See Thomas Goltz, "Letter from Eurasia: The hidden Russian hand", foreign policy (Washington), No.92, Fall 1993, P.97.

interest in near abroad. The old policy of divide and rule was used by Russians in a systematic manner to bring states which had refused to join the CIS like Georgia, back to the fold.

In fact, Georgia represents the most evident case of Russia's involvement in near abroad countries as its sphere of influence. Moscow applied political, military and economic pressure to force Tbilisi to abide by Russia's strategic interests in its territory.

Russia's role as a guarantor of peace and stability has been endorsed by others, particularly Americans.²⁹ This has enhanced Russia's political leadership as an arbiter to the conflicts in near abroad, a position on which the parties of the conflict depend. So far as Georgia is concerned, this was manifested in Russia's attempts to intervene and mediate between Georgians and Abkhazians, a job that could hardly be neutral.

Although, there is no absolute evidence to assert that Russia unleashed the attack against Georgia, there are some clear signals suggesting Russia's role in supplying arms, and training and sometimes directly assisting Abkhazians in their conflict with Georgia. It appeared that the Russian military forces played an essential role in the conflicts. The presence of the Russian troops was one of the most important disagreement between Georgia and Russia. From the beginning, Tbilisi demanded

29. See The Sunday Times (London), 25, September 1994.

the withdrawal of Russian forces from its territory and Moscow was reluctant to give up its bases in Georgia, citing the special strategic interests of Russia in Georgia's Black Sea coast including Abkhazia and Ajaria³⁰ which dictate the Russian presence in Black sea bases in Georgia.

However, it should be emphasized that it is difficult to believe that the Abkhaz military forces drawn from a population of just 90,000 could have defeated the Georgia National Guard backed by 4 million Georgians, without any help from outside. Moreover, the sophisticated arms like T-72 tanks and heavy artillery used by Abkhazians against Georgians which neither Abkhazians nor North Caucasus volunteers possessed,³¹ suggest that Russia could have supplied them to Abkhaz fighters.

More importantly, Sukhumi was repeatedly bombed by unidentified aircrafts. Georgian authorities including Shevardnadze himself, blamed Russia for bombing of Sukhumi.³² Moscow denied its involvement in attacking Sukhumi, but the contradictory allegations of Pavel Grachev the Russian Defence Minister confirmed Russian complicity, if not direct involvement in the attack. He initially accused Georgians of bombing their

30. The current digest of the post Soviet press, Vol. 45, No. 39, 1993, P. 18.

31. SWB, 18 March 1993, Su/1640, B/9. Also see, The current digest of the post Soviet press, Vol. 45, No. 11, 1993, P.14.

32. SWB, 18 March 1993, Su/1640, B/8. Also see SWB, 29 March, Su/1649, B/1.

own citizens, though later on he admitted "that a Russian attack had taken place in revenge for Georgian shelling of area close" to Russian position including its military bases in Georgia.³³ And even, when Georgian forces succeeded to shot down a Russian Su-27 aircraft, Moscow claimed that the aircraft was not on bombing mission, but was only patrolling in the skies, preventing the Georgian pilots from inflicting a missile - bomb strike on Russian military facilities'.³⁴

Georgia's attempt to woo western support through its western oriented policy proved in vain. And when it signed a friendship treaty with Ukraine in April 1993, Russia considered it as a threat. As such, it did not promote Georgia's position before Russia. After the fall of Sukhumi to the hand of Abkhaz fighters Shevardnadze appealed to the U.N. Secretary General and to the leader of the U.S, Italy, Spain, Japan, Canada, Great Britain, France and other countries³⁵ though without any concrete result. It appeared to be a swan song of independent Georgia before yielding to Russian demands. In fact, with the resurgence of Zviadists in western Georgia, the country was on the brink of dismemberment. In the absence of any option outside the CIS, it appeared that there was only one option before Tbilisi, namely to

33. Goltz, n. 26, P.107.

34. SWB, 22 March 93, Su/1643, B/4.

35. The current digest of the post-Soviet press, Vol. 45, No.39, 1993, P. 19.

turn toward Russia. Hence, Georgian government agreed to join the CIS which it had earlier resisted. As Shevardnadze put it: "I sent a telegram there consenting to Georgia's joining the CIS, something that I had opposed until the very end. I agreed to the Russian Defence Minister's proposal to send additional armed forces from that country into Abkhazia. Georgia was essentially brought to its knees".³⁶

However, it should be noted that, Russians used not only military pressure, but they also utilized the economic levers at their disposal against Tbilisi government.

It should be emphasized that the structure of the Soviet economy was interconnected through central planning and regional specialization among the union republics.³⁷ Therefore, the new independent states are heavily depended on each others particularly on Russian Federation. Russia is source of raw material and energy, as well as a market for the low quality products of the near abroad countries. This economic power provides Moscow a good lever to put pressure on the near abroad countries, unwilling to join the CIS, like Georgia.

The rise of ethnic conflict and civil war in Georgia compounded with rail and road blockades which led to rupture of Georgia from other parts of the former Soviet Union, specially

36. Ibid.

37. See B. Miller, "Interrepublic economic relations and the Transition to a market," Problem of economic transition (Armonk, N.Y.), Vo. 35, No. 3, July 1992, PP. 78-87.

Russia brought about catastrophe to the Georgian economy. The situation was exacerbated as a consequence of Russian retaliatory measures against Georgia for not joining the CIS. This was included the termination of deliveries of goods from Russia³⁸ and erecting barriers to the Georgian exports.

Hence, many of the Georgian enterprises were shut down,³⁹ monthly rate of inflation exceeded 40 percent⁴⁰ and the prices drastically went up. Moreover, there was no market for Georgian low quality products other than Russian market.⁴¹

So, the disappointment of Shevardnadze with the west, compounded with increasing economic hardship and Russian heavy handed deal with Georgia, forced Tbilisi to yield to the Moscow's demands. Henceforth, Georgia not only acceded to the CIS, but also signed a treaty on bilateral military relation with Russia. Soon after, Russian troops came to the assistance of Georgian forces in repulsing the Zviadists insurgency in western Georgia, and protecting the major rail links.

38. See B. Plyshevskii, "Reforming the economies of the CIS: The Transcaucasian republics and Moldova", Problem of economic transition, Vol. 37, No. 10, February 1995, P. 59.

39. See Jean Radvanji, "Observation on Independence and Statehood in Transcaucasia", Post-Soviet Geography (Columbia), Vol.35, No. 3, March 1994, P.181.

40. Plyshevskii, n. 36, P.58.

41. See Radvanji, n. 37, P. 180.

In February 1994, Yeltsin and Grachev visited Tbilisi and signed a treaty with Shevardnadze, in which Russia was committed to assist Georgia in the creation of the republic of Georgia of the armed forces⁴² and supplying military equipments. More importantly, Russia retained the three military bases in Georgian territory, including the Black Sea naval base of Poti.⁴³ In November 1994, the two countries also reached a border patrol agreement⁽⁴⁴⁾ aiming to fulfill one of the Russia's strategic goals with regard to the near abroad countries, namely protecting the outer CIS border. Little wonder, that Georgia also joined the CIS collective security system. In fact, the Abkhaz and south Ossetia problem remained unresolved, and the peace that prevails now is dependent only on the presence of Russian peacekeepers there. Therefore, there is always the possibility of the renewal of conflict, if Georgia turns assertive against Russian strategic interests in its territory. In this context, Georgia has no option than to boost its ties including security relations with Moscow either within the CIS or on the bilateral basis. For this reason, Georgia has come closer to the core

42. See the Text of Draft cooperation Treaty, in SWB, 22 March 1993, Su.1643, B.1.

43. Hamner Adomeit, "Russia as a 'great power' in world Affairs; image and reality", International affairs (London) Vol. 71, No. 1, January 1995, P. 47.

44. Martha Brill Olcott, 'Sovereignty and the near abroad', Obris, Vol, 39, No. 3, Summer 1995, P. 538.

states of the CIS, even once Shevardnadze supported the idea of Eurasian Union,⁴⁵ proposed by Kazakhstan president.

This drastic shift in Georgia's policy seems to have been facilitated by the dismissal of its hard line opponents within the ruling Georgian elites,⁴⁶ even without substituting the Georgian ruling elites as it was the case with Azerbaijan. Thus by the end of 1994, it did appear that some semblance of stability in Russia's relations with Georgia had appeared. However, a clear picture is yet to emerge.

45. Ibid., P. 360.

46. See Ibid., P. 363.

CHAPTER IV

Russia's Policy Towards Armenia and Azerbaijan
and Nagorno-Karabakh
Conflict

The two Caucasian states of Armenia and Azerbaijan emerged as independent states with the break-up of the Soviet Union, amid mutual conflict over Nagorno-Karabakh region.

Armenia with an area of 29,800 (sq.km) is a land locked country in Caucasus. Its 3,304,353 population is composed of 93.3 ethnic Armenians.¹ In fact, Armenia has one of the most homogeneous populations among the republics of the former Soviet Union, particularly after the Nagorno-Karabakh conflict, when many Azeris in Armenia left for Azerbaijan.² Therefore, Armenia unlike the other two Caucasian multinational states, namely Georgia and Azerbaijan, remained protected against secessionist movements and consequently outside manipulation.

Azerbaijan covers an area of 86,600 (sq.km) and its population is 7,019,739, composed of 390,495 Armenians along other minorities living in Azerbaijan.³ Nakhichevan autonomous republic and Nagorno-Karabakh autonomous region.

The diversity of population posed a threat to the territorial integrity of Azerbaijan particularly when outsiders have tried to utilize it to extract concession from Baku.

1. See Paul B. Henze, "The demography of the Caucasus according to 1989 Soviet census data", Central Asian Survey (London), Vol. 10, No. 112, 1991; pp. 148-50.
2. Ibid.
3. Ibid.

Generally speaking, most of the newly independent states of the former Soviet Union, including Armenia and Azerbaijan, under the fervour of nationalist movements thought of independence as something which would be achieved soon after breaking with the Soviet Union. Moreover, it was perceived that Moscow would adjust its policy towards the newly sovereign states according to the international norms and with regard to the niceties of independence. But, both of these perceptions proved unlike in the course of time.

No doubt, Russia is still a great power. It has strategic interest in the former territory of the Soviet Union or the near abroad countries. It seems that Russia has tried to protect its strategic interest through every means at its disposal regardless of its legality. This is specially true of Moscow's policy towards Armenia and Azerbaijan in pursuing its strategic interests. In fact, the Nagorno-Karabakh conflict which was underway between the two states was utilized by Russians to make Armenia and Azerbaijan dependent on Moscow for the sake of Russia's strategic interest in the region. These strategic interests could be identified as protecting the outer CIS borders and preventing the outside powers from intrusion into the region, and the control of oil flow in the region. In fact, the Nagorno-Karabakh conflict was utilized by Russians to make these two countries dependent on Moscow to secure Russia's strategic interests. Hence, an investigation of the development of the conflict is of great importance to understand how Russia follows its goals in the region, particularly vis-a-vis Azerbaijan and Armenia.

Nagorno-Karabakh Conflict

The Nagorno - Karabakh is an autonomous oblast within Azerbaijan's territory. It covers an area of 1700 square mile and it has an Armenian majority. According to the 1989 census of the Soviet Union, the total population was 189, 029 comprising 145,450 Armenians, 40,632 Azeris and 2417 Slavs.⁴ Nagorno-Karabakh conflict has its roots in the past. As was mentioned earlier,⁵ the independent states of Armenia and Azerbaijan fought over it repeatedly between 1918-1921. After the Bolsheviks took over, the fate of the region was decided by Stalin, therefore, Nagorno - Karabakh as an autonomous region with an Armenian majority joined Azerbaijan. No wonder, it continued to be a matter of silent contention between Yerevan and Baku. And whenever the circumstances permitted Armenians in Nagorno-Karabakh marched in protest against assimilationist policies of the government in Baku. However, these protests under Gorbachev culminated in the form of armed clashes with support of people and nationalist groups in Armenia. When the two countries of Armenia and Azerbaijan acquired their independence, the conflict took the form of a real war between the two newly independent states, in which Armenia never accepted its involvement in the war.⁶

However, it should be noted that with the break up of the Soviet Union, Armenia developed a good relation with Russia and

4. Ibid., PP. 154-55.

5. See, Chapter II PP.37.

joined the CIS, and subsequently its collective security system, co-signed by Russia, Kazakhstan, Uzbekistan, Kyrgyzstan, and Tajikistan. While Azerbaijan turned assertive with regard to its independence and refused to ratify the documents of the CIS signed by Mutalibov. Furthermore, it decided to establish its own armed forces⁷ and demanded the withdrawal of the Russia military units from its territory.

During 1992, the conflict over Nagorno-Karabakh intensified in which Armenians took the upperhand and forced Azeri military forces to retreat. It was a setback to the Baku's leadership under Ayaz Mutalibov. In fact, the military reverses, combined with power struggle among Azerbaijan's elite, compelled Mutalibov to resign.⁸ He was replaced by Yagub Mamendov the Chairman of the Parliament as the provisional head of the government till a new Presidential election was held.

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6. Paul B. Henze, "Conflict in the Caucasus, background, problems and Prospect for mitigation", Eurasian Studies (Ankara), Vol. 1 No. 1, 1994, P. 79.
 7. Roy Allison, Military forces in the Soviet successor states, Adelphi Paper (London), No.280, October 1993, PP.9-10.
 8. See Tadeusz Swietochowski, "Azerbaijans triangular relationship: The land between Russia, Turkey and Iran", in New Geopolitics of Central Asia and its border lands, eds., Ali Banu Azizi and Myron Weiner (London: I.B. Tauris, 1994), P.128.

However, the replacement of Mutalibov did not bring any change in the battlefield. Therefore, the Armenian military units continued to advance into the Azerbaijan's territory. In May 1992, they captured Shusha a strategic town in Nagorno-Karabakh and succeeded to open a corridor to reach Armenia.⁹

Henceforth, the Azerbaijan's parliament unsuccessfully tried to reinstate Mutalibov as President which failed with take over of the Pan-Turkish Popular Front of Azerbaijan (PFA).¹⁰ As a result, Mutalibov took refuge in Russia, and Yaqub Mamedov resigned as the Chairman of the Parliament. It was alleged that Russia was involved in bringing Mutalibov back as president of Azerbaijan. Accordingly, before his resignation Mutalibov had negotiated with Russian authorities on delivery of arms and equipments to Azerbaijan by Moscow in exchange for Azerbaijan's joining the CIS.¹¹ However, with PFA coming to power, the course of events in Azerbaijan went against Moscow's interests.

It is worth noting that, unlike Azerbaijan, Armenia enjoyed a relative stability in spite of economic crisis,

9. Peter Rutland, "Democracy and Nationalism in Armenia", Europe-Asia Studies (Oxfordshire, U.K.), Vol. 46, No. 5, 1994, pp. 856-59.

10. The current digest of the post-Soviet Press (Ohio), Vol. 44, No. 20, 1992, P. 10.

11. Ibid.

specially extensive shortage of energy as a result of blockade by Azeris and rupture of transportation in neighbouring war-torn Georgia. Levon Ter-Petrosyan the leader of Armenian Pan-national Movement (APM) who was elected as president of Armenia continued to rule the country. As mentioned earlier, Yerevan from the beginning developed a good relation with Moscow. It joined the CIS and was one of the founding members of the CIS collective security treaty.¹² Furthermore, Armenia signed a mutual defence pact with Russia in May 1992.¹³ Russian troops continued to remain in Armenian territory and protecting its borders particularly with Turkey, the historical enemy of Armenians. The presence of the Russian troops partly contributed to the Armenia's political stability. While, Baku considered this as a sign of Moscow Yerevan axis against Azerbaijan. Therefore, Azeris, accused Moscow of giving help to Armenians in Nagorno-Karabakh conflict, specially when some of Russian nationals were arrested by Azeri forces in Karabakh in September 1992.¹⁴ Nevertheless, Armenians continued to advance in Azeri territory and captured the Lachin district, a land bridge between Nagorno-

12. See, Ruttand, n. 9. P.856.

13. Allison, n. 7, P. 65.

14. See Thomas Goltz, "Letter from Eurasia: The hidden Russian hand", Foreign Policy (Washington), No.92, Fall 1993, P.98.

Karabakh and Armenia proper.¹⁵

However, after deposing the old Nomenklatura in Azerbaijan who were looking, by and large, toward Moscow, the leader of PFA Abulfaz Elchibey, once a prisoner during the Soviet Union, was elected as new President in June 1992.¹⁶ Elchibey, who like other Azeri nationalists blamed Russia for Azerbaijan's defeat, turned toward Turkey for help. In fact, Baku under Elchibey tried to replace Russia with Turkey. Furthermore, it refused to join the CIS and kept pressing for the withdrawal of Russian military units from the Azerbaijan territory.¹⁷

In June 1992, Azeris launched a counter offensive and succeeded to regain some parts of their lost territory. By October, they were in control of big chunk of Nagorno-Karabakh. However, Armenians believed that Russian helping hand was behind these victories. But these successes did not last long. In fact, the economic crisis of Azerbaijan, as a result of the war and

15. Robert V. Barylski, "The Russian Federation and Eurasian Islamic Crescent", Europe-Asia-Studies, Vol. 46, No. 3, 1994, P.404. Also see The current digest of the post-Soviet Press, Vol. 44, No.20, 1992, P. 12.

16. The current digest of the post-Soviet Press, Vol. 44, No. 23, 1992, P.14.

17. Barylski, n. 15, P. 404.

18. The current digest of the post-Soviet Press, Vol. 45, No. 14, 1993, P. 22.

refugees as well as rupture of its economic relation with CIS members, particularly Russia, was a destabilizing factor in the country. At this juncture, Azerbaijan suffered a setback in the battlefield. On April 1993, Armenians captured another part of Azeris and opened a second corridor from Armenia to Nagorno-Karabakh,¹⁸ and reversed the direction of war in their favour. To the disappointment of Elchibey, though Turkey rebuffed the Armenian aggression, but rejected the possibility of open military intervention in the conflict.¹⁹ It is interesting to note that once Ankara had threatened to intervene in the Armenian-Azerbaijani conflict on the side of Baku, when Armenian forces intruded into Nakhicheavan territory that is bordering Turkey.²⁰ This led to harsh response by Marshal Yevgeny Shaposhnikov then commander in chief of the CIS joint Armed Forces and the warning over the possibility of a global war.²¹

However, the new developments was a blow to Elchibey and his "idealist nationalism". As a matter of fact, he did not bring any positive change in Azerbaijan's political and economic situation by keeping distance from Moscow.

19. Ibid, P. 23.

20. According to the 1921 Russo-Turkish Treaty, Turkey was entitled to send troops into Nakhichevan to defend its territorial integrity.

21. Mohiadin Mesbahi, "Russian foreign policy and security in Central Asia and Caucasus", Central Asian Survey, Vol .12, No.2, 1993, P. 205.

Furthermore, he alienated the old elite *nomanklatura* by replacing Mütalibov's former communists with popular Front members.²² Finally, during the Elçhibey's government Karabakh conflict turned from bad to worse for Azerbaijan.

Henceforth, the first sign of threat to Elçhibey's government came from Ganja, the stronghold of Colonel Surat Husseinov. Once he was director of a Woolen factory who provided arms and equipment to the national army of Azerbaijan. Because of his services, he was granted the title of National hero of Azerbaijan and then became the commander of Karabakh forces.²³

In June 1993, Elçhibey dismissed Husseinov of his posts, but he refused to abide by the order²⁴ and the 709th brigade at Ganja remained loyal to Surat Husseinov.²⁵

Therefore, Elçhibey sent troops to disarm them. This led to the armed conflict and Husseinov's victory.²⁶ In turn, Husseinov put an ultimatum demanding the resignation of the authorities in Baku including Elçhibey by 15 June,²⁷ and

22. Barylski, n. 15, P. 404.

23. On Husseinov's record See, The Current digest of the Post-Soviet Press, Vol. XLV, No. 24, 1993, PP. 2-3. Also Goltz, n. 14, PP.110-11.

24. Ibid., P. 3.

25. Ibid.

26. Barylski, n.15, P. 405.

27. The current digest of the post-Soviet Press, n. 22, P. 1.

started marching towards Baku. Meanwhile, amid this power crisis in Baku, Armenians launched an offensive against Aghdam, Aghdary and Aghdzhabedi Districts of Azerbaijan'.²⁸

To avoid confrontation and boosting his position, Abulfaz Elchibey invited Haider Aliev from Nakhichevan to mediate. Soon after, Aliev was elected as the chairman of parliament and asked Hossainov to stop marching on Baku. But it was too late. Elchibey fled from Baku, and Aliev was appointed by parliament as acting president²⁹ with Surat Hosseinov as his Prime Minister.

In October 1993, as a result of Presidential election Aliev was elected as new President of Azerbaijan. The return of the old elite, brought a new orientation to Azerbaijan foreign policy from Turkey to Russia. In September 1993, Aliev negotiated with Yeltsin in Moscow and in the same month Azerbaijan was admitted to the CIS. It also joined the CIS collective security pact. It was a great achievement for Russian foreign and security policy in near abroad. However, this achievement appeared to be as a consequence of the Russian subtle policy regarding Nagorno-Karabakh conflict.

From the beginning of Nagorno-Karabakh conflict, Moscow adjusted its policy regarding the conflict to the political

28. Ibid., P. 2.

29. The current digest of the post-Soviet Press, Vol. 45, No. 25, 1993, P. 18.

inclination in Yerevan and Baku³⁰. For example, Moscow under Gorbachev sided with Baku while the Azeris Nomenklatura was dependent on the center.³¹

After the collapse of the Soviet Union, it appeared that Russia under Yeltsin was in favour of developing relation with near abroad countries as independent and sovereign states. But - this was a short period in Moscow's relation with the former Soviet Union republics. Nevertheless, during this period Russia divided its military and economic assets among them,³² despite the fact that, some of the arms and military equipment had been already seized by the near abroad countries. Armenia and Azerbaijan also took their shares of weapons and ammunition from the Soviet Red Army despite of war between the two.³³ However, so far as Nagorno-Karabakh conflict is concerned, this may hardly be attributed to the Russian goodwill towards Azerbaijan and Armenia.

30. See Uwe Halbach and Heinrich Tiller, "Russia and its Southern Flank" Aussen Politik (Hamburg), Vol.45, No. 2, 1994, P.160.

31. See Chapter II, P.50-2.

32. Robert, V. Barylski, "Russia, the West, and the Caspian Engrey hub", Middle East Journal (London), Vol. 49, No.2, Spring 1995, P. 219.

33. Ibid.

Soon, Russia turned assertive on protecting its strategic interests in near abroad. This was marked the beginning of the second phase in Russian foreign and security policy towards the newly independent states of the former Soviet Union. Therefore, having friendly neighbors in near abroad became the keystone of Russian policy to achieve its strategic goals in near abroad countries.³⁴ This led to the Russian interventionism under guise of peacekeeping mission in the former territory of the Soviet Union as a way to raise Russia's international prestige, while expanding its influence with neighbouring governments; they were also a means of keeping local conflict from spreading into Russia.³⁵

But, it seems that some of 'Russian military involvement' aimed at 'peacepreventing' rather than peacekeeping or peacemaking. In fact, there are evidents indicating that Moscow's interest would be served better if 'certain conflicts continue'³⁶ particularly those related to some of near abroad countries which are not accommodating towards Russia.

34. See Chapter I, P.22,30.

35. Stephen Page, "The creation of a sphere of influence: Russia and Central Asia", International Journal (Toronto), Vol. 49, No. 4, Autumn 1994, P. 795.

36. Rence De Nevers, Russia's strategic renovations, delphi paper, No.289, July 1994, P. 55.

One of these conflicts appeared to be between Armenia and Azerbaijan. First Russia transferred arms and equipments to Armenia. No wonder, that Armenians took an upper hand in the conflict and occupied a large segments of the Azerbaijan territory. The capturing of six members of Russian special forces by Azeris in Nagorno-Karabakh can be cited as an evidence of Russian support for Armenians. It may be said that Moscow has closed its eyes from the involvement of Russian military men in the conflict if did not encourage them. Moreover, it was reported that Russian tanks and armored personnel carriers from the 366th army based in Karabakh were along advancing Armenian forces into Azerbaijan territory.³⁷ However, the collapse of Azeri defence posed a threat to the Russian interests by possibility of intervention of outside powers like Turkey. Furthermore, Kremlin was determined to maintain a balance of power between Armenia and Azerbaijan. Therefore, it supplied some arms and equipments to Baku through its 4th army stationed in Azerbaijan territory. Even the issue was discussed between Russian and Azeri officials. Pavel Grachev, the Russian defence minister, had proposed to supply arms to Azerbaijan in exchange for Baku joining the CIS³⁸.

After all, Azeris took an upper hand in the conflict and continued to take back their territory with Russian helping hand. But in October 1992, when Azerbaijan parliament voted against

37. See Goltz, n. 14, P. 101.

38. See Mesbahi, n. 21, P. 206.

joining the CIS, Azeris offensive repeatedly ended in failure,³⁹ and Armenians began to advance inside Azerbaijan and occupy Azeris cities. It caused a flow of refugees in Azerbaijan a heavy burden on its fragile economy. Meanwhile, secessionist movements among Azerbaijan's minorities have surfaced. Talish in the South and Lezghins in the north demanded secession from Azerbaijan.⁴⁰ The occupation of about 20% of Azerbaijan territory by Armenians and rising of secessionist movements brought the country on the verge of dismemberment. Amid this turmoil the June coup by Colonel Hosseinov appeared to be the last step in overthrowing the pro-Turkish Elchibey government allegedly masterminded by Russians.

It is worth noting that, there were attempts to mediate between the warring factions in Nagorno-Karabakh conflict by organisation of security and co-operation in Europe (OSCE), Russia and Iran. However, the OSCE and Iran efforts to negotiate a cease-fire in conflict posed a threat to the Russia's dominant position in its sphere of influence. In fact, Iran was invited by the Ministers of foreign affairs of Azerbaijan and Armenia to mediate. They preferred Iran because of its impartiality, while Russia was being considered 'as an "imperial" state' and Turkey's mediation was not acceptable to Yerevan.⁴¹ But Moscow was impatiently waiting Tehran's efforts to fail.

39. Goltze, n. 14, P. 113.

40. Ibid.

41. The current digest of the post-Soviet Press, Vol. 44, No.8, 1992, P. 12.

Then, Russia supported the OSCE mediation and creation of a 'peacekeeping forces made up of United Nations "blue helmet" forces, CSCE(OSCE) troops and special units of the CIS Armed Forces', (42) while providing parallel unilateral mediation. However, the divergent interests of Moscow and OSCE caused friction between them and Moscow have blamed OSCE for sabotaging 'Russian interests and negotiations' (43) in the region. Hence, it may be argued that while Moscow was anxious about outsider's influence in the Caucasus, it wanted a peace in Nagorno-Karabakh on its own terms.

Russia's Policy Towards Armenia

As mentioned earlier, one of the Russia's strategic goals is defending the external borders of the former Soviet Union in order to protect the intrusion of foreign powers into the Moscow's sphere of influence. It also sought to set up multilateral or bilateral security pact with near abroad countries to prevent them from leaving the Russia's sphere of influence while protecting them against external and internal threat.

42. Ibid., No.20, 1992, P. 12.

43. See Stephen Blank, "Russia's real drive to the South", Orbis (London), Vol. 39, No. 3, Summer 1995, P. 375.

This is the case with Russian southern flank specially the conflict - torn region of Caucasus. However, it should be kept in mind that according to Grachev, defence minister of Russia, the 'main near-term danger' to the former territory of the Soviet Union comes from the South, namely Iran, Afghanistan and Turkey.⁽⁴⁴⁾ Armenia located in the western side of the Russian southern flank is one of the forefront countries among the CIS states which has common border with both Turkey and Iran. Therefore, having common security arrangement with Yerevan was important to Russia.

However, Armenia appeared to be less problematic in accommodating Russian interests. Armenia's geopolitical location has played a determinant role in Yerevan's external behaviours towards Russia. In fact, the old enmity between Armenians and Turks on the one hand and Azeris, on the other, and the memory of their genocide by Turkey, left little option for Yerevan except to seek Moscow's protection.⁴⁵ Henceforth, Armenia became one of the core states of the CIS in promoting ties with Moscow, particularly in security field.

Against this background, Russia basically had no difficulty in pursuing its strategic interest in Armenia. In fact, Armenia was one of the founding member of the CIS

44. Allison, n.7, P. 22.

45. See Barylski, n. 15, P. 403.

collective security treaty which bounded Russia to protect Armenia against internal and external threat. Furthermore, Russia has entered in series of bilateral security agreement with some of near abroad countries. Armenia also signed a mutual defence pact with Russia in May 1992.⁴⁶ However, they agreed to set up a joint military force consisting of Armenians and Russians for patrolling the border with Iran and Turkey.⁴⁷ It is reported that 9,000 Russian troops were deployed in Armenia for the said purpose.⁴⁸ Some of these forces also are deployed along Armenian-Azeri borders. Apart from the agreement on patrolling of the borders, Armenia provided two military bases to Russia.

However, it seems that Moscow uses Armenia as a regional proxy against the other two Caucasian states,⁴⁹ specially Azerbaijan. After all, it appeared that there are continuity in Russia's policy towards Armenia. Once again the Russo-Armenian relation has revived the historical role of Russia as protectorate of Armenia mainly against Turkey. Yet, this role should not undermine Moscow's strategic goal and its national interests. To pursue its interests, Russia has to maintain good relation with Turkey and bring the oil rich Azerbaijan under the

46. Allison, n.7, P.65.

47. Ibid., PP. 65-66.

48. Yasin Aslam, "Turkey holds the key to the Caucasus conflict", Eurasian Studies, Vol.1, No. 1, Spring 1994, P.63.

49. Goltz, n. 14, P. 96.

control. Therefore, Russia cannot support Armenia's territorial claims against Turkey and Azerbaijan.⁵⁰ This was evident, when a Republic of Kurdistan was proclaimed in the occupied territory of Azerbaijan under Armenia's aegis. But soon it disappeared after Turkey's consultation with Russia.⁵¹

In the economic fields, Russia has tried to reintegrate the near abroad countries in an economic union. As a matter of fact, the near abroad as a market is important to Russia's economy. Furthermore, the legacy of the Soviet Union namely the economic interdependence of the near abroad countries specifically on Russia has persuaded these states to concur with Moscow's proposal on economic cooperation in general.

Armenia as having one of the most critical economies among the newly independent states has been one of ardent supporter of economic cooperation with Russia. As a consequence of war with Azerbaijan which absorbs 40 percent of the state budget,⁵² and continuous blockade in both Azerbaijan and Georgia, the economy of Armenia almost collapsed. The blockade led to the rupture of supplies of required resources specially fuel, and therefore many

50. See Barylski, n. 15, P. 403.

51. Ibid., P. 404.

52. See William Word Maggs, "Armenia and Azerbaijan: Looking toward the Middle East", Current History(philadelphia), Vol. 92, No. 580, January 1993, P. 9.

enterprises were shot down.⁵³ Though, Armenia has started to look towards the Middle East, particularly Iran as an economic partner,⁵⁴ but the 'structural dependency' with other parts of the Soviet Union specially Russia could not be overcome overnight.

Thus, Russia would continue to be the main economic partner of Armenia for sometime to come. Henceforth, Armenia under its pragmatic leader Ter-petroysan has already concluded treaties on the Economic Union and on the formation of the new ruble zone,⁵⁵ even at the expense of its sovereignty. However, as of 1994, concrete results of these treaties have not yet materialized.

Russia's Policy Towards Azerbaijan

Unlike Armenia, Azerbaijan turned assertive of its independence and refused to abide by Russian interests in its territory. It is true specially with regard to the pro-Turkish Elchibey government. As discussed earlier, Azerbaijan under

53. Jean Radvanji, "Observation on Independence and Statehood in Transcaucasia", Post-Soviet Geography, Vol.35, No.3, P. 181.

54. Maggs, n. 52, P. 10.

55. B. Plyshevskii, "Reforming the economics of the CIS: The Transcaucasia republics and Moldava", Problem of economic transition, Vol, 37, No, 10, February 1995, P. 57.

Elchibey refused to join the CIS, and demanded the withdrawal of the Russian forces. Relying on its vast oil resources, Azerbaijan was hoping to obtain full sovereignty. To this aim, Elchibey even bypassed Russia and signed an agreement with the western oil companies to extract oil, which was to be exported through Turkey, then Azerbaijan's ally.

In fact, an assertive Baku under APF posed a challenge to Russia as it was poised to undermine its strategic interests in near abroad.

Security, as Russia's historical preoccupation is continued to be of its primary concern. Moscow has tried to promote the security of the Russian heartland through creating a buffer zone, a legacy of the Soviet Union. Therefore, having 'friendly neighbors' among the republics of the former Soviet Union, more importantly in its southern flank, as well as organising them in a common security arrangement was essential to Russia as a strategic goal. However the pro-Turkish and nationalist government in Baku appeared to be very hard to deal with. Therefore, Moscow was ready to pressurise the Elchibey government either to yield to the Russian demands or leave. It resorted to every means to destabilize the government in Baku. When Azerbaijan's parliament voted against joining the CIS, Russia promptly retaliated. It erected barriers against Azerbaijanian products; import duties on industrial products from Azerbaijan rose more than half while many contracts between

Russia and Azeri enterprises were withdrawn.⁵⁶ The retaliatory measures of Russia, along with catastrophic impact of Nagorno-Karabakh conflict led to the decline of Azeri national economy. In the Nagorno-Korabakh conflict Azerbaijan had lost 20% of its territory and in turn was saddled with one million refugees; all these exacerbated its economy. Yet, the decline of its national income and industrial output was lower than in Georgia and Armenia,⁵⁷ partly because of availability of energy in Azerbaijan.

However, the conflict in Nagorno-Karabakh provided Russia a good ground to destabilize the nationalist government Elchibey. The Russian involvement in the conflict in terms of supplying arms and equipments to Armenians significantly considered to the Azerbaijan's defeat, and rising opposition to APF government. Moreover, the June coup by Husseinov and subsequent fall of the elected president of Azerbaijan mainly occurred with the helping hand of Moscow.

The ascendancy of Heidar Aliev to the power, led Azerbaijan to join CIS and its collective security system. In fact, he was on the view that Azerbaijan had no other option than cooperating with Russia particularly in security domain.⁵⁸ It was an important achievement for Russia in near abroad. Yet, Aliev's

56. See Swietochowski, n.8, P.130.

57. Plyshevskil, n. 54, P. 53.

58. Barylski, n. 15, P. 405.

government appeared to be less 'Russo-centric' than it was expected. That notwithstanding, Baku has entered into negotiation with Moscow on variety of issues including patrolling the borders of Azerbaijan with Iran and Turkey. But, it refused to abide by Russia's demand on introduction of Russian border troops.⁵⁹ Therefor, one of the Russian strategic goals, namely protecting the outside CIS borders, which has been operational in the southern flank, remained to be extracted from Azerbaijan. Moreover, Baku in spite of joining the CIS continued to be one of the most reluctant states to enter fully into the CIS.

As a matter of fact, Russia's insistence on demarcation of its sphere of influence suggests near abroad as its economic domain. Moscow's attempt to organize the newly independent states in an economic union represents one of the strategic goal of Russia.⁶⁰ So far Azerbaijan has proved reluctant to enter an economic union. The introduction of an Interstate Economic Committee by Russia in September 1994, for creation of 'Tariff-free common Trade zone within the CIS' in which the participants have to coordinate their foreign policy trade and economic development policies,⁶¹ Aliev's government failed to entertain.

59. Martha Brill Olcott, "Sovereignty and the near abroad", Orbis, Vol. 39, No. 3, Summer 1995, P. 359.

60. See Andrei Zagorski, "What kind of CIS would do?", Aussenpolitik, Vol. 46, No.3, 1995, PP. 266-67.

61. Olcott, n.59, PP. 357-58.

However, it may be argued that Azerbaijan as an oil producing country tries to consolidate its statehood by achieving full sovereignty. At the same time, Moscow is trying to control these resources as a strategic goal.

It should be emphasized that the oil factor has played a significant role in Russia's policy towards Baku also in internal development of Azerbaijan.

Azerbaijan was one of the main producers of oil in later 19th and first half of 20th centuries. As mentioned earlier, one of the motivations of the Bolsheviks to recapture Azerbaijan was the importance of oil for Russia's industry. However, since 1966 the oil production started to decline. After the collapse of the Soviet Union, Azerbaijan under Elchibey signed a contract with western companies to develop its oil fields in Caspian sea. Accordingly it agreed to export the oil through Turkey's territory. In fact, Russia was totally excluded from the contract. Therefore, the influence of the oil factor in Russia's policy towards Elchibey's government and his fall should be kept in mind. The new government under Aliyev canceled the contract and proceeded for a new one, in which Russia's interests has been taken into account, but still far from Moscow's satisfaction. On 20 September 1994, Aliyev's government signed a new agreement with British petroleum led international consortium for extraction of oil from Caspian sea. The Russian state oil company Lukoil was also given a share of 10 percent of

the consortium.⁶² Yet, Moscow rejected the deal and asserted that oil deals in the Caspian sea "Can not be recognized" unless approved by Moscow⁶³. It is interesting to know that Moscow asserted its position regarding the contract in a demarche to London not Baku. This has revived once again the old rivalry between Russia and Britain over the oil of Caucasus. Meanwhile, the issue of pipeline is also a matter of difference among parties of the deal. Russia wants the oil to be exported through existing Russian pipeline to the Black sea, while the west prefers Georgia's rout.⁶⁴ To secure its strategic interest regarding the control of oil resources, it is suggested by some Russians, that Russia has to resort to harsh measures, otherwise it would be out of region by the west that has enough capital to invest in the region.⁶⁵

To this aim, Moscow allegedly plotted a coup against Heider Aliev only a short time after he signed the oil deal with the consortium. But it failed and Husseinov, who led the coup,

62. See Mathew J. Sagers, "The oil industry in Southern-Tier former Soviet Republic", Post Soviet Geography, Vol.35, No.5, May 1994. P. 289.

63. Blank, n. 42, P. 369.

64. The Sunday Times (London), 8 October 1995.

65. Barylski, n. 31, P. 222.

fled to Russia. However, Russia assumed that if it controls the oil resources not only in Azerbaijan but also in near abroad, its international position would strengthen. Otherwise, the oil revenue that flows into the near abroad oil producing countries, including Azerbaijan would promote their independence at the expense of Russia's interests.

All said and done Russia is not the only contending power for influence in Armenia and Azerbaijan after the demise of the Soviet Union. Other outside powers, whether near or far are vying for influence over them too. Hence, Russia has to live with this new reality. But whether Moscow will shed its imperial obsession peacefully is a matter of contention.

CHAPTER V

Conclusion

Conclusion

One of the motivations behind the dissolution of the Soviet Union was Moscow's determination to get rid of, what it considered the economically costly constituent republics of the former Soviet Union. But as it is now widely known, the dissolution of the union proved much more costly for new Russia. Soon the reintegrative tendencies have reemerged in Russian policy towards the newly independent states of near abroad.

Russia, as a great power, has strategic interests in the former territory of the Soviet Union. As a matter of fact, the geopolitical compulsions as it was in Tsarist Russia and Soviet Union has continued to be a determinant factor in Russia's policy towards its adjacent lands regardless of ideological inclinations of Kremlin leaders. The fall of the Soviet Union, left a strategic vacuum in the former republics of the Soviet Union, which was bound to be filled by others if not by Russia?

Therefore, Russia after the collapse of the Soviet Union albeit neglecting its near abroad for a brief period, turned assertive towards it. One of the most important concerns of Moscow has been protecting of Russia's heartland against outside threat.

As for the vacuum the intrusion of foreign powers in the region would have caused anxiety in Moscow particularly within military circles. Henceforth, the army in Russia took the lead of Russia's foreign and security policy towards near abroad, to

preserve Russia's interests. To pursue this aim, newly independent states should be organised in a common security arrangement within the CIS framework. Thus the states which have refused to join CIS should be brought back to the fold and abide by the Russian strategic interests. The CIS thus became poised for some kind of permanency.

So far as the Caucasus was concerned, once again in its history it appeared problematic for Russian decision makers. This strategic region on the western side of Russia southern flank posed a threat to Russia's security with the rise of ethnic conflict. The possibility of intervention of outsiders and the spill over of the conflict into Russia was a major source of anxiety for Kremlin. Apart from that, Russia continued to have strategic interests in the region which can be summarised as; protecting the outer CIS borders against outside powers, a guaranteed access to the ports in the region in order to off-set the loss of its sea outlets, and the control of the oil-flow in the region. In the pursuit of these three pronged interests it had now to deal with the independent states of the region.

Armenia, as it is compelled by its geopolitical location, had no option other than turning towards Moscow. Therefore Russia had no difficulty in pursuing its goals in Armenia. Russian troops remained in Armenia after the collapse of the Soviet Union and it was welcomed by Armenians as a security against their historical enemy, Turkey. It seems that there is continuity in Russia's policy towards Armenia, as once again it has emerged as its main protector.

However, the two states of Georgia and Azerbaijan turned assertive in their independence and refused to join the CIS. Yet, Russia was determined to secure its strategic interests by every means at its disposal. The multi-ethnic character of these republics provided a good opportunity to Moscow to destabilise the defiant governments in Tbilisi and Baku. Therefore, Russia utilized the conflicts in Abkhazia and Nagorno-Karabakh to extract concession from Georgia and Azerbaijan. As a result of the subtle Russian policy which brought them on the brink of dismemberment, Georgia and Azerbaijan yielded to the demands of Moscow. Both of them acceded to the CIS and its collective security system; while Georgia even agreed to give Russia three military bases.

In fact, in the Caucasus, Russia has resorted to the policy of divide and rule in order to achieve its goals, this was the same very policy which was used by Tsarist Russia and later by Stalin as Commissar of nationalities after the October Revolution. It is interesting to note that there is analogy between the policy of Stalin his associates in Caucasus and that of present Russia to bring Caucasian states back into the Russia's sphere of influence.

As a matter of fact, the similarity between Tsarist aims in the region and those of Yeltsin's Russia is striking. As it is widely known, reaching the warm water of the seas was one of the motives behind the land locked Russia's expansion prior to the Bolshevik revolution.

Yeltsin's Russia is also pursuing the same goal in the newly independent states adjacent to seas notably the Black sea, particularly when its access to warm waters is marginalised after the collapse of the Soviet Union.

Georgia on the shore of the Black sea, with its internal turmoil provided Russia a good hunting ground for extracting concession from Tbilisi for gaining access to its ports for military and economic purposes.

Furthermore, the control of Azerbaijan's oil and gas resources is another strategic goal of New Russia. This is yet another primary motive behind Moscow's policy towards governments in Baku. The Elchibey government that signed an oil contract with western oil companies against the will of Russia was overthrown with Russia's helping hand. Though Haider Aliiev, the new leader of Azerbaijan, gave a share of the contract to Russia, it did not satisfy Russia, and soon Baku witnessed an unsuccessful coup.

The fall of Elchibey as elected President of Azerbaijan showed that Russia had no preference for democracy in near abroad. But it favours the old elites or Nomenklatura in power, as long as they continue to accommodate Russia's interests.

However, a change in ruling elite of Azerbaijan led to some adjustments of its behaviour towards Russia. But in Georgia, the adjustment of Tbilisi's behaviour took place as a result of a partial reshuffling of the ruling elite, not a total

replacement of the elite. After all, the rising fever for independence among Caucasian states has been controlled in the face of reality. The 'idealist nationalism' has been substituted with 'pragmatist realism'. The economic hardship which was a result of the rupture of their link with other republics of the former territory of the Soviet Union, specially Russia, exposed their structural weakness and dependency to Russia, a legacy of the immediate past that cannot be overcome in a short term. This has given a boost to the idea of economic cooperation among the CIS members including Caucasian states.

However, Russia tries to integrate the newly independent states in an economic block as a market for its growing capitalist economy on the pattern of the western neo-colonial policy towards its former colonies, namely making profit without undue burden. Thus, the formation of an economic union is a long term policy for Russia, whereas, it is a tactical policy for Caucasian states to relieve their economic difficulties.

All said and done, Russia's policy in Caucasus is no longer as its domestic concern. Independent states are now involved that have begin to operate, albeit falteringly in an international environment. The USA and Europe may be far but states like Iran, Turkey, Pakistan, China and India are close by, not to speak of independent central Asian states. Hence, new Russia will be compelled to operate in the region with a style different from the past. But is it capable of doing so? The question mark remains ! *

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