Sven Gunnar Simonsen (ed.): Conflicts in the OSCE Area

CONFLICTS IN THE OSCE AREA

Sven Gunnar Simonsen (ed.)

PRIO
International Peace Research Institute, Oslo

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THIS BOOK is a third revised and expanded version of the publication *Conflicts in the CSCE Area*, which PRIO gave out for the first time in 1994. A number of people have contributed to the production of the total of 19 articles as they appear in this volume:

"This is the OSCE" is written by Ole Berthelsen. The article "Former Yugoslavia" is written by Dan Smith, and updated for 1995-1996 events by Sven Gunnar Simonsen. "Macedonia" is written by Sigurd Marstein, and updated by Sven Gunnar Simonsen. "The Hungarians" is written by Sigurd Marstein, and updated by Sven Gunnar Simonsen. "Albania" is written by Sigurd Marstein, and updated by Sven Gunnar Simonsen. Furthermore, Svein Mønnesland has contributed with useful comments to the last three articles. "Estonia, Latvia, and Lithuania" is written by Kjersti Løken, and updated and revised by Sven Gunnar Simonsen and Helge Blakkisrud. "Belarus" is written by Sven Gunnar Simonsen. "Moldova and the Dniester Republic" is written by Pål Kolstø. "Ukraine" is written by Kjersti Løken and updated and revised by Tor Bukkvoll. "Minorities and separatism in the Russian Federation" is written by Pavel Baev, and updated and revised by Helge Blakkisrud. "Minorities in North-west Russia" is written by Pavel Baev, and updated and revised by Helge Blakkisrud. "North Caucasus" is written by Pavel Baev. "Chechnya" is written by Sven Gunnar Simonsen. "Russian Minorities in the Former Soviet Union" is written by Pavel Baev, and updated and revised by Pål Kolstø. "Georgia" is written by Pavel Baev. "Armenia and Azerbaijan " is written by Kjersti Løken, and updated by Sven Gunnar Simonsen. "Central Asia" is written by Nina Græger, and updated and revised by Pål Kolstø. "Tajikistan" is written by Sven Gunnar Simonsen. "The Kurds" is written by Kjersti Løken, and updated by Sven Gunnar Simonsen.

All articles are updated to include events up to November, 1996.

This is the OSCE

Since its birth in 1975, the Organization for Security and Co-operation in Europe (OSCE) has been the only regional forum for dialogue open to all European states. During the Cold War, it functioned as a bridge between the Eastern and Western blocs. With the changing political landscape following the end of the Cold War, the OSCE transformed from a loosely grouped conference forum for 35 states (the Conference on Security and Co-operation in Europe, CSCE) to a 55-member organization with permanent structures.

A telling indicator of the changes that have taken place within Europe and the OSCE in the 1990s is the implementation of the Dayton Agreement, the peace accord for Bosnia-Herzegovina. The Dayton Agreement gave the OSCE responsibility for conducting the disarmament negotiations between Serbs, Croats and Muslims, to report on human rights violations, and to prepare and oversee the elections in Bosnia-Herzegovina. Together, these widely different tasks express core functions of the OSCE: promoting security for individuals as well as for states, and helping to develop democratic institutions within OSCE member-states.

The signing of the Helsinki Final Act in 1975 marked the beginning of the first regional forum for dialogue across the Iron Curtain that divided Europe. The main purpose of the Final Act was to reduce the impact of the closed borders between East and West by developing binding principles for cooperation among the 35 signatory states.

The Final Act became a watershed by taking a comprehensive approach to the concept of security. It states that security is indivisible – that is, a country cannot create security for itself while ignoring its neighbours. Moreover, security goes beyond military security. The concept must also include human rights, the rule of law and economic stability.

Adopting this broad definition of security, the Helsinki Final Act lays down principles for state behaviour within three core areas: security (such as arms control and confidence-building measures); human rights; and inter-state cooperation regarding cultural and scientific affairs, economics and the environment. A fourth point specifically commits the participating states to

develop and strengthen the cooperation within the organization. This was included to ensure that the CSCE process would continue.

The New Conflict Pattern

The upheavals following the end of the Cold War resulted in a total of 20 new OSCE member-states. Except for Andorra and Albania, all the new members were newly independent states. While the new political landscape presented vast opportunities, it was also marred by nationalism, separatism and ethnic conflicts. The number of armed conflicts in Europe rose from two to five between 1989 and 1995. In the peak year, 1993, a total of ten armed conflicts were registered in Europe in six different locations. Eight of the conflicts took place within the territories of the newly independent states Azerbaijan, Bosnia-Herzegovina, Croatia, Georgia and Russia. Thus, most of the focus of the OSCE came to rest on the Balkans and the former Soviet Union (the other two conflicts were Northern Ireland and the Basque insurgence in Spain). Other states, such as Hungary, Romania and the Baltic states, faced similar problems, although they were spared armed conflict.

From CSCE to OSCE

Efforts to transform the CSCE into a full-fledged organization started in Paris in 1990, during a summit meeting for European heads of state. The fall of the Berlin Wall a year earlier had opened the way for the democratization of Eastern Europe. But it also revealed a host of new challenges for the CSCE. Political instability in the new states threatened the stability of all of Europe. The fact that the new conflicts were intrastate rather than interstate demanded an overhaul of the existing apparatus for conflict resolution. The so-called Charter of Paris opened the way for increased cooperation among CSCE states with regard to military matters, human rights and the development of democracy. Moreover, permanent CSCE institutions were established – a secretariat, a conflict prevention centre and an office to monitor elections in the newly independent states. Since then, the organizational structure has been developed further (see below).

Through Review Conferences and Summits, the fields of cooperation have been expanded to include disarmament, securing political rights and the development of democracy. So-called confidence- and security-building measures now include advance notification of military activities and exchange of military information.

The OSCE Structure

The OSCE can be divided in two main parts: the political and the administrative bodies. The Chairman in Office (CiO) oversees the political process within the OSCE, while the Secretary General is in charge of the administrative tasks. The CiO initiates consultations between member-states and coordinates OSCE activities on behalf of the Ministerial Council and the Senior Councils. The CiO and his or her predecessor and successor form the so-called Troika.

Between the Summits, the highest body of the OSCE is the Ministerial Council. As a rule, it meets at least once a year, at the foreign minister level. The Senior Council prepares the meetings of the Ministerial Council and sees to it that decisions are implemented. The Permanent Council, which consists of the heads of member-state delegations in Vienna, meets weekly. This is the most common forum for day-to-day political consultation and decision-making. The Forum for Security and Cooperation is a forum for consultation and negotiations on conventional disarmament, confidence-building measures and regional security issues.

The bulk of the political and administrative activity takes place in Vienna. The Secretary General is located here, along with the Secretariat (the Auxiliary Secretariat is located in Prague). Activities concerning democratization and human rights are centred around the Office for Democratic Institutions and Human Rights (ODIHR) in Warsaw. The ODIHR's mandate includes monitoring of member-states' policies regarding human rights, election observation and other tasks directed at stimulating democracy and the rule of law. It also serves to support the High Commissioner for National Minorities (HCNM), based in The Hague. The main task of the HCNM is to identify and react to conditions that might draw minority groups into conflicts, and to send so-called 'good office' representatives to conflict areas. In 1992, a court for reconciliation and arbitration was established.

In April 1991, an assembly of parliamentarians from OSCE countries was established, with its secretariat in Copenhagen. This Parliamentary Assembly (PA) meets once a year and produces recommendations for the Chairman and the national parliaments of the member-states. In cooperation with the ODIHR, the PA has participated in election observation in a number of newly independent states.

A subsidiary of the Secretariat is the Conflict Prevention Centre. Its main function is to provide assistance to OSCE observers and missions. The OSCE missions attempt to handle crises, identify conflicts and, if possible, prevent them from worsening. As of August 1997, there were OSCE missions or delegations deployed in twelve countries: Albania, Bosnia-Herzegovina, Croatia, Estonia, Georgia, Latvia, the Former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia, Moldova, Russia (Chechnya), Tajikistan, Ukraine and the Former Republic of Yugoslavia.

Decisions made within the OSCE are based on consensus; that is, all 55 states must agree to a proposal for a decision to be made. This prevented the CSCE from intervening in the initial phases of the Balkan crisis, because former Yugoslavia (Serbia and Montenegro) refused to discuss the matter. However, in January 1992, the other CSCE states agreed to introduce the so-called Consensus Minus One principle, allowing the CSCE to react against a member-state if the country in question had violated CSCE obligations with regard to human rights, democracy or the rule of law (the so-called Human Dimension). This made it possible for the OSCE to participate in sanctions against Serbia and Montenegro. Yet, it did not prevent Armenia from blocking a formulation in the Lisbon declaration stating that any solution to the conflict over Nagorno-Karabakh had to be based on autonomy for the enclave within the borders of Azerbaijan. This reduced the chances for a planned OSCE peace-keeping operation in Nagorno-Karabakh, since such an operation will be implemented only when a peace agreement for the area has been signed. The Lisbon summit did not the bring the issue closer to a solution in this respect.

In Lisbon, the 54 participating states (the Federal Republic of Yugoslavia has been suspended from the OSCE since 1992) agreed to continue working for a Common and Comprehensive Security Model for Europe. Otherwise, the outcome of the summit was modest. One reason for this was that the discussion of NATO enlargement came to overshadow much of the agenda in Lisbon.

During the 1990s, the OSCE has proven itself capable of adapting to a rapidly changing political landscape. The main challenge in the years to come will be to strengthen its role as a regional organization, for example by taking on peace-keeping operations, while at the same time maintaining its core function as a forum for dialogue and development of norms for state behaviour. In large measure, success will not depend on the OSCE itself, but on the will of the member-states to lend support to the organization.

Former Yugoslavia

The wars of Yugoslavia's disintegration began in summer 1991. Constituting the most destructive warfare in Europe since World War II, they defied repeated international efforts at mediation before the November 1995 conclusion in Dayton, Ohio, of an agreement between the parties, bringing an end to the war in Bosnia-Herzegovina.

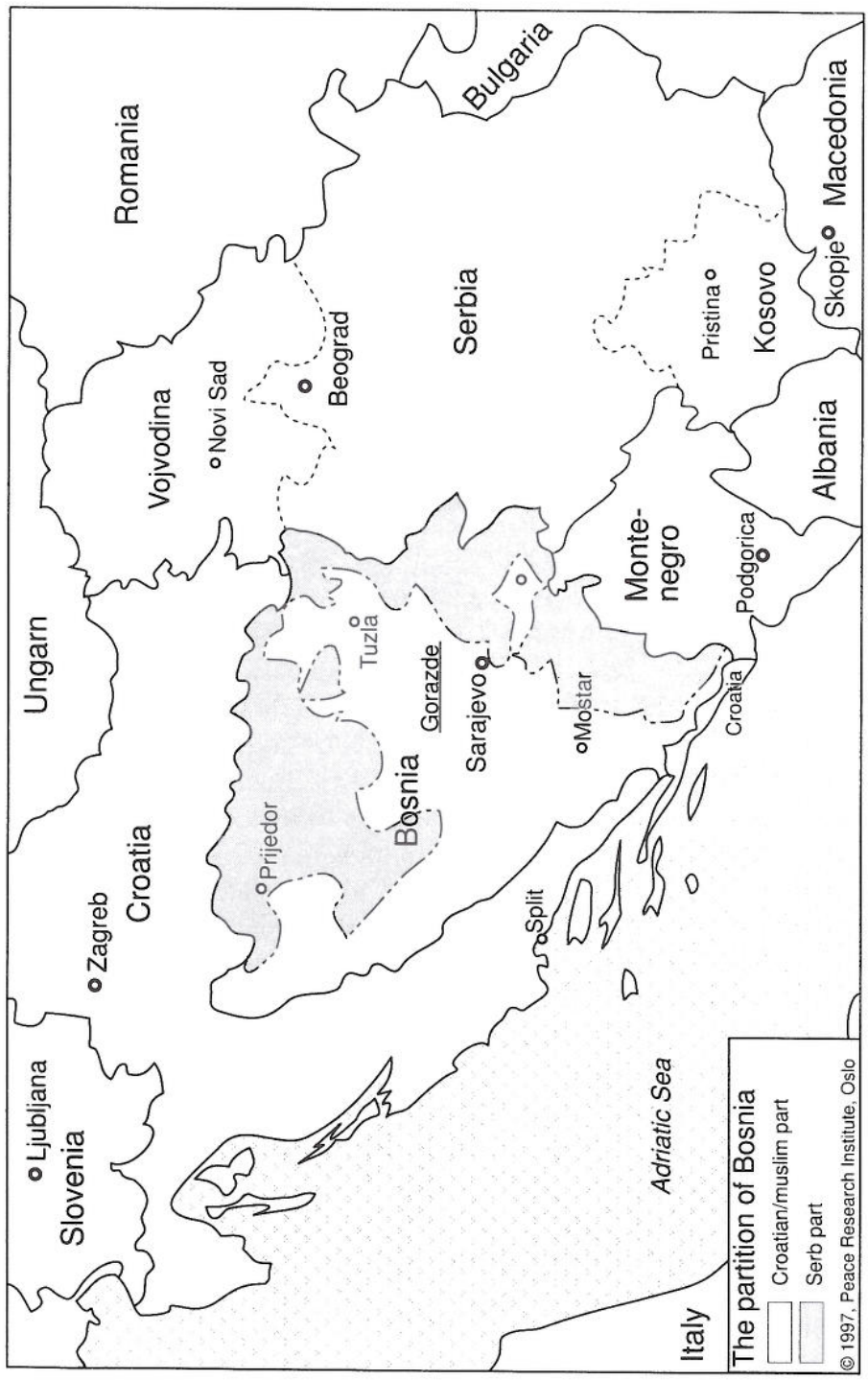
History and Territory

Nowhere in Europe is ethnicity a more explosive source of political identity than in the Balkans, and nowhere else do so many strongly defined ethnic groups live in such close proximity. The differences between them may be insubstantial and vague – matters of faith and community customs that often differ far less than city life does from village life. Yet these differences have shaped politics and conflict in the Balkans since the early 19th century.

Slavs settled in the Balkans from the 7th century. The historically crucial line of division between the Western and Eastern Roman empires lay in the north-west of the region. The Eastern empire proved more durable, becoming Byzantium. Among its possessions were modern Serbia and Bosnia-Herzegovina. The areas that today are Slovenia and Croatia were not firmly held by Byzantium. In the 8th century, the north-western Balkans were the eastern fringe of the Frankish Empire. The ebb and flow of empires created the religious division between Roman Catholicism, in the north-west, and Orthodox Christianity, which predominates in the rest of the Balkans.

In the 10th century, an independent state of Croatia was formed. It lasted for just under two hundred years. In the 12th century, a Serbian state was formed. It expanded until, at its greatest extent, it reached to both the Adriatic and the Aegean. In 1389, following the battle of Kosovo, the Ottoman Empire conquered Serbia and Bosnia-Herzegovina. There were large numbers of converts to Islam in the next two centuries. Today, their descendants form the ethnic group known as the Muslims.

Serbia, Bosnia-Herzegovina, Montenegro and Macedonia spent centuries under Ottoman rule, whereas Croatia and Slovenia were part of the Habsburg



Former Yugoslavia

Empire. The border region between the empires was repeatedly marked by wars. In the late 17th century, Serbs who fled Ottoman rule were encouraged by the Habsburgs to settle as military colonists in one of the most hotly contested border areas. In return for their services against the Ottomans, these Serbian warrior communities were granted religious freedom and a degree of self-government. The area was known as the Military Frontier. In Serbo-Croat, it is known as Vojna granica, Krajina. Krajina was at the core of the Serbian–Croatian war.

Serbia gained autonomy in 1815 after a series of Russian-supported uprisings against the Ottoman Empire. In 1875, Serbs and Croats in Bosnia-Herzegovina rebelled against Ottoman control. The following year, Serbia went to war. Although defeated by the Ottoman forces, Serbia gained full independence in 1878 thanks to great-power intervention. Bosnia-Herzegovina was made a protectorate of the Habsburg Austro-Hungarian Empire. In wars in the 1880s and on the eve of World War I, Serbia annexed Montenegro, Kosovo and northern Macedonia. Austria-Hungary transformed Bosnia-Herzegovina from a protectorate into a possession in 1908.

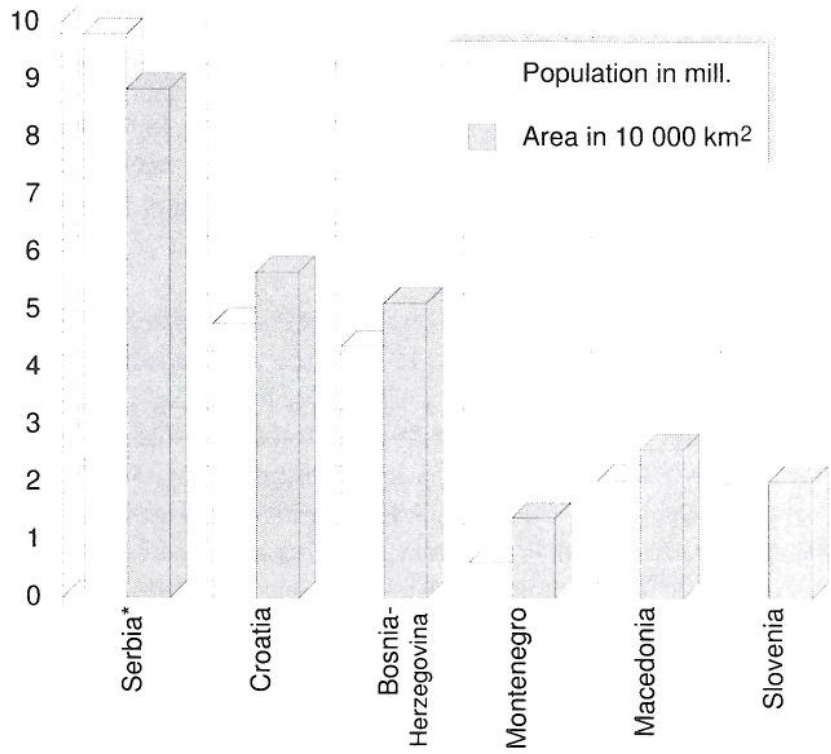
World War I and the Formation of Yugoslavia

On 28 June 1914 in Sarajevo, a militant Serb nationalist killed Archduke Ferdinand, heir to the throne of Austria-Hungary, and his wife. Austria immediately demanded compensation from Serbia, which appealed to its ally, Russia. Austria and Russia, in turn, called on the aid of Germany and France respectively. Thus began World War I.

The war was devastating. Serbia lost a quarter of its adult male population. But when Yugoslavia was created after World War I, drawing in the former Austro-Hungarian possessions of Slovenia, Croatia, Bosnia-Herzegovina and Vojvodina, Serbia was the largest and dominant unit. The Serbian king became the king of Yugoslavia.

The vast majority of the population of the new state were Slavic, but ethnic divisions had become fundamental determinants of political identity. Politics in the 1920s and 1930s were marked by violence, culminating in 1934 when King Alexander was assassinated while on a state visit to France. The killer, a Macedonian, had been hired by a Croatian fascist–nationalist organization called the Ustashe (Uprising).

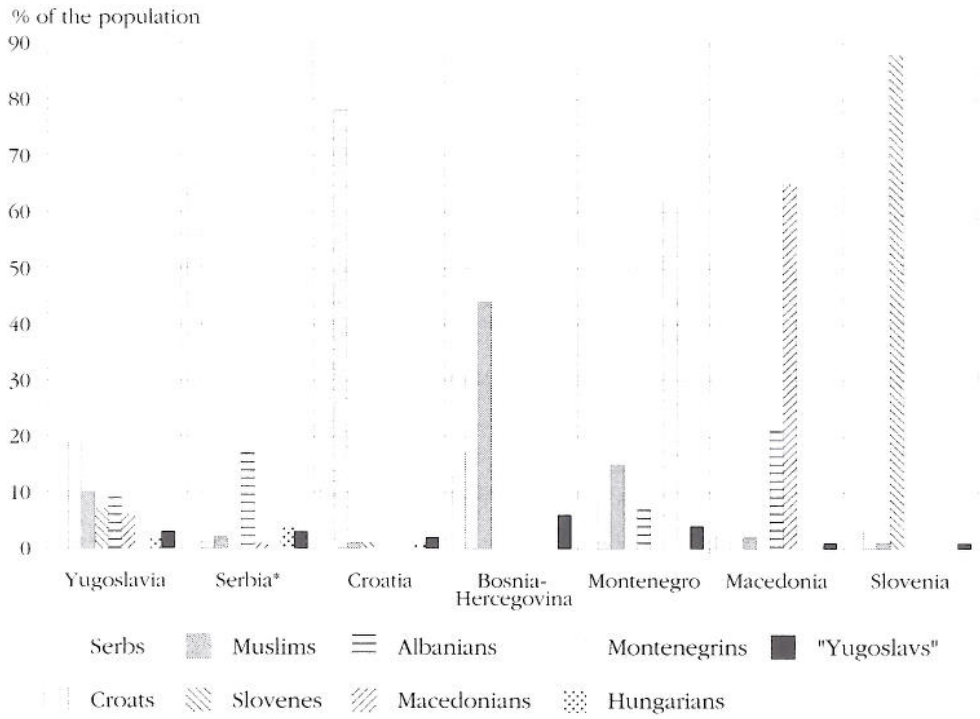
The Prince Regent of Yugoslavia signed a treaty with Germany in March 1941, upon which he was deposed by the army. The 18-year-old Peter was proclaimed king. On 6 April 1941, Germany invaded. Victory was swift.



* Included Vojvodina (population: 2,01 mill., area: 20.256 km^2) and Kosovo (population :1,95 mill., area: 10.887 km^2).

Chunks of Yugoslavia were parcelled out to Austria, Italy, Hungary and Bulgaria. Croatia was established as an independent fascist state under the Ustashe leader, Ante Pavelic, who annexed Bosnia-Herzegovina and much of Serbia.

World War II in Yugoslavia was a civil war as well as an international one, a continuation of earlier Balkan wars. Fascist Croatia unleashed a war of terror and extermination against Serbs and Jews, killing 700,000. Communist guerrillas led by Marshal Tito were the main resistance to Nazi Germany. Serbian royalists formed the smaller Chetnik resistance, collaborating with the Germans to fight the Communists. Both Chetniks and Communists fought the Croatian Ustashe. Ultimately, the Communists triumphed over all their enemies. When the Soviet army passed through northern Yugoslavia in 1945 and liberated Belgrade, Tito's partisan army had already liberated the rest of the country.



* Most of the Albanians live in Kosovo, where they represent 80–90% of the population. The Hungarians live mainly in Vojvodina, where they represent 17% of the population (the Serbs 57%).

Ethnicity and Religion

The Federal People's Republic of Yugoslavia was proclaimed in January 1946. It was renamed the Socialist Federal Republic of Yugoslavia in 1963. The main language, Serbo-Croat, is spoken by both Serbs and Croats with some differences in vocabulary, regional variations of accent and different alphabets. Serbs and Montenegrins use the Cyrillic alphabet; Croats, the Latin. The Slovene and Macedonian languages are distinct Slavic languages. In Vojvodina, where Serbs formed 54% of the population in 1981, ethnic diversity produced five official languages – Serbo-Croat, Hungarian, Slovak, Romanian and Ruthenian.

History has bequeathed to the region three major religions. Roman Catholicism is mainly found among the Croats and Slovenes; Orthodox Christianity, among the Serbs, Montenegrins and Macedonians; and Islam, among Muslims and Albanians. Some close observers suspect the number of practising Muslims has been exaggerated in population censuses, especially in Bosnia. They argue that many people who considered themselves to be

neither Serb nor Croat would not describe themselves as 'Yugoslav' because of the repressiveness of the federal state. These people then described themselves as 'Muslim' – meaning not 'Islamic believer' but Bosnian.

Tito's Yugoslavia

Tito ruled Yugoslavia from 1945 until his death in 1980. He generally permitted the republics and their ruling groups some degree of autonomy, as long as it did not threaten the cohesiveness of Yugoslavia as a whole. When it did, he reined it in with tough, repressive measures. For the most part, this resulted in a balance between the republics. Old rivalries and resentments were not ended, but they lost some of their immediacy and importance.

However, freeing the other nations and nationalities from domination by Belgrade and the Serbian bureaucracy needed to be balanced by more than repression. Serbian membership in the Communist Party and in the Yugoslav army's officer corps was disproportionately high. In areas outside Serbia – most notably in Croatia – Serbs also took a disproportionate number of senior positions in government administration, education and policing.

The Breakup

After Tito's death in 1980, the federal presidency rotated between representatives of the six republics. Each held the presidency for one year at a time. Where Tito had attempted to balance the republics and the nationalities, the new system simply set them against each other. In the 1980s, Yugoslavia was beset by three main problems:

1. *The economy*: Except in Slovenia and Croatia, the Yugoslavian economy deteriorated dramatically. The inflation rate was 250% in 1988 and reached 10,000% in 1989. When economic differences coincide with strongly felt ethnic divisions, outsiders are either blamed for the nation's problems or seen as the ones who benefit unfairly from the nation's success. Either way, the result is an upsurge of nationalism.
2. *Nationalism*: Economic stagnation was not the only cause of discord. In 1981, the grievances of the Albanian majority in Kosovo led to demonstrations that were forcibly repressed by the Serb authorities. Protests continued. In January 1986, 200 leading intellectuals in Belgrade signed a statement depicting Kosovo's Serbian minority themselves as the victims of repression. In Serbian nationalism, Kosovo is

regarded as the spiritual heart of the nation. But this upsurge of nationalism in Serbia was not solely directed against Albanians. The result was a reciprocal rise in nationalist sentiment among Slovenes, Croats and Muslims.

3. *Authority*: Because of the history of repression, there was no popular commitment to federalism, except in Bosnia-Herzegovina – and there only belatedly. No major political force had a clear and relevant agenda for maintaining the federal system as a way to balance the different republics and nationalities. All the dominant agendas were about how to gain maximum advantage for one or other national group. The lack of strong or even clear leadership meant there was no way of dealing at the federal level with the major symptoms, let alone the underlying causes. Starting with Slobodan Milosevic in Serbia in 1988, Communist Party leaders protected themselves by donning nationalist garb. The Federal Party broke up into separate republican parties, united only by mutual hostility.

Yugoslavia thus broke up under the combined weight of economic failure, nationalist rivalries built on ethnic differences, the short-term opportunism of political leaders and the lack of viable governmental and political structures at the federal level.

The Coming of War

In 1988, Serbian leader Milosevic demanded that Vojvodina and Kosovo be stripped of their autonomy and that Serbia be given a stronger role in the federation. By supporting political agitation, he undermined the government in Montenegro and secured a new government loyal to him. He insisted on vigorous repression of dissent, not least in Kosovo during 1989 and early 1990.

In April 1990, Croatia and Slovenia held free elections, won in both cases by nationalists. The winner in Croatia was Franjo Tudjman, leader of the Croat Democratic Union, formed in 1989. A former partisan general, he was imprisoned in the 1970s for upholding Croatian rights. Once in power, Tudjman initiated a purge of Serbs from government jobs.

In February 1991, Slovenia announced it was establishing its own currency, was setting up its own armed forces and would repudiate all federal control. The following day, the Croatian parliament likewise declared it had the right to veto federal laws. Milosevic responded by announcing that if

Yugoslavia broke up, Serbia would claim Serbian areas in other republics. The way was prepared for a war in which federal Yugoslavia and its army fought to hold Yugoslavia together while the republics fought each other for territory.

The fighting began in Krajina in May 1991 between Croatian forces and Serb irregulars. Slovenia and Croatia proclaimed independence on 25 June. The Yugoslav air force then bombed targets in Slovenia, and the army prepared to attack. But the Slovenian government had a well-armed militia and successfully penned the mainly Serb Yugoslav army forces in their barracks and camps. Working with the Serb irregulars, the Yugoslav army turned its main fire on Croatia. The war was fought on two fronts – eastern Croatia, where Vukovar was besieged and destroyed; and Dalmatia, where Dubrovnik was persistently shelled and, further north, the independent Serb republic of Krajina was established.

War in Bosnia-Herzegovina

The secession of Slovenia and Croatia forced the pace of independence in Bosnia-Herzegovina as well. In elections in December 1990, the three most successful parties were representatives of the three major ethnic groups – Muslims, Serbs and Croats. As Yugoslavia approached disintegration, the case for secession strengthened for both Muslim and Croat leaders, while the case for leaving Bosnia-Herzegovina and uniting with Serbia began to seem unanswerable to Bosnian Serb leaders.

As a ceasefire was agreed between Serbia and Croatia in January 1992 and the United Nations deployed a 14,000-strong UN Protection Force (UNPROFOR) to monitor it, Bosnia-Herzegovina moved towards war. In December 1991, West Germany recognized Slovenia and Croatia, and the European Community announced its readiness to consider the case for recognizing republics that sought independence. Muslim and Croat leaders in Bosnia-Herzegovina decided to apply. Bosnian Serb leaders reacted by declaring an independent republic on 9 January 1992. On 28 February and 1 March, the non-Serb population of Bosnia-Herzegovina voted for independence. Almost immediately, Bosnian Serb artillery was deployed in the hills around Sarajevo and the shelling began.

Serb forces had a vast superiority in armament. While Bosnian government forces were hampered by an international arms embargo, Serb forces controlled most of the equipment from the former Yugoslav army in Bosnia-Herzegovina. By late 1992, most Serb areas of Bosnia-Herzegovina were

under Serbian control. Croat forces backed by the Croatian government had also carved out an area in the south-west of the country. In this way, the Serb and Croat sides began to put into operation the March 1991 agreement between Presidents Milosevic and Tudjman to divide Bosnia-Herzegovina between them. In late 1993, Bosnian forces received fresh supplies and won back territory from both Croat and Serb forces. Peace plans and ceasefires came and went as the fighters continued to grab as much territory as possible.

During the war, the term 'ethnic cleansing' entered the international language as communities were broken up and snipers shot at former school friends. Detention camps were set up for unwanted people. Individuals who thought of themselves as neither Croat nor Serb nor Muslim were forced to choose one ethnic identity. By the end of 1996, the death toll was in the tens of thousands and may have been as high as 200,000. The number of refugees exceeded 2 million, of a pre-war population of 4.4 million.

International Intervention

Outside powers have intervened since summer 1991. The Organization for Security and Co-operation in Europe (OSCE, formerly the CSCE) has been involved in monitoring human rights in Serbia and checking the effectiveness of economic sanctions. The European Community sent observers to Croatia and sponsored a long effort at mediation, to no avail. The United Nations took over the diplomatic role and, following the Serbian–Croatian ceasefire, deployed UNPROFOR. Locating its headquarters in Sarajevo ensured the UN would be involved from the start of the war in Bosnia-Herzegovina. UN 'Blue Helmets' have tried to keep supply lines open to deliver food and medical assistance and have evacuated refugees. In 1992 the UN declared six safe zones – Tuzla, Gorazde, Zepa, Sarajevo, Bihac and Srebrenica – but that did not make them safe from Serb and Croat artillery. UN forces have been abused, threatened and fired on by all sides. They have been the local representatives of an international community whose motives, actions and inaction are viewed with suspicion by all parties. UN economic sanctions against Serbia for aggression in Bosnia-Herzegovina have been successful in inflicting serious damage on the Serbian economy and creating shortages, but did not seem able to change the Belgrade government's behaviour until mid-1994, when Milosevic announced his government was closing the border with Serbian zones in Bosnia.

In February 1994, in a change of policy after a crisis and public arguments between different UN military and civilian authorities, UN forces in Sarajevo

arranged a ceasefire and began to police it intrusively. A demand that artillery be withdrawn or surrendered was backed by a NATO threat to carry out airstrikes (if requested by the UN) if the deadline for local withdrawal/ disarmament were not respected. As the ceasefire terms were being implemented, Russian troops joined the 'Blue Helmets' forces. Most observers believed the Russian government's representatives could do more to persuade the Bosnian Serbs to comply with the ceasefire than UN negotiators could. Russia was also included in the so-called Contact Group, which otherwise consisted of the USA, France, the United Kingdom and Germany. The group was established with the aim of improving communication between the parties to the conflicts and major external states. Another aim was to increase the pressure on the warring parties.

In March 1994, with help and pressure from the USA, including both the threat of sanctions and the offer of aid, the Bosnian government and Croatia agreed on an outline plan for a new federated state of Bosnia. Although ultimate implementation would be dependent on Serb agreement, the first result was a ceasefire in the Bosnian-Croat war.

These two ceasefires were the first signs of hope since the summer of 1991. Later in the year, hope evaporated. A Bosnian Serb offensive against the 'safe zone' of Gorazde in April 1994 revealed the powerlessness of the UN forces. When Serb forces counterattacked after an initially successful Bosnian government offensive in the Bihac region in November, the UN was again accused of reacting slowly and ineffectively. At the end of December 1994, however, a new ceasefire agreement was reached. The ceasefire held for four months, but efforts to extend it failed and violence broke out again.

In late May 1995, after Bosnian Serbs had ignored a UN order to remove heavy weapons from the Sarajevo area, NATO retaliated by attacking a Serb ammunition depot. The Bosnian Serb forces, in turn, responded by shelling the UN 'safe areas'. Serb forces also took more than 350 UN peace-keepers hostage. The hostages were later released after an intervention by Milosevic.

The summer of 1995 brought major developments which laid the foundations for the peace settlement reached later that year. In mid-July, Bosnian Serb forces overran the small UNPROFOR force guarding the 'safe area' of Srebrenica and seized control of the city. In the process, thousands of Muslim men, disarmed by the UN, were massacred and buried in mass graves. An estimated 8,000 men went missing after the takeover. A couple of weeks later, Bosnian Serb forces seized control over Zepa, another 'safe area'. Again, UN forces were intimidated. As Zepa was falling, the UN representative for human rights in former Yugoslavia, Tadeusz Mazowiecki,

resigned over the international community's inaction in the face of the Srebrenica tragedy.

In early August, however, Croatia initiated a massive offensive against the Serb forces, which had their attention focused on south-eastern Bosnia and the 'safe area' of Bihac in the north-west. In the course of a few weeks, with two major offensives, Croat forces retook most of the land that Croatia had lost during the war. In the process, up to 180,000 Serbs were expelled from Krajina.

At the end of August, backed by NATO airpower, Bosnian government forces began to take back land from the Bosnian Serb army. NATO's new decisiveness came in the wake of an apparent Bosnian Serb mortar attack on Sarajevo. The Serb forces surrendered to 'Operation Deliberate Force' in the second half of September. Also that month, the foreign ministers of Bosnia, Croatia and Yugoslavia agreed to the division of Bosnia into two parts – a Serb and a Muslim–Croat one. On 5 October, a ceasefire went into force.

On 1 November, peace talks at Dayton Air Force Base, Ohio, began between the presidents of Croatia, Bosnia and Serbia. The last also represented the Bosnian Serbs, as leaders Radovan Karadzic and Radko Mladic had both been indicted for war crimes and risked arrest if they went to the USA. Leading the talks was Richard Holbrooke, US assistant secretary of state for European and Canadian Affairs. After three weeks of intense negotiations, on 21 November, the parties agreed to a settlement, which was signed in Paris in mid-December. The agreement provided for the establishment of a 60,000-strong NATO force to enforce the ceasefire and implement the division of Bosnia within the framework of one state. The so-called IFOR (Implementation Force) force would replace the UNPROFOR force, whose mandate ended early in 1996.

According to the Dayton Accord, Bosnia-Herzegovina would be divided into a Serb area (49%) and a Muslim–Croat federation (51%). The two entities are not permitted to enter into relations with other countries in a way that would encroach on the sovereignty or territorial integrity of Bosnia. The Bosnian state is to be governed by a central government with a democratically elected collective presidency and a parliament. The former warring parts of the state are also to operate under a single central bank and monetary system. The central institutions are to be based in Sarajevo. In the three-man presidency, decisions must, as a general rule, be made with unanimity – and always so on matters where one party considers that its national interests are at stake.

On 19 December, IFOR took over authority from the departing UN troops. The new force was deployed without meeting armed resistance. The three parties of the war pulled back from the confrontation line, and in early February they ceded land in accordance with the Accord.

Within the Muslim–Croat federation, however, tensions arose at this point over the city of Mostar. This city was, according the Dayton Agreement, to be the capital of the federation, with Croats and Muslims re-unified under an EU administration. Only with strong US pressure on Croatian President Tudjman did the federation get over the stumbling block created by a dispute over representation in the city government.

The UN Security Council voted to lift sanctions against Yugoslavia immediately after the Dayton Accord had been agreed upon. It also voted to phase out the arms embargo on all former Yugoslav republics. In late February, the Council also suspended sanctions against the Bosnian Serbs. In mid-June, with the signing of an arms control agreement, the Council voted to end the arms embargo. The following day, the naval blockade of former Yugoslavia was suspended. (In October, however, the US Congress voted to extend its trade sanctions against the Federal Republic of Yugoslavia into 1997.)

In March 1996, the weak Muslim–Croat federation took control of Sarajevo. A delay of the transfer could not completely prevent an exodus of Serbs or the destruction of many homes upon their departure.

In the spring of 1996, the first indicted war criminals were brought to the UN International Tribunal for the Former Yugoslavia in The Hague. However, those in question were without exception low-ranking men. Indicted figures such as Republika Srpska 'president' Radovan Karadzic and Bosnian Serb military leader Ratko Mladic continued to challenge the IFOR force, which was trying to avoid moving from peace-keeping to policing tasks. Only in July did the war crimes tribunal issue arrest warrants for Karadzic and Mladic. That same month, Karadzic, after strong international pressure, agreed to resign as 'president' and leader of the Serbian Democratic Party (which had unanimously re-elected him as leader only two weeks earlier). IFOR, however, still basically counts on the sides themselves to turn in their own accused. In October, the UN Security Council expressed regret over the slow progress in investigating the fate of missing persons. The Bosnian Serb side was singled out for obstructing efforts.

The Dayton Accord established that a series of seven elections – cantonal and parliamentary ones for the federation; parliamentary and presidential ones in the Serb republic; and, throughout Bosnia, municipal, parliamentary and presidential ones – were to be held in September 1996. Before the

elections, it was clear that many of the preconditions had not been met. Particularly, freedom of political activity was far from complete, as was freedom of movement.

The Dayton Accord and the September elections served to cement Bosnia, which used to be a multinational entity, into ethnically based districts. The three positions in the collective three-man presidency were won by Alija Izetbegovic, Momcilo Krajisnik and Kresimir Zubak – Muslim, Serb and Croat, respectively. The biggest winner was Izetbegovic, who won the most votes and thus became Bosnia's head of state. Izetbegovic had turned towards specifically Muslim nationalist rhetoric; the major candidate professing a multinational Bosnia, Haris Silajdzic, won 14% of the Muslim vote. Following the elections, Bosnian Serb leader Krajisnik began a boycott of the shared presidency.

The elections were ultimately deemed free and fair by the OSCE. Still, they were criticized by a number of observers. Not unexpectedly, a major problem was connected with getting people to cross opposition lines to cast their votes. Only one-tenth of eligible Muslim voters entered Serb zones to do so. However, international recognition of the outcome seemed to reflect the view that no side was more affected by such weaknesses than others.

In any case, the OSCE in October announced that it would postpone the local elections, which were supposed to be held in September but later slated for November, until the spring of 1997. The reason was massive fraud in the registering of voters, particularly on the Serb side. There were also technical problems that called for a postponement. Republika Srpska President Biljana Plavsic, Karadzic's successor, announced that she did not wish to see the OSCE's mission for organizing elections extended into 1997.

Prospects

Although the Dayton Accord ended the fighting in Bosnia in November 1995, the near future of former Yugoslavia is not devoid of grim possibilities:

- The peace accord presupposes that new elections are held no later than September 1998. It is far from certain that nationalists will be less successful then than they were in 1996.
- The issue of war crimes still haunts former Yugoslavia and the international community. If the IFOR does not apprehend fugitives such as

Karadzic and Mladic, one may expect to see numerous cases of rough justice.

- Observers have long warned that war may spread to Macedonia. The international presence in former Yugoslavia, as well as the Milosevic regime's recent cooperation, has rendered this scenario less likely, but not impossible.
- Kosovo may still re-emerge as a focal point of conflict. A solution to the Serb-Albanian conflict has yet to be found (see also article on Albania).
- The multi-ethnic population of Bosnia has been divided according to ethnicity – the policies of the ethnic cleansers have won. In the territories of today's Muslim–Croat Federation, there were 225,000 Serbs in 1991. In 1996, the figure was down to 36,000. In the Serb-held areas, the number of Muslims and Croats in the same period decreased from 840,000 to 73,000.
- The economy of most of former Yugoslavia has been destroyed. Recovery will be slow; prosperity is still a long way off.
- If conflict lines do not ease, Western military forces may have to stay on in Bosnia for years to come.
- There are a range of views on the Dayton Agreement. At one end of the spectrum, the agreement is seen as one that unifies Bosnia-Herzegovina as a multi-ethnic state with full respect for human rights. From this perspective, the implementation, though not a total failure, is seriously flawed. At the other extreme, one considers the agreement to be one that cements ethnic division. From this perspective, the implementation has been successful.

Macedonia

The former Yugoslav republic of Macedonia received its independence as a result of the dissolution of Yugoslavia. This has rekindled old disputes in Serbia, Greece and Bulgaria concerning the classical Macedonia. Today the most probable sources of conflict are the threat from Serbia and the increasing dissatisfaction among the sizeable Albanian minority in Macedonia.

Background

Macedonia is, historically speaking, the name of the geographical area covering the former Yugoslav republic of Macedonia, large parts of northern Greece and southern areas of Bulgaria eastward to the Black Sea. These areas were controlled by the Macedonian Empire in the reign of Alexander the Great, 336–323 BC. Following his death, the Macedonian areas were weakened by internal dissension. However, Macedonia remained the core of the Greek Empire until it was conquered by Rome in 168 BC. In the period that followed, Macedonia was subjected to invasions by Slavs, Bulgarians and groups on the move from Asia Minor. Macedonia was controlled by the Slavs and Bulgarians from the 6th century, until it came under the Ottoman Empire in the 1300s. The Germans held Macedonia until the Second Balkan War in 1913, when Greece, Serbia and Bulgaria split the area, and the three states started assimilating the population in their respective parts of Macedonia.

In the interwar period, the area which today constitutes the republic of Macedonia was part of the southern Slav state established in 1918 – the Monarchy of Serbs, Croats and Slovenes (from 1929, Yugoslavia). The Great Serb politics that dominated in the interwar period defined the Slav population in Macedonia as Serbs, and the area was called 'South Serbia'. The only permitted language was Serbian. Under these conditions, pro-Bulgarian sentiments grew among the Macedonians. When Yugoslavia was occupied by Germany and Italy in 1941, Macedonia became part of the Great

Areas with Macedonian or Albanian majority

Bulgarian state. The Bulgarian regime soon made itself unpopular as the occupants' collaborators. Thus, the Macedonian wish for independence grew.

It was not until 1943 that Macedonia once again received its own identity. Tito promised that the Yugoslav part of Macedonia would have the status of a republic in a future southern Slav state. This became reality in 1944.

Macedonia decided to secede from Yugoslavia in a 1991 referendum, and declared its independence on 8 September 1991. In April 1993, the country joined the United Nations under the temporary name of 'The Former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia' (FYROM).

Ethnic Tensions

The ethnic composition of the Macedonian population reflects the changing history of the area. The largest group are the Macedonians, who are Slavs of Bulgarian origin. There is a strained relationship between the Macedonians and the large Albanian minority. Macedonia's Albanians make up about 22% of a population of 2.1 million. They are well organized politically, and maintain that the constitution does not take sufficient consideration of their

linguistic, cultural and religious needs. For that reason, the Albanians of Macedonia boycotted the independence referendum in 1991. Then, in a 1992 referendum, a large majority voted in favour of internal self-government. The Macedonian authorities dispute the validity of this referendum. Full reunification with Albanian is, as yet, not a widespread demand among Macedonian Albanians, because the Albanian economy still is weaker than that of Macedonia.

The second largest minority are the Turks, who make up approximately 100,000 (i.e. some 4%) of the population. The Turkish minority is a remnant of the Ottoman rule in the Balkans. The Turks live all over Macedonia, and this minority's existence has not caused any serious conflicts. They have secured a minimum of cultural minority rights.

Serbs make up only 2–2.5% of the population in Macedonia. A long period of coexistence has resulted in the absence of enmity between Serbs and Macedonians. Official discrimination against Serbs is not a major issue in Macedonian politics, and the discrimination that exists continues to decline. There are also a small number of Greeks in Macedonia, but their situation is not regarded as vulnerable.

The nationalist party VMRO received the most votes in the 1991 elections. It is VMRO's wish to gather historic Macedonia into one nation, which would include Greek Macedonia. State use of antique Greek symbols and ambiguous statements in the Macedonian constitution have reinforced Greek fears of a territorial claim from Macedonia. VMRO is being kept out of government by more moderate parties, and it received considerably less support in the October 1994 elections. Macedonia has, under President Kiro Gligorov, followed a fairly pragmatic course in questions linked to ethnic opposition, as well as to its relations to neighbouring states.

Stagnation

The economic situation in Macedonia is difficult because of tensions since the country declared its independence from former Yugoslavia. Macedonia was the poorest of the former Yugoslav republics, with a GNP of USD 3,330 per capita. The main sources of income have been mining, agriculture, tourism and private transfers from Macedonians abroad. The period following secession has been marked by economic stagnation, caused primarily by the loss of the rest of Yugoslavia as a trading partner – which Macedonia has been boycotting in line with international agreements – but also by the Greek trade boycott of Macedonia, introduced in 1994. Unemployment is running

at more than 20%, and inflation is very high. The prospect of foreign investments modernizing industry is minimal. Only in March 1996 was the country's first (modest) stock exchange opened.

Before Macedonia joined the UN, only a few states had recognized its sovereignty. The country could therefore not seek assistance from the International Bank for Reconstruction and Development (IBRD) or the International Monetary Fund (IMF) to stabilize the economy.

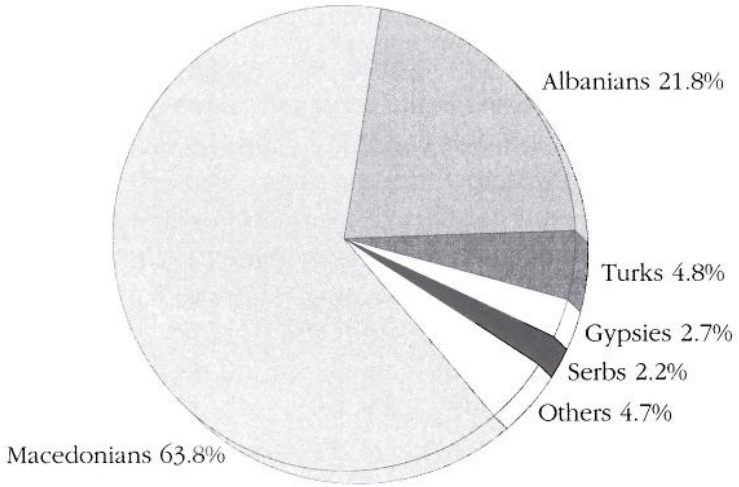
At the Intersection

The establishment of the Macedonian state has revived conflicts linked to the classical territory of Macedonia. The new Macedonian state is situated at the point of intersection for attention from Serbia, Greece and Bulgaria.

Serbia's attitude towards Macedonia is ambiguous. Nationalistic Serbian leaders deny the existence of a Macedonian nationality, and maintain that the area is Serbian. Even though Serbian President Slobodan Milosevic has not expressed such views, the possibility of Serbian aggression is taken seriously. After all, the vision of a Greater Serbia has always included Macedonia. Serbia's historical claim to Macedonia dates back to the Middle Ages, when Serbian rulers controlled large parts of Macedonia.

Serbia was disappointed when Macedonia seceded from former Yugoslavia. While Yugoslavia existed, it was primarily Serbs who were in charge of industry in Macedonia, and the Macedonian mining industry was an important resource in former Yugoslavia. This also means that Serbs have economic interests in the new state of Macedonia. However, no demands for intervention have so far been made concerning protection of the Serbian population in Macedonia.

International diplomatic recognition was long prevented by Greece, which could not accept that the name of the new state would include the word 'Macedonia'. To the Greeks, the name Macedonia is insolubly tied to Greek culture and history, and another state's use of the name is seen as a provocation. Furthermore, Greece fears that recognition of the Macedonian state, under the name of Macedonia, can legitimize future territorial claims against Greek Macedonia. Greece refers to paragraphs in the Macedonian constitution which they claim indicate such ambitions. A further Greek worry is that recognition will give a push to minority-rights demands for the Slavic-speaking population in Greek Macedonia. Territorially, Greece has no claims on the new Macedonian state.



Ethnic distribution in Macedonia

Bulgaria has recognized Macedonia as a state, but not as a nation. Bulgaria has, since the 19th century, regarded the geographical Macedonia as a part of Greater Bulgaria, claiming that the population in the new Macedonian state is Bulgarian. Bulgaria modified its views later, however, and relations between the two states are now relatively good. There is growing recognition of Macedonian Slavs as an independent ethnic group. Demands for union between the two states are now mostly furthered by nationalists who hope to reawaken the Bulgarians' latent feelings and make them realize that Macedonia belongs to them. Access to the sea, through the Greek port of Thessaloniki, was central to Greater Bulgarian ambitions. Revival of such plans is therefore felt as a threat in Greece and in Macedonia alike.

International Initiatives

Greece blocked international recognition of Macedonia until April 1993, thereby preventing Macedonia from receiving regular assistance from the IMF and the IBRD. This made it more difficult for Macedonia to meet the demands of the Albanians, and even more difficult to claim sovereignty vis-à-vis Serbia. Nor could the country be assured of international military protection without recognition by the UN.

Greece accepted the recognition of Macedonia under the temporary name of 'The Former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia'. Mediation between the

two states has been held under the aegis of the UN, in an attempt to find a final solution to the name question.

The IMF and the IBRD did, however, informally recognize Macedonia in 1992/93, in order to be able to provide the economic aid regarded as necessary to give Macedonia the stability it needed to claim its sovereignty from neighbouring states. Many Western European states also granted de facto recognition of Macedonia before the formal recognition was agreed.

The UN Security Council decided on 11 December 1992 to send peacekeeping forces to the Serbian–Macedonian border. This was the first time the UN stationed forces to prevent the outbreak of a possible conflict. Since January 1993, US, Canadian and Nordic contingents, numbering some 1,200 troops, have been in charge of guarding the borders with Albania and former Yugoslavia. In addition, a smaller number of UN military observers, as well as a division of civilian police officers, have been stationed to keep an eye on the Macedonian police. The OSCE has a so-called deputation, led by an ambassador in Skopje. The deputation aims to establish contact and to create a favourable climate for negotiations between the different parties in order to prevent conflict from developing.

Conflict Potential

In May 1993, the Serbian president pressured Macedonia not to accept the offer concerning the presence of US military forces. That has been interpreted locally to mean that militant Serbs would attack Macedonia after the war in Bosnia-Herzegovina was over. With the outcome of the Bosnian war, however, that possibility has been rendered less likely. Serbian operations in Kosovo can worsen the situation in Macedonia, in that Kosovo-Albanian refugees may be driven to Macedonia. This may, in turn, worsen relations between Macedonians and Albanians in Macedonia.

The conflict between Macedonians and Albanians has become manifest, since Macedonia's Albanians have already declared their desire for internal self-government. This demand has been rejected by Macedonian authorities, but after four people were killed in street rioting in Skopje in November 1992, the Macedonian authorities have become more conciliatory with regard to the Albanian minority. But with an increasing number of Albanian refugees from Kosovo, and a generally rapid growth in the Albanian the population, there are potential sources for future conflicts. One ominous prospect is that Turkey could use possible encroachments against Albanian

Muslims in Kosovo and Macedonia to justify a heavier involvement in the region.

Developments until November 1996

Since the autumn of 1993, the internal political situation in Macedonia has been characterized by continued tension between Macedonians and the sizeable Albanian minority. Nine ethnic Albanians were arrested for smuggling weapons in November 1993; one of them was the Deputy Minister of Defence. The circumstances surrounding the smuggling were not clear. Macedonian authorities refuted early contentions that the weapons were intended for a violent separatist wing of the country's large Albanian party, the Party for Democratic Prosperity (PDP). The leaders of PDP also disassociated themselves from the people arrested. In the wake of this episode, a power struggle ensued within the PDP. The party leader was dismissed because he had 'cooperated' with the Macedonian authorities. In December, members of the PDP requested that Macedonia not join the OSCE until the Albanians of the country had received constitutional guarantees of their rights on a par with those of the Macedonians. In July 1994, the PDP began a boycott of the parliament, as a response to the verdict against the alleged arms smugglers.

For the same reason, many ethnic Albanians boycotted the census in the summer of 1994. The census was financed by the EU precisely to establish the size of the Albanian part of the population.

Serbia is still seen as the foremost external threat to Macedonia. Serbian President Slobodan Milosevic claims that armed Albanian separatism is in the making. Moderate ethnic Albanians deny this, claiming that the weapon smuggling could have been staged by Serbia as an excuse for intervention.

Relations with Greece deteriorated following the Greek change of government in October 1993. The new Greek prime minister, Andreas Papandreou, was elected on renewed promises never to permit the neighbouring state to use the name Macedonia. A drastic intensification took place in February 1994, when Greece unexpectedly closed the Greek–Macedonian border to all ordinary trade; this was a serious blow to landlocked Macedonia. The president of the EU Commission at the time, Jacques Delors, threatened to bring Greece before the Court of Justice of the European Union – a serious action against a member country.

Independence has largely failed to improve conditions in Macedonia. The country's economy is still characterized by socialist principles. At the same

time, inflation is running high. Macedonia has an army of some 12,000 troops, but the armed forces completely lack heavy arms.

The 1994 Elections

An opinion poll in 1994 showed a marked reduction in the support to nationalist parties, whereas the governing coalition had been strengthened. This was confirmed by the parliamentary and presidential elections in October 1994. VMRO–DPMNE (the Democratic Party for National Unity, and the Democratic Party) boycotted the second round and demanded re-elections, alleging that the elections were rigged. CSCE representatives who supervised the elections described them as 'partly chaotic'. The Albanian minority complained about irregularities in voter registration and in election procedures.

President Gligorov and his electoral Alliance of Macedonia (SM) – made up of the Socialist Party, the Liberal Party and the Social Democrats – won the elections. Gligorov, president since January 1992, was elected for a second term with 52% of the vote. The SM alliance won 96 of 120 seats in the parliamentary elections, and a new cabinet dominated by the SM was approved in December.

The Albanian Minority

The situation of the ethnic Albanian minority has continued to play an important role in Macedonian politics. Whereas the Albanians did not participate in politics in the first period after 1990, the largest Albanian party, the PDP, has since participated in several Macedonian governments. After the elections in 1994, Albanian parties received 18 seats in the national assembly and 4 places in the cabinet.

After the Albanians complained that their numbers were too low in the 1991 census – they claimed to comprise around 40% of the population – another census was held in 1994, under international supervision, which showed that the Albanians make up 22%.

In January 1995, Albanian was recognized as the state's second official language. Only one month later, however, parliament approved a draft law prohibiting the use of Albanian on identity cards and passports. As a result, all 19 Albanian deputies walked out, not to return until July; they also protested for the right to use Albanian in parliament and the right to an

Albanian university. The ethnic Albanian deputy speaker of the assembly resigned.

In early 1995, clashes took place between Albanians and Macedonian police as a controversial ethnic Albanian university opened in Tetovo. Some 2,000 people gathered for the opening of the university, which had been declared illegal by the authorities. Within a day, the university was closed by the police. On 17 February, an Albanian man was killed in a clash with police outside the university.

In the spring of 1995, the US State Department reported that Albanians were being subjected to various types of discrimination in Macedonia, including limited access to Albanian-language media and education, poor representation in public sector jobs, denial of citizenship, and unfair drawing of voting district boundaries.

In early October 1995, President Gligorov was seriously injured when a bomb exploded near his car. One year later, there had still not been made any arrests in connection with the attack.

The autumn of 1995 brought two breakthroughs for Macedonia on the international scene: in October it became a full member of the OSCE, and in November it was admitted to the Council of Europe. To break the deadlock caused by Greece, Macedonia's parliament approved a new flag, replacing the Star of Vergina.

Since then, Macedonia's situation has been eased on several fronts. An accord of mutual respect of sovereignty, territorial integrity and political independence has been signed with Greece. Lecturers are still not allowed into the university in Tetovo, but they are allowed to give classes in their homes. In April 1996, forced largely by economic imperatives, presidents Milosevic and Gligorov signed an accord on mutual recognition between Yugoslavia and Macedonia. Both countries have suffered under the UN-led boycott against Yugoslavia; Serbia used to be Macedonia's largest trading partner. The parties agreed to respect each other's sovereignty, independence and territorial integrity. Despite these advances, however, the UN Preventive Deployment Force (UNPREDEP) mission has been extended into 1997.

Albania

Albania suffers from a weakly developed political culture, as well as fundamental economic development problems. Moreover, the country has difficult relationships with its neighbours. About half of the Albanians – some 3 million – live outside the republic of Albania, most of them as minorities in Serbia and Macedonia. Relations with Serbia are especially tense. As long as ethnic Albanians in Kosovo are oppressed by the Serbs, Albania will remain in danger of becoming involved in a serious conflict.

Background

The Albanians claim descent from the Illyrians, an Indo-European people who lived in the areas of today's Yugoslavia and Albania. Linguistic characteristics, in addition to continuity in the settlement pattern, give some support to this claim.

Ancient Albania was strategically located between the Roman and the Greek Empire. Rome had tried from around 300 BC to conquer the surrounding Albanian territories, but Albania was situated like a natural fortress in difficult mountain terrain. The Romans, therefore, did not succeed until 168 BC. In the 6th century AD the Balkans underwent major Slavic settlement, and the Albanians escaped to the mountains, forming small tribes with little mutual contact. Consequently, Albania was easy prey for the Ottoman Empire in 1385. National feelings did not rise again until towards the end of the 19th century, owing to strong tribal identity. Albania was independent from 1912 and until it was invaded by Italy in 1939.

Following World War II, the Communist leadership of Albania sought cooperation, first with Yugoslavia and then with the Soviet Union. There was a break with the Soviet Union in 1961 over ideological matters, and China took over the role as supporter. Following Mao's death in 1967, Albania dissociated itself from China, alleging Chinese political revisionism.

Under pressure from the revolutionary wave in Eastern Europe, the ruling Albanian Socialist Party began a process of democratization in 1990. The

Areas with Albanian majority

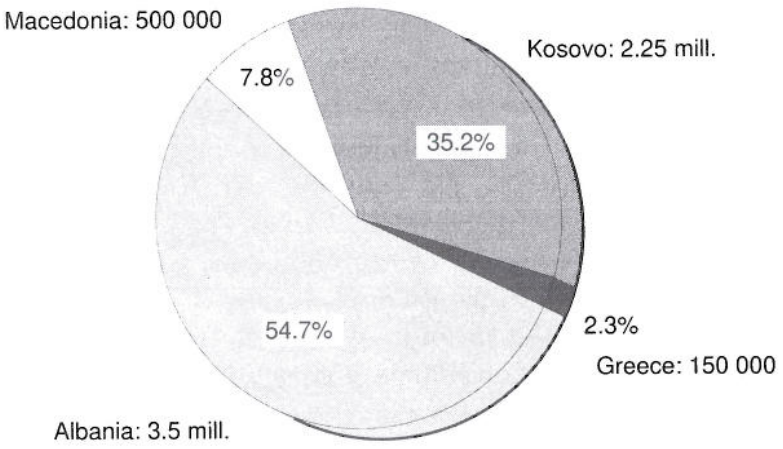
country's first democratically elected government was appointed on 13 April 1992.

Albania has never constituted a self-sustaining economic unit. Its weak trade and infrastructure prevented independent industrialization: 90% of the population still live in rural villages or on farms. The most important livelihoods are agriculture and cattle. Some metallurgical activity and export-regulated mining were established with Soviet, and later Chinese, assistance. Delayed industrialization and lack of capital have prevented the modernization of commercial and industrial life.

Changing Masters

The Albanian people are divided into two linguistic groups. The Ghegans live in the north, the Toskans in the south, with the division following the Shkumbin River. The two groups have distinct characteristics, for instance regarding music and dress. Since 1945 the official language has been based on Toskan.

Albanians' religious affiliations reflect the country's history under different masters. About 70% of the population are Muslim, 20% Greek Orthodox and the remaining 10% Roman Catholic. Following a long period when



The distribution of Albanians

atheism was the official policy, religious orientation is no longer a major concern. Religion is primarily an indicator of where in the country one belongs. Catholics are found mainly in the north, while the Orthodox dominate in the south.

Only parts of the Albanian nation – approximately 3.5 million people – live within the borders of today's Albania. When the region's borders were drawn at a great-power conference in 1913 following the Balkan wars, in which the Turks were ousted, the Albanian population was divided between several states. The great powers based the borders on historical principles, not on ethnic realities. Thus, Serbia got a significant Albanian population (Kosovo and Macedonia). After World War I, these areas became part of the new southern Slav state, Yugoslavia. Today this is the Kosovo province within Serbia in the Republic of Yugoslavia, and the Republic of Macedonia, where some 2.5 million Albanians live. There is also an Albanian minority in Montenegro.

Since the 17th century, the tight economy been a source of emigration. Large groups of people living in Kosovo and the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia consider themselves to be Albanians. Many have emigrated to Greece, Italy, Turkey and the USA. About 50,000 ethnic Greeks live in southern Albania, around the cities of Gjirokastër and Sarandë near the Greek border. Greek, Romanian and Bulgarian minorities make up about 5% of the population of Albania.

Post-Communist Politics

The former Socialist Party, the Albanian Labour Party, won the country's first postwar parliamentary elections in March 1991. At the elections in March 1992, however, the Communists lost power to the Democratic Party, which received 62% of the vote. The party formed a government with two other opposition parties, and the Albanian Labour Party went into opposition. The Democratic Party implemented one of the most severe reform programmes in former Communist Europe.

In November 1994, a clear majority of Albanian voters rejected a proposed new constitution, which would have greatly increased the powers of the president in relation to the parliament. The government could not muster the necessary two-thirds support for the constitution in parliament, after a faction split off from one of the Democratic Party's allies. The referendum vote was widely interpreted as an indication that democratic values were taking root; not least, President Sali Berisha's brash style had served to turn Albanians away from him.

Following the referendum loss, Berisha thoroughly reshuffled the cabinet, removing 12 ministers. The abandoning of allies did not, however, affect the governing of the country, as the Democratic Party alone commanded a majority in parliament.

Other significant political developments in 1994 included the 12-year prison sentence of Fatos Nano, leader of the Socialist Party and former prime minister, for misuse of government funds and abuse of office; and the 9-year sentence of former president Ramiz Alia, for abuse of power. Alia was released in mid-1995 by the Court of Appeal.

The action against Nano has been proclaimed by the opposition to signify an authoritarian leaning by the Berisha regime. Other policies are said to point in the same direction; for example, the Law on Genocide and Communist Crime, ratified by the president in September 1995, blocked those who had held senior political office under the Communist regime from public office until 2002. The law is worded such that it affects a great number of Socialist Party and Social Democratic Party politicians, whereas it permits Berisha – former Communist leader Enver Hoxha's personal doctor and a former Albanian Workers' Party functionary – to run for the presidency again. Similarly, the Electoral Law, passed in early 1996, prevented small parties from joining together to meet the 4% threshold for representation in the parliamentary elections.

The elections were held on 26 May 1996, with a second round on 2 June and a re-run in 17 constituencies on 16 June. The main opposition parties boycotted the second round and the re-run. The elections resulted in a landslide victory for Berisha's party, enabling it to completely control the government and finally pass a new constitution. The Democrats won 101 of the 115 directly elected seats in the 140-seat parliament.

However, the elections took place under highly questionable conditions. 'The will of the Albanian people was not expressed in a free manner in the elections', the OSCE observer group reported, stating that 32 of the 79 articles in the Albanian election law had been violated. The opposition concluded that dictatorship had returned in Albania. Even before the elections, opposition politicians were intimidated. On election day, the result was secured by means of rigging, violence and intimidation.

Following the elections, international criticism of the regime was loud. In late June 1996 the European Parliament voted to 101–72 to suspend European Union cooperation with Albania until 'a democracy worthy of the name' is instituted there. A suspension of Albania from the Council of Europe, to which it was admitted a year earlier, seemed possible.

After the elections, the opposition refused to take the seats it had won. In September, after strong pressure from the USA and the Council of Europe, the parties agreed to sit down for roundtable talks. During these talks, they agreed on conditions under which the opposition would take part in the local elections, the first round of which was held on 20 October. The agreement, however, was limited: the opposition still challenged the outcome of the parliamentary elections and remained absent in the parliament.

Before the local elections, the Office for Democratic Institutions and Human Rights (ODIHR) and the OSCE's Parliamentary Assembly withdrew their monitors. The pretext was the Albanian authorities' refusal to accept the ODIHR's list of observers. However, the USA, Italy and the Council of Europe did send monitors. Despite allegations of rigging from the opposition, the international observers who were present deemed the elections, on balance, free and fair. According to the Albanian Central Electoral Commission, the Democratic Party scored an overwhelming victory, winning 88% support, compared with a mere 10% for the Socialists. The Greek minority Human Rights Party gained less than 3%. According to the vote, Democrats would govern in 37 municipalities and the Socialists in 4. Run-offs were due in 22 municipalities.

Whereas the Albanian regime left much to be desired politically, it could show a good economic record. Since 1993, Albania has had one of the

highest growth rates in Central and Eastern Europe – albeit from a very low starting-point – and it has eased a lot of the state control over the economy. Much of the growth has come in the agricultural sector, after most land was privatized in 1992. In 1995, the inflation rate was down to 10%; unemployment had fallen to 13%. Remittances from Albanians working abroad – mostly in Greece and Italy, and accounting for about 20% of the workforce – add significantly to the Albanian economy. Furthermore, Albania received USD 350 million in aid in 1995. Among the main current economic problems are rife corruption and a lack of private investment.

City and Country

Cabinet ministers in the new government are to a great extent university graduates from urban areas. Because Albania had never had a multi-party system, the right–left axis is not a central dimension in politics. The main divisions go between city and country, and between north and south. The Democratic Party appeals to university graduates and industrial workers, primarily settled in the northern cities. The Albanian Labour Party has its stronghold in the countryside and among the older generations – a solid electorate in a country where the majority of the population are farmers. The Socialist Party is also the guardian of the legacy of party leader Enver Hoxha, who is constantly remembered as father of modern Albania, as well as a national hero, even though his political ideology is dead.

Relations with Other States

During the conflicts in former Yugoslavia, Albania has held a low profile on the international scene. The goal has been stability in the region. The exception has been a sometimes tense relationship with Greece. Albania has not led a nationalist policy with regard to the Albanians outside its borders. This policy has been motivated by, among other things, the need for political and economic support from Western Europe. It took, however, some time before the country began to receive significant support from the West. Italy gave emergency aid in the form of food and medicine in order to stabilize the situation. Only recently have Italian investments begun to arrive. Turkey has also given aid to Albania, and the two countries have entered into a military agreement. Through its relationship with Turkey, Albania has become a member of the Organization of the Islamic Conference (OIC) in order to seek support from the Muslim world. However, the relationship with Western

Europe is the most important, and in December 1992 Albania applied for NATO membership.

Kosovo

Albania's main foreign-policy challenge lies in its relationship with Serbia. About 2.5–3 million Albanians live in areas of former Yugoslavia – 2 million in Kosovo province, an area of Serbia which borders Albania. In 1946, Kosovo received the status of an autonomous province within the Yugoslav republic of Serbia.

Ninety per cent of Kosovo's population are Albanians. They are the third-largest group in former Yugoslavia, following the Serbs and the Croats. Because of this, the Kosovo-Albanians demanded status as an independent republic, similar to what other Yugoslav groups (Serbs, Croats, Macedonians, Slovenians, Bosnians and Montenegrins) had received in their respective regions. However, Serbia deprived Kosovo of the status of autonomous province in the summer of 1990 – a very drastic measure, considering that Kosovo was populated primarily by Albanians. This loss of self-governance took place at the same time as other groups in Yugoslavia were strengthening their independence.

Kosovo has a special meaning to Serbia because it was the centre of the medieval Serbian Empire and consequently the home of much of Serbian cultural heritage. Kosovo was also the scene of a crucial battle in 1389, in which the Serbian army was defeated by the Turks. The battle has a central place in today's Serbian national myth-making, increasing Kosovo's importance to Serbia.

The Kosovo-Albanians' popularly elected representatives went underground as a result of Serbia's more stringent conditions. On 7 September 1990, these representatives adopted a constitution that gave Kosovo status as a republic within the Yugoslav Federation. So far, Albania is the only state to recognize Kosovo as an independent republic.

Macedonia

Approximately 22% of the Macedonian population are Albanians. In the late 1980s, authorities limited the already modest rights of the Albanians and prohibited the use of the Albanian language in schools. As a result, Macedonia's Albanians boycotted the September 1991 referendum concerning secession from Yugoslavia. In their own, unofficial referendum held on 12

January 1992, the Albanians of Macedonia decided to demand territorial and political autonomy within Macedonia, claiming that the Macedonian constitution did not safeguard their interests properly. The authorities, however, denied the validity of this referendum. Albania, along with Greece, has been preventing Macedonia from participating as a full member in the Organization for Security and Co-operation in Europe (OSCE, formerly the Conference on Security and Cooperation in Europe, CSCE). Albania is protesting the treatment of the Albanian minority in Macedonia. (For details on the Albanian minority here, see the article on Macedonia.)

Greece

Two questions create difficulties in Albania's relations with Greece. One is the flow of illegal Albanian immigrants to Greece, while the second concerns the Greek minority in South Albania.

The wind-up of the Communist regime in Albania in 1990 resulted in mass emigration to the rich neighbouring states of Italy and especially Greece. Many of the approximately 300,000 Albanians who now are in Greece do not have valid residence or work permits. This uncontrolled immigration has resulted in a large increase in begging and crime in Greece. Greek authorities have, in agreement with Albania, continued to send back illegal immigrants.

The OMONIA Party, which represented the Greek minority, was banned in February 1992. It was argued that the party was a cultural organization rather than a bona fide political party. Pressure from Greece and the EC resulted in permission for the Union Party for Human Rights – OMONIA's successor – to participate in the 22 March elections that year.

Tensions between Greece and Albania increased in June 1993 when Albanian authorities expelled a Greek Orthodox priest from South Albania. The expulsion was linked to the other issue of conflict between the two countries: the Greek minority in South Albania. The priest had claimed that South Albania, called North Epirus by the Greek nationalists, was actually Greek, and that the area therefore ought to become a part of Greece. The Greek government reacted by increasing the expulsion rate of illegal Albanians. Approximately 20,000 Albanians were expelled in the course of a few days, placing an added burden on the rundown Albanian society.

Relations between the two countries deteriorated in 1994. Incidents on the border in the spring and summer of that year led to mutual expulsion of diplomats. One rather odd incident took place in August 1994, when an

airplane from the Greek air force violated Albanian airspace, dropping leaflets demanding the resignation of the Albanian government.

In a court case in September 1994, six representatives of the Greek minority received long prison sentences for 'treason'. The trial led to strong retaliations from the Greek government: official contacts were frozen, EU aid was blocked, and tens of thousands of Albanians were expelled.

Then, in February 1995, the Greek prisoners were freed. Greece displayed its satisfaction with a visit to Tirana by Foreign Minister Karolos Papoulias the following month. Since then, cooperation between the two countries has increased, and the tone between them has improved significantly. Occasionally, Greek border guards still shoot – and kill – Albanians trying to cross the border. And Albanians are still expelled. But these incidents have become less frequent.

In March 1996, the relationship between the two countries took yet another positive turn when Greek President Kostas Stephanopoulos visited Albania. During the visit, the Greek and Albanian foreign ministers signed a treaty of friendship, cooperation, good neighbourliness and security.

The Greek government has not claimed Albanian territory, and the idea has little place in the wider Greek consciousness. The thought has, however, always appealed to circles within the Greek Orthodox Church, and in certain small circles within the large parties Nea Demokratia and PASOK (Panhellenic Socialist Movement).

Conflict Potential

The most probable source of conflict for the Albanian nation rests in Kosovo. It is not very likely that Serbia will restore Albanian self-government in Kosovo, given the area's symbolic and historical value to the Serbs. Serbia fears that self-government at a later stage will lead to the demand for full detachment, following the patterns of Central and Eastern Europe. This policy is untenable. It is therefore probable that the tension in Kosovo will continue. Albania will probably engage itself more strongly on the side of the Kosovo-Albanians if the conflict escalates. So far, the Kosovo-Albanians have not used violence to any great extent. Albania's ability to carry out military operations abroad is also minimal.

During the spring of 1996, several outbreaks of violence, causing several deaths, served to increase ethnic tension in Kosovo. A previously unknown group calling itself the Liberation Army of Kosovo claimed responsibility for some of the attacks on Serbs. Nevertheless, most Albanians continued to

follow the strategy of non-violence, which Kosovo-Albanian President Ibrahim Rugova and Berisha support. The latter has criticized the Serb leadership for conducting 'ethnic cleansing' in Kosovo by settling Serb refugees from Krajina there.

During 1996, concerns grew among Serbs in Kosovo that Yugoslav leader Slobodan Milosevic was planning to 'sell them out', as they considered he had done to the Serbs in Bosnia. Milosevic on several occasions spoke of giving Kosovo 'autonomy'. In early August, however, the leader of the Party of Serbian Unity, accused war criminal and Milosevic supporter 'Arkan' Zeljko Raznatovic, staged a parade of his private army in Kosovo. The parade, protected by a large police force, was clearly intended to intimidate the ethnic Albanians.

In early October 1996, UN human rights envoy Elisabeth Rehn met with the Serbian prefect in Kosovo, Aleksa Jokic, and Kosovo's shadow-state president, Ibrahim Rugova. Rehn urged the opening of UN and EU offices in Pristina and discussed with Rugova several proposals for solving Kosovo's current problems, including the idea of an international administration. Despite a previous agreement between Rugova and Serbian President Milosevic, some 200 schools still operate in private homes.

If Serbia resorts to 'ethnic cleansing' in Kosovo, refugees will turn to Albania and Macedonia. This will again worsen the situation for the Albanian minority in Macedonia. Albania's relationship with Macedonia is decided by the conditions of the Albanian people in the country. Albania has little ability to enforce pressure on the Macedonian authorities. The Albanian minority, however, has been able to establish a fairly sizeable group within Macedonian politics. The Macedonian state is too weak to not give consideration to the wishes and demands of the Albanians.

The relationship with Greece will probably remain somewhat strained, but stable. Albania must constantly refuse Greek nationalists' demands against Albanian Epirus, but is at the same time dependent on continuing Greek economic assistance. The Greeks, on the other hand, need the Albanians to remain in their own country. Economic assistance can contribute to this.

On the understanding that Albanians will never get sufficient rights in the neighbouring states, certain Albanian politicians argue for the establishment of a 'Greater Albanian' state. This would include Albania, Kosovo and north-western Macedonia. They primarily want this goal to be reached in understanding with the neighbour states.

President Berisha is following a more pragmatic line, underlining Albania's need for internal stability combined with confident relations with other

countries. To build an economic foundation for his policies, Berisha has sought connections all over the world. One example is membership in the OIC. Berisha has been trying at the same time to maintain relations with the Roman Catholic Church and the Western countries.

International Initiatives

A deputation from the CSCE was stationed in Belgrade in September 1992. The deputation was responsible for reporting any human rights violations in Kosovo, Vojvodina or Sanjak. Its tasks also included arranging for communication between the contending groups and preventing intensification of the conflicts. The deputation's authority expired in July 1993, and the residence permits of its members were not renewed by the Serbian authorities. The missions are therefore not currently operative.

Attempts were made to carry on the work of the deputation through the CSCE participant countries' representatives in former Yugoslavia. This role is, however, limited to reporting on any human rights violations, without much possibility to activate conflict prevention initiatives. The report work is coordinated by the state that currently leads the OSCE.

The UN has stationed about 1,200 soldiers from the Nordic countries and the USA in Macedonia. The instructions of this UNPREDEP force are to protect Macedonia from Serbian expansion through Kosovo. Informally they also fill another function by establishing a means of guarding the Albanian–Macedonian border, where incidents have occurred. At the same time, the UN has been trying to signal to Serbia that the 'ethnic cleansing' of Muslims that happened in Bosnia-Herzegovina will not be accepted in Kosovo.

The Hungarians

Next to Albania, Hungary is the country in Europe which has the greatest proportion of its predominant ethnic group residing outside its national borders. Since the collapse of the Iron Curtain, it has been an important aim of Hungary's foreign policy to safeguard the welfare of these people. However, the immediate short-term interests of the minority groups stand in the way of a more long-term and constructive policy.

Background

During the reign of King Matthias Corvinus (1458–90), Hungary grew to be the foremost power in Central Europe. The kingdom stretched from the Adriatic coast in the west, across a large part of former Yugoslavia and well into present-day Romania. To the north, the realm encompassed present-day Slovakia. Furthermore, in order to strengthen resistance to the Turkish threat, Matthias Corvinus conquered the adjoining areas of Moravia, Silesia and Lusatia.

All the same, the Turks conquered Hungary in 1526 and divided the country into three regions. The northern and southern areas were assigned to the Habsburg Empire, while central Hungary and the Principality of Transylvania came under Turkish supremacy.

It was in Transylvania that the idea of an independent and free Hungary lay in hibernation. Powerful princes gained political and military assertion through the constant wars between the Austrian emperor and the Turkish sultan in Istanbul. Gradually Turkey became weakened, and in 1699 almost all of the old Hungary was surrendered to Austria.

Peoples from throughout the Hapsburg realm now flooded into Hungary, making the original inhabitants of the country, the Magyars, a minority in their own land. Nevertheless, Hungary consolidated its position within the Habsburg realm, and in 1867 the empire was converted into the Austro-Hungarian dual monarchy. This monarchy pursued an aggressive foreign policy which included entering the so-called Triple Alliance with Germany

The Hungarians outside Hungary

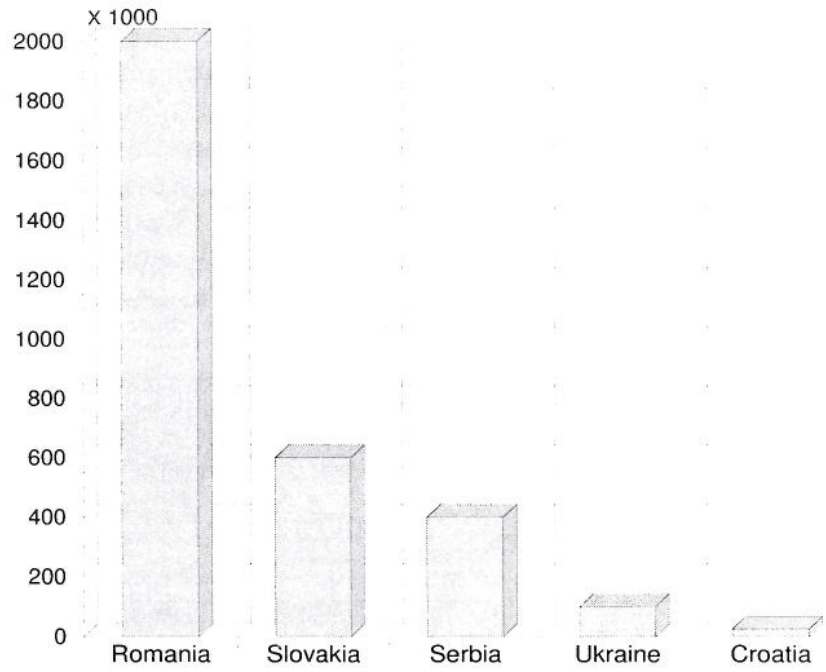
and Italy. The alliance drew Austria-Hungary into World War I, which in turn led to the final dissolution of the dual monarchy.

The present borders of Hungary were laid down by the 1920 Treaty of Trianon. The country was forced to relinquish two-thirds of its territory to the neighbouring states of Romania, Czechoslovakia and Yugoslavia. In addition, smaller areas of Hungary were taken over by Austria, Italy and Poland. The population of Hungary was thereby reduced from 20.8 to 7.6 million. The number of Magyars within the reduced Hungarian state sank from 10 to 6.8 million. Approximately 3.2 million ethnic Hungarians became minorities outside their own state.

Until the mid-1980s, the problem of the minorities was ignored by the socialist regime led by Janos Kadar. Then, under the government of the late Jozsef Antalls, the question became a central issue of foreign policy.

Suspicion

It is traditionally difficult for a state to make demands on host nations on behalf of resident minorities. Such demands are frequently perceived as pretexts for subsequent territorial or political demands on the host country. This is particularly characteristic of Hungary's relations with its neighbouring states. For one thing, the Hungarian minorities in these countries constitute large numbers, and host nations fear that even the slightest concession may encourage even greater demands. Second, Hungary has historically been a great power within the region. Requests or demands on behalf of Hungarian minorities are therefore looked upon with deep suspicion by neighbouring states. The situation is further exacerbated by the fact that Hungary is one of the states which most frequently demand recognition of the principle of collective minority rights – scarcely surprising, since every fourth Hungarian lives outside Hungary. However, in the light of their past experience with Hungary, neighbouring states frequently interpret such demands as elements of a manoeuvre towards regaining control of adjoining areas. There is a latent fear of Hungarian revenge in the region because of the awareness of the harsh treatment suffered by Hungary under the terms of the Treaty of Trianon. This fear has been nurtured by demands from the extreme right in Hungarian politics for the renegotiation of the treaty, with the result that whenever minority questions are discussed with neighbouring states, Hungary has had to reaffirm its humiliating acceptance of the 1920 treaty.



The Hungarians outside Hungary

Slovakia

In southern Slovakia, there are approximately 600,000 residents of Magyar origin (11.5% of Slovakia's total population). Hungary appreciates Slovakia's acknowledgement of the principle of collective minority rights. The Slovakian nationality law of 1968 is among the most liberal in Eastern Europe. This law secures proportional representation for minority groups in elections, and the right to express themselves in their own language, both in writing and orally. However, not all the Hungarian demands have been met by the Slovakian authorities: for one thing, Hungary has contended that the November 1990 legislation does not give sufficient status to minority languages. Slovakia has also been blamed for not giving full compensation to those Hungarians who were persecuted during the Communist regime.

Representatives of the Council of Europe and the Conference on Security and Cooperation in Europe (CSCE, now the Organization for Security and Co-operation in Europe, OSCE) visited Slovakia in January 1994 and expressed general approval of the Slovakian policy on minority groups. However, in both January and June, the parliament rejected a motion for bilingual

sign-posting in areas with large ethnic minorities. For their part, the Slovakian authorities frequently accuse Hungary of 'misrepresenting' information relating to the conditions of Hungarians in the country. The climate has not been the most favourable for finding pragmatic solutions to the minority question: Hungary was relentlessly opposed to the division of Czechoslovakia, arguing that the maintenance of a united federal state was the best defence against aggressive Slovak nationalism. Since Slovakia became independent, there have been disputes between the two nations over the use of the water resources of the Danube.

Nonetheless, in the autumn of 1991, the Slovakian authorities established a Hungarian cultural centre in Bratislava. The two countries also agreed to appoint a committee of historians to work out a joint Hungarian–Slovakian analysis of the relations between the two states up to the present time. A student-exchange programme will be expanded, and instruction in the language of the other country will be strengthened. The most successful specific agreement so far has been a set of confidence-building initiatives in the military sphere which have been agreed upon by Hungary and former Yugoslavia. Slovakia subsequently joined this agreement.

On 19 March 1995, Slovakian Prime Minister Vladimir Meciar and his Hungarian counterpart, Gyula Horn, signed a historic Treaty of Friendship and Cooperation. The treaty has four main points: (1) the rights of minorities are designated as fundamental human rights; (2) such minorities are regarded as forming 'integral parts of the society and state'; (3) both states recognize the 'responsibility to protect and foster the national or ethnic, religious and language identity of minorities' within their borders; and (4) the existing Hungarian–Slovak border is declared 'inviolable', and a mutual commitment is made 'not to raise territorial claims in the future'.

Relations between Slovakia and Hungary have not improved to any great extent since the signing of the treaty. Slovakia has continued to issue legislation which Hungary considers to have negative consequences for the Hungarian minority. In November 1995, a law was passed which reaffirmed Slovak as the country's only official language and restricted the use of other languages in public life. The law, which went into effect 1 January 1996, effectively repealed the 1990 law that allowed use of minority languages in districts where a minority constituted more than 20% of the population. The Hungarian Coalition has protested the law, which it claims violates both the Constitution and the Slovak–Hungarian agreement entered into in March 1995.

In March 1996, the Slovak parliament approved the Law on the Protection of the Republic, which provided for, among other things, two years' imprisonment for 'disseminating false information abroad damaging to the interests of the republic'.

In September, the Slovak government passed a law altering the boundaries of the country's administrative entities in a way that diluted the influence of the Hungarian minority. In the autumn of 1996, the government was working on a change in the country's electoral system which seemed to greatly benefit Vladimir Meciar's party, the Movement for a Democratic Slovakia.

In early July, a summit was held in Budapest with participation of the Hungarian government, all parliamentary parties and 11 ethnic Hungarian organizations from neighbouring countries. The participants called for establishing local governments and autonomy in line with Western European practices. Slovak and Romanian leaders strongly criticized the communiqué from the summit. In particular, tensions rose between Hungary and Slovakia; the Slovak cabinet accused Hungary of violating the bilateral treaty between the two countries, and a planned meeting between Meciar and Horn was postponed indefinitely by the Slovakian side.

Romania

The largest group of Magyars outside Hungary – approximately 2 million – live in what is now Romania. Most of these people have settled in the Transylvania region in the western part of the country. Relations between Hungary and Romania are influenced by the concern of the Hungarian authorities for the situation of the minorities. Even so, the topic was not brought up for formal discussion before the spring of 1993, when the first Hungarian–Romanian summit meetings after the fall of the Soviet regime took place. Before this, it had not even been possible for the two states to agree on an agenda for any meeting.

The Hungarian delegation to the CSCE asserted in July 1991 that the Hungarians in Romania were the victims of persecution and vindictive treatment. The Magyars alleged that they were systematically underrepresented in local bodies. Recent Romanian legislation gives room for cultural activities to be regarded as separatism and thus prohibited as criminal offences. Furthermore, the Hungarian CSCE delegation accused Romania of restricting the use of Hungarian as an official language in areas with a predominantly Hungarian population. In February 1994, the Roma-

nian Senate passed a law making the publishing of 'false information and contempt of the Romanian nation' a punishable offence. The opposition considers this law a tool which may be used to reduce the freedom of expression of the minorities.

Throughout the entire postwar period, the Magyars' opportunities for education on their own terms have been reduced. Hungarian and Romanian schools have been amalgamated to prevent the use of Hungarian in class. Opportunities for cultural development have been similarly reduced. Romanian has become the language of the theatre, and even the meetings of the Hungarian authors' association are to be conducted in the Romanian language.

Violent street fighting took place in March 1990 between Hungarians and Romanians in the Transylvanian town of Tirgu Mures. The riots were triggered by a Hungarian–Romanian agreement on increased autonomy for the Hungarians in the area. The Romanian nationalists retaliated with attacks on Hungarians and their property. During the subsequent legal settlement, local Hungarian groups protested that they had been unfairly blamed for the riots.

The most successful measures taken by Hungary and Romania so far have been a series of agreements on the coordination of defence policies and a set of regulations aimed at generating trust and preventing tension in the border zones. The latter correspond to the agreement between Hungary and Slovakia on the same issues. During the spring of 1993, there were also talks at the foreign-ministerial level, at which the minority question and other topics were discussed.

In May 1994, Romania's treatment of ethnic minorities was criticized by a commission appointed by the European Council. This question has been standing in the way of the conclusion of the planned Romanian–Hungarian friendship treaty.

During 1995 and 1996, Hungary and Romania worked together towards agreement on a bilateral cooperation agreement. Opposition to the agreement, however, was significant. In September 1995, Hungarian Foreign Minister Laszlo Kovacs said it was an 'illusion' to expect historic reconciliation without first settling contentious issues. Kovacs specifically pointed to Romania's education law, promulgated two months earlier, which declared that Romanian was to be the language for instruction and examination in all universities and colleges, and the Romanian parliament's approval that same month of a law banning the use of foreign flags and the singing of foreign national anthems.

In mid-August 1996, it was finally announced that Hungary and Romania were close to signing their basic treaty. Hungarian Prime Minister Horn said his country was not ready to accept the Romanian interpretation of the Council of Europe recommendation on ethnic minority rights, which implied that national minorities would not be granted 'collective rights' or territorial autonomy on the basis of ethnicity. Opposition circles in both countries reacted strongly to the news of the treaty. In Hungary, the vice-president of the Smallholders' Party charged that 'the holocaust' of Hungarians in some parts of Romania would not be prevented by the treaty. Gheorghe Funar, leader of the Party of Romanian National Unity, described the treaty as 'an act of national treason'.

In early September, a second round of the Hungarian minority summit was held in the Hungarian city of Papa. The summit criticized the basic treaty between Hungary and Romania, and objected to the choice of the Romanian town of Timisoara as the site for its signing. A demonstration in Budapest gathered 10,000–20,000 people who were against the treaty. Still, on 16 September, the basic treaty was signed by the Romanian and Hungarian prime ministers, Nicolae Vacaroiu and Gyula Horn, in Timisoara.

Serbia

There are over 300,000 Magyars residing in the north-eastern part of Serbia (about 340,000, according to the census of 1991). This district is called Vojvodina and borders on Hungary. Under Tito's regime, ethnically diverse Vojvodina had the status of an autonomous province, with a degree of self-government for its Hungarian minority and other minorities. In 1987, however, these rights were withdrawn simultaneously from Vojvodina and Kosovo province, and in 1990 both were stripped of all special privileges in relation to the rest of Serbia. Conditions deteriorated further when it became known that Hungary was selling weapons to Croatia. This unleashed a wave of anti-Hungarian nationalistic feeling in Serbia. Hungarian schools were closed, and the use of Hungarian as an official language was no longer permitted in Vojvodina. The Hungarians in Vojvodina appealed to the Hungarian authorities to halt any measures which could exacerbate conditions for Hungarians in Serbia. The war in former Yugoslavia worsened the situation for Hungarians in Vojvodina. They maintained that they were conscripted for military service to an extent out of all proportion to their numbers; Hungarian losses in the battles of the federal army in Croatia were correspondingly high. Hungarian civilians have also been directly affected by the war, in that their

lands in Croatian Slavonia were turned into a battlefield. This state of affairs has resulted in a stream of Hungarian refugees into Hungary, in addition to the Bosnian and Kosovo-Albanian refugees. In all, Hungary has taken in 100,000 refugees from former Yugoslavia, of which some 30,000 are Magyars.

Ukraine

North-eastern Hungary borders on Ukraine. Approximately 160,000 Magyars live in the Transcarpathia region, where they make up about 10% of the population. Relations between Hungary and Ukraine are good, owing to the sympathetic attitude of the Ukrainian government towards the Hungarian minority. Ukraine accepts the principle of minorities as the holders of collective rights. There are two reasons why it is easier for Ukraine to accept this controversial principle. First, the Magyars do not constitute a large group in relation to the total population of the country. Second, Ukraine looks upon Hungary as the road to Western Europe, both politically and geographically, and the authorities hope that a clean record on the treatment of minorities may help to smooth the path. In this situation the Magyars benefit from a relatively well-developed educational system which includes subjects such as Hungarian language and history.

In December 1991, Ukraine decided to seek independence from the Soviet Union. At the same time, the Hungarians of Transcarpathia were pressing for local self-government within an independent Ukraine. So far, the Ukrainian national assembly has not legalized such independence; but even so, Ukraine stands out as the host country with the best and least-complex relations with the government in Budapest. In May 1993, the two nations signed a treaty of friendship in which Hungary agreed to refrain from any future territorial demands on Ukraine.

International Initiatives

Hungary has attempted to deal with the problem of minorities both through bilateral negotiations with neighbouring states and by taking up the question in the Council of Europe and the OSCE, as well as in the European Union. The OSCE's High Commissioner for National Minorities has become particularly involved in relations between Hungary and Slovakia. The two countries have accepted a proposal from the High Commissioner to form an advisory group of impartial experts to take a position on various minority problems over a two-year period.

The main line of the Hungarian government over the question of minorities has been to promote good relations with neighbouring states, including those with whom they are not altogether satisfied, in hopes of ensuring a stable situation for the Hungarian minorities. This friendly policy, however, conflicts with the deep distrust of Hungary among its neighbours, and is under pressure from Hungarian right-wing groups which do not accept the Treaty of Trianon. Recently it has become possible to establish relations with neighbouring states so that minority problems can be discussed objectively. However, this is not the case in Serbia, where in the summer of 1993 CSCE human rights observers were not allowed to renew their residence permits in Vojvodina.

On the institutional level, Hungary is working for a general extension of minority rights to include collective rights. It is natural that Hungary should take the lead in this field, given the large number of Hungarians living outside the national boundaries. Hungary sees collective minority rights as a constructive alternative to traditional nationalistic demands for amending the Treaty of Trianon. The idea of a group as the subject of rights is controversial, even from a strictly theoretical point of view. In the tense reality of Central Europe, such ideas become even less attractive when they are put forward by a mistrusted Hungary to sceptical neighbouring states.

Estonia, Latvia and Lithuania

For the Baltic states of Estonia, Latvia and Lithuania, the period of independence between the world wars marked a turning-point in their longings for liberty and belief in national sovereignty. The three border states are usually looked upon as basically comparable and closely integrated, despite considerable linguistic, religious and cultural differences.

Background

Estonia, Latvia and Lithuania all experienced a period of national awakening at the end of the 19th century, followed by several years of independence between the world wars. Estonia proclaimed its independence in 1918, but was not recognized by the Soviet Union until February 1920 (under the so-called Tartu Agreement). Lithuania was not recognized by the Soviet Union until July of the same year, and Latvia in August. Up to the time of World War II, authoritarian political regimes were maintained in all three countries. In Lithuania, Antanas Smetona carried out a military coup as early as 1926. In 1934, Estonian Prime Minister Konstantin Päts declared a state of emergency. Four years later, he named himself president. Also in 1934, the leader of the Latvian Agrarian Party, Karlis Ulmanis, plotted a coup against the president, and thereafter ruled the country, from 1936 as president.

The fate of the Baltic states after the interwar period was sealed with the Molotov–Ribbentrop Pact of 23 August 1939 between the Soviet Union and Germany. Under this agreement, the three Baltic countries were divided between the USSR and Germany. Estonia and Latvia were to come under the USSR. At the outset, Lithuania was assigned to the German sphere of interest, but when war broke out, the USSR gained control of Lithuania as well. During this brief period when the three states were Soviet republics, the population was subjected to severe purges, estates were expropriated, and cultural life was subject to strict control. However, the Molotov–Ribbentrop Pact remained valid for only a short time, and the three states came under Nazi occupation from 1941 to 1944.

Estonia, Latvia and Lithuania

The Soviet authorities recovered power after the war, with further deportations to Siberia and compulsory migration until Stalin's death in 1953. Opposition to Soviet rule, including guerrilla warfare – particularly in Lithuania, by the so-called Forest Brethren – continued until the 1950s, when amnesty was granted. Over the following decade, there were occasional popular protest movements against Soviet power and Moscow; but it was not until the advent of glasnost and perestroika during the mid-1980s that demands for Baltic independence reached a level which was difficult to ignore.

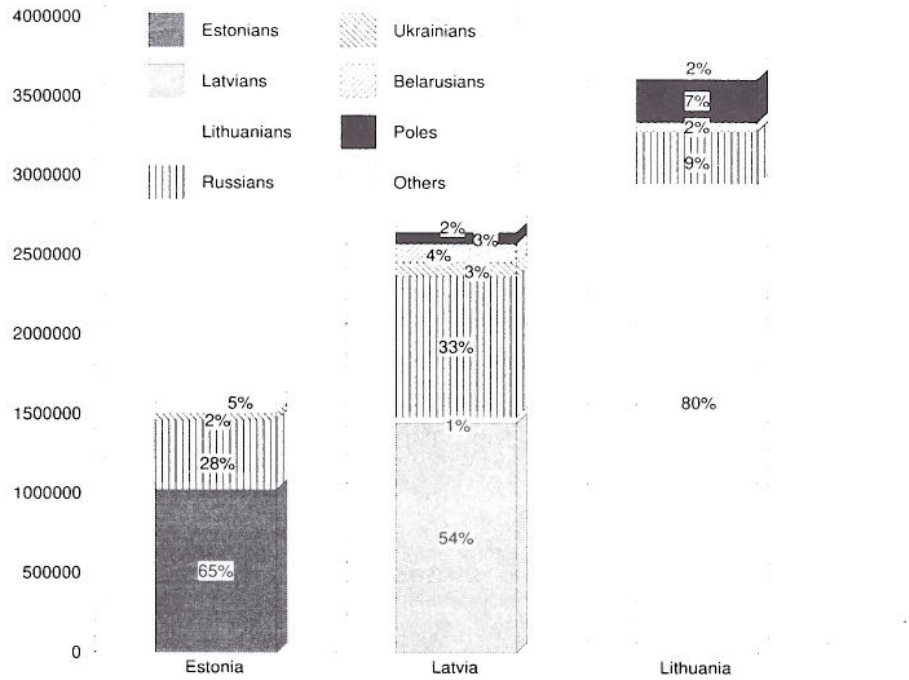
The Baltic states were the republics with the highest standard of living in the former Soviet Union, although development was scant in comparison with Western standards. The three states became centres for industrialization during the Soviet era, but agriculture still plays an important role, particularly in Lithuania.

Estonia

Area: 45,226 sq km.
Language: Estonian, a Finno-Ugric language.
Religion: Estonians traditionally belong to the Lutheran Evangelical Church.
In the late 1970s and into the 1980s, the questions of 'Russianization' and environmental pollution in the wake of extensive industrialization led to intense social debate in Estonia. In August 1987 some 2,000 people took part in a demonstration in Tallinn against the Molotov–Ribbentrop Pact. Of central importance was the demand for publication of the actual text of the pact. With the coming of glasnost, the press took up environmental problems and other touchy aspects of Estonian history, and the independence snowball gained momentum. In April 1988 the Estonian People's Front was formed. On 16 November the Estonian Supreme Soviet issued its proclamation of sovereignty. The following year Estonian was declared the state language, and the Soviet flag was replaced by the Estonian. In the democratic elections to the Estonian Supreme Soviet held in March, the Popular Front gained 43 of the 105 seats, and the Association for Free Estonia (reform communists), 35.

In early April 1990, Edgar Savisaar of the Popular Front was elected head of the Supreme Soviet. As early as 30 March, the Soviet had announced a period of transition towards national independence – a resolution rejected by the president of the Soviet Union, Mikhail Gorbachev.

In a referendum on 3 March 1991, Estonians voted overwhelmingly in favour of independence. At the time of the coup against Gorbachev in August



Ethnic composition in Estonia, Latvia and Lithuania

1991, General Fyodor Kusmin, commander-in-chief of the Soviet forces in Estonia, declared full control over the country. Troops moved into the capital city of Tallinn. Following the failure of the coup in Moscow, the Estonian Supreme Soviet passed a resolution for immediate and complete independence. By the end of August, more than 30 nations had recognized the country. On 6 September the Soviet Union also recognized Estonia as an independent state. On 17 September Estonia, together with Latvia and Lithuania, joined the United Nations.

In the spring of 1992, a recommendation was drawn up for a new constitution; it was passed by the national assembly, following a referendum in June that year. The constitution established Estonia as a republic. The Estonian Supreme Soviet was replaced by a new legislative assembly (Riigikogu) with 101 seats. Presidential and legislative assembly elections were held in September 1992, with a 62% turnout. Non-citizens, who were predominantly Russian, were debarred from participation. The right-wing politician and former foreign minister Lennart Meri was elected president. The parliamentary election returned a non-socialist majority government, led by the Pro Patria party, with Mart Laar as prime minister. In the autumn of 1994, Laar was forced to resign, following a vote of no confidence in the parliament.

Former minister of environmental affairs Andres Tarand set up a new, non-partisan government. New elections to the Riigikogu were held in March 1995. Here, the ruling centre–right coalition government lost heavily. A new centre–left coalition was formed, led by Tiit Vähi from the Coalition Party. The government resigned in October 1995, over a phone-tapping scandal, but Vähi was authorized by parliament to form a new centre–right coalition government.

Russian troops on Estonian soil and the rights of the Russian minority in Estonia have been the two major points of contention in Estonian–Russian relations. The presence of Russian troops figured prominently in political rhetoric both in Estonia and among the international community. Negotiations on troop withdrawal were prolonged because Russia linked the question of withdrawal directly to the treatment of Russians residents in Estonia. In July 1994 the two countries finally agreed on a complete withdrawal, and in August 1994 the last 2,000 soldiers departed (except for a limited contingent in Paldiski – 210 men who were to stay for another 14 months). The agreement was reached only a short time after US President Bill Clinton had visited the Baltic countries and criticized the Russian presence on Estonian soil.

In accordance with Estonian law, citizenship is granted only to pre-1940 Estonian citizens and their descendants. In practice this means that a large majority of the 475,000 Estonian Russians (1989 figure) must apply individually for citizenship. In addition, before citizenship can be awarded, Russians are required to pass an Estonian language test. Moscow has voiced very sharp protests against the treatment of Russians in Estonia, a treatment which they maintain can be likened to apartheid.

The Organization for Security and Co-operation in Europe (OSCE, formerly CSCE) and the Council of Europe have encouraged Estonia to take measures to reduce the number of non-citizens in the country. In the summer of 1993, President Meri refused to ratify the so-called Law on Aliens, which was designed to regulate entry to Estonia as well as provide authorities with information on those resident in the country at all times. On the recommendation of the CSCE and the European Union, the bill was extended to provide, among other things, greater security to those inhabitants whose applications for residence permits had been refused.

In Narva and Sillamäe, towns with mainly Russian populations, referenda on self-government were held on 16 and 17 July 1993, in protest against the Law on Aliens. The referenda were rejected as illegal by the Estonian government.

A further conflict exists between Estonia and Russia over the question of state boundaries. According to the Tartu Agreement, Estonian territory should include the currently Russian areas of Ivangorod (east of Narva) and Petseri (south of Lake Pechora). But since the border with Russia was adjusted during the time of the Soviet empire, Russia has refused to go back to the Tartu Agreement border. There has been some progress on the matter of Estonia's claims on Russia. In February 1995, President Meri called for territorial claims against Russia to be dropped. And in November that year, an agreement in principle was reached between the two countries by which Estonia would give up its claim to the district of Petseri. Estonia ruled this district during its period of independence between 1920 and 1940.

In January 1995, the Estonian parliament adopted a new law on citizenship which extended the minimum period of residency required for naturalization from two to five years. The legislation was strongly criticized by Russia. Estonia has, however, so far avoided large-scale confrontation with Russia by postponing decisions with large-scale implications. In the summer of 1996, Estonia at the last minute extended the validity of Soviet passports of non-citizens until 30 November. By the beginning of October 1996, the Estonian Citizenship and Migration Department had received some 112,000 applications for alien passports.

During 1995 and 1996, the tensions between Russia and the Baltic states did not ease. In particular, relations were strained with Estonia and Latvia, which have the largest Russian minorities. Estonia was increasingly singled out by Russia as the actor pursuing regrettable policies. In Latvia and Estonia, Russian citizens overwhelmingly opted for self-proclaimed patriot Gennady Zyuganov in the Russian presidential elections in the summer of 1996. Before the elections, Zyuganov had suggested that he, if elected, might abrogate some treaties Russia had signed, intimating that he had in mind treaties with Estonia. The Yeltsin regime, for its part, had intensified its criticism of the Baltic states. In April 1995, Foreign Minister Andrei Kozyrev suggested that Russia might use military force to protect Russians living abroad, hinting at Estonia and Latvia. In August 1996, presidential aide Dmitri Rurikov said that the 'policy with regard to ethnic Russians living in the CIS states will become much more active that it was previously'. He accused the Estonian authorities of practising 'apartheid' and of not fulfilling agreements on pensions and other social rights of Russian residents. Russia often accuses Estonia of deliberate provocation and has threatened to impose economic sanctions.

Latvia

Area: 64,589 sq km
Language: Latvian, one of the Baltic languages, a sub-group of the Indo-European family
Religion: The majority belong to the Lutheran or Roman Catholic Church. Most Russians in Latvia are Orthodox Christians.
In the late 1970s and early 1980s, there was a considerable resurgence of traditional Latvian cultural life. Political groups, including an environmental movement, were established. In June and August 1986, the Helsinki-86 group organized several anti-Soviet demonstrations. The following year saw an increased mobilization of the people, among other things in connection with the commemoration of Latvian independence during the interwar years and opposition to the Molotov–Ribbentrop Pact. In the course of 1988, the opposition movement consolidated itself into a significant political force, and in October leading oppositionals and radical members of the Communist Party in Latvia united to form the Latvian Popular Front. Within a short time, the Popular Front had become the largest and most influential grouping in the country, with an estimated membership of 250,000 by the end of 1988.

At elections to the Supreme Soviet in March and April 1990, the Popular Front won a convincing victory (131 of the 201 seats). On 4 May the Soviet declared that the annexation of Latvia into the Soviet Union has been illegal, and at the same time announced the beginning of a transition period for full political and economic independence.

In January 1991 Soviet OMON commando forces occupied the press building in Riga. Two weeks later an endeavour was made to occupy a police station and to remove the barricades which had been erected against a possible military intervention. On 20 January there was an attempt by a Communist-led 'salvation committee' to take power in the country. Four people were killed when OMON troops attacked the Ministry of the Interior in Riga.

A referendum on Latvian independence was held on 3 March. Of the 87.6% of the electorate who participated, 73.7% supported the idea of a democratic and independent Latvian republic. Shortly after the failed August coup against Soviet President Gorbachev, on 6 September 1991, the USSR recognized Latvia as a fully independent state.

One of the most controversial political questions in Latvia concerns the status of the Russian population in the country, not least because Latvians were almost reduced to a minority in their own land after World War II. In

October 1991 the Latvian Parliament resolved that citizenship was to be automatically conceded only to pre-1940 citizens and their descendants. All others would have to apply formally. Naturalization procedures were adopted in July 1994. According to this law, non-citizens born in Latvia may apply for citizenship starting from 1996. However, the law requires five years residence in the country. One also has to swear an oath to the nation, and speak Latvian. Those who have immigrated to Latvia may apply for citizenship from 2003.

Elections to Latvia's first non-Soviet parliament were held in July 1993. The resulting alliance of former Communists and returned émigrés was a successful step forward for the country. None of the parties won an absolute majority. The new parliament elected Guntis Ulmanis as president. He is, incidentally, a nephew of Karlis Ulmanis, the nationalist leader of the inter-war years. A two-month crisis of government was ended in September 1994 when the parliament accepted Maris Gailis from Latvia's Way as the new prime minister. Latvia's Way is particularly concerned with economic liberalization.

Some 70% of the population (approximately 40% of the ethnic Russians are Latvian citizens) were allowed to vote in the 1993 parliamentary election. It was established in a CSCE report issued before the elections that no Russians had been unlawfully deprived of the right to vote. The CSCE recommended that Russians who had lived in Latvia for more than five years should be accepted as Latvian nationals. Moscow criticized the parliamentary election, maintaining that it provided a 'foundation for ethnic cleansing'.

In October 1996, the OSCE High Commissioner on National Minorities, Max van der Stoel, visited Latvia. He stated that the attitude of resident non-Latvians towards Latvia as an independent state was improving, but he was still disturbed by the fact that 28% of the permanent residents in Latvia were not citizens.

As in Estonia and Lithuania, the presence of ex-Soviet troops was a constant source of conflict. In the spring of 1992, there were approximately 50,000 military personnel in the country. Russia threatened to cut off energy supplies and from time to time closed down the oil and gas pipelines to protest the circumstances of Russians in the country. In April 1994, after lengthy negotiations, Latvia and Russia agreed that Russian troops should be withdrawn from Latvia before 1 September that year. The Skrunda early-warning radar site is to be abandoned by September 1998.

According to the Latvian constitution, parliament elects the president, as in Estonia, who in turn nominates a cabinet. In September–October 1995,

inconclusive parliamentary elections were held, with left- and right-wing populists faring well. In the end, parliament approved a government headed by Andris Skele. Guntis Ulmanis was elected president for a second three-year period in June 1996.

The parliament in Latvia is currently highly polarized. The two major parties are the Saimnieks (left of centre) and the For Latvia party (far right); however, even the largest parties are relatively small.

Lithuania

Area: 65,200 sq km.
Language: Lithuanian, a Baltic language.
Religion: The majority are Roman Catholic.
In August 1987, taking advantage of glasnost, political dissidents demonstrated against the Molotov–Ribbentrop Pact. Even though this demonstration was tolerated, in February of the following year, security troops were brought in to prevent any marking of the 70th anniversary of Lithuanian independence. This, together with the impatience of the intelligentsia, also led to the formation of a popular front in Lithuania, called Sajudis, in October 1988. In the March 1989 elections, Sajudis captured 36 of the 42 seats in the USSR People's Congress. This compelled the Communist Party in Lithuania to carry out a more moderate policy in order to gain the support of the people. Similar changes took place within the Communist parties in Estonia and Latvia. On 23 August, the 50th anniversary of the signing of the Molotov–Ribbentrop Pact, more than a million people formed a human chain from Tallinn in Estonia right across Latvia to Vilnius in Lithuania. In December 1989, the Communist Party in Lithuania declared itself an independent party, despite protests from President Gorbachev. Popular support for Sajudis grew, and in the Lithuanian Supreme Soviet election in February–March 1990, the opposition won a decisive victory. The new pro-independence parliament elected Vytautas Landsbergis chairman of the Supreme Council and, in principle, president of Lithuania. On 11 March, the newly elected parliament declared Lithuania an independent state – the first of the Soviet republics to do so. On 17 March, Kazimiera Prunskiene, a member of the Communist Party, became prime minister.

In response to the mounting unrest, Soviet army units seized several Communist Party buildings in Vilnius. Troops also seized newspaper presses. From mid-April until the end of June 1990, Lithuania was subjected to an economic boycott by the rest of the Soviet Union. The country then agreed

to a moratorium on the declaration of independence for 100 days, conditional on early negotiations between the USSR and Lithuania. The negotiations started in August but were soon called off by the Soviet Union.

In January 1991, Landsbergis announced that the period of transition was over, since the negotiations had been to no avail. Political tension increased. The situation came to a climax when Moscow moved OMON troops into Vilnius at the time of the Gulf War. Nationalized buildings which had formerly belonged to the Communist Party were occupied.

Meanwhile, there were increasing internal political conflicts. On 8 January, Prunskiene and her government resigned, following the parliament's rejection of a proposal for price increases. Prunskiene was replaced by a member of parliament, Gedimas Vagnorius.

Landsbergis mobilized civilian support for the defence of the parliament building, which he believed to be under threat from the OMON forces. During the night between January 13 and 14, Soviet troops occupied the TV building and the television transmission tower in Vilnius. Fourteen civilians were killed and 500 wounded. The military attacks led to increased demands for independence, and in February a referendum was held. There was an 84% turnout, with a 90% vote in favour of independence. OMON troops launched a new offensive in Vilnius; the Ministry of Defence was occupied in March. There were subsequent attacks on Lithuanian border posts. In July, seven frontier guards were killed by OMON forces.

The abortive coup against Gorbachev in August 1991 led to a long-awaited outcome for Lithuania: by the end of August, more than 40 nations had recognized the country as an independent state.

However, the increasingly nationalistic line adopted by Landsbergis gave rise to political tension. Landsbergis was also pressing for a stronger presidential role while at the same time failing to tackle the serious economic problems effectively. A crisis arose in the government in April 1992 when scores of ministers publicly criticized Prime Minister Vagnorius's 'dictatorial' methods. Two ministers left the government. Vagnorius resigned but remained in office until July.

Algirdas Brazauskas's Lithuanian Democratic Labour Party (the former Communist Party) won a very surprising victory in the parliamentary elections in October and November 1992. The party took 73 of the 141 seats; the Homeland Union alliance, between Sajudis and a citizens' rights group, won only 30 seats. On 25 October, the new constitution was adopted. Brazauskas, former first secretary of the Communist Party, was elected president in February 1993. In March, Adolfas Slezevicius from the Democratic Labour

Party took over the office of prime minister. In February 1996, Slezevicius was forced from office by a scandal; he was proven to have withdrawn his savings at the last minute from two banks which collapsed. A new government was set up by Mindaugas Stankevicius.

On 20 October 1996, conservatives won new parliamentary elections in Lithuania – the Homeland Union clearly defeated the ruling Democratic Labour Party. However, the conservatives won only a quarter of the total vote; support was scattered among more than 20 parties. A second round of elections was scheduled for 10 November.

Since the majority of the population are ethnic Lithuanians, the country has avoided the minority problems which have plagued Latvia and Estonia. In 1989, Lithuania adopted a liberal law which nearly amounted to a zero-option solution to the citizenship issue: Almost all who applied were awarded citizenship. A new and much stricter law was passed in 1991. Because of the relatively open policy, Lithuania has been able to avoid more serious conflicts with Russia. Still, an April 1995 report from the Council of Europe stated that the rights of members of national minorities were being violated in Lithuania. In January 1995, Lithuania's parliament approved a law establishing Lithuanian as the country's only state language.

For Lithuania, as for Estonia and Latvia, the withdrawal of former Soviet troops has been crucial. At the beginning of 1992, there were around 38,000 military personnel in the country. By the end of August 1993, all troops had been withdrawn.

Integration into Western Structures

All three countries are members of the OSCE. OSCE membership was regarded as important to secure backing for the demands for the withdrawal of Russian troops. The OSCE also rejected Russia's demand that the troop withdrawal be linked to the question of human rights for Russian minorities in the Baltics. The Nordic countries have maintained a high profile regarding the Baltic states by giving economic assistance. They have, however, shown a negative attitude towards requests from Estonia, Latvia and Lithuania to join the Nordic Council as full members.

The Baltic states have negotiated free trade agreements with the European Union. In accordance with the agreements, a free trade zone for Estonia came into force from 1 January 1995, but it will take another four years for Latvia and six years for Lithuania to attain full free trade with the European Union.

For a long time, NATO kept a low profile regarding the Baltic nations, and was extremely cautious about entering into any binding agreements. Thus, contact during the early stages of independence took place first and foremost through the North Atlantic Co-operation Council (NACC), as well as through bilateral agreements. All three nations have now signed NATO's Partnership for Peace Agreements.

Despite their numerous differences, the Baltic states have to a large extent acted together on the international scene since gaining independence, recognizing that they are frequently seen as parts of the same entity. Thus, they have generally pursued the goal of attaining NATO and EU membership together. During 1995 and 1996, the Baltic heads of state repeatedly declared that they wished their states to become members of the EU and NATO as soon as possible. Russia objected strongly to the idea of their joining NATO, but was open to their joining the EU.

In May 1996, the Baltic leaders – Lennart Meri of Estonia, Guntis Ulmanis of Latvia, and Algirdas Brazauskas of Lithuania – stressed the need for Baltic cooperation rather than competition on the international scene. They recognized that it would take some time for them to attain NATO and EU membership, but expressed their satisfaction with the progress they were making in terms of economic integration. That month, the countries agreed to eliminate import tariffs on agricultural products.

In October, the Latvian and Estonian presidents issued a declaration stressing the need to deepen cooperation to gain access to NATO and the EU. In the declaration, they called for the establishment of a Baltic customs union, joint border-crossing points and a coordinated battle against crime.

In September, however, US Defense Secretary William Perry had stated that the Baltic states would not be among the first new NATO members, citing the limited capabilities of their armies. Striving to improve their joint capabilities, the Baltic countries in October announced the development of a Baltic Peacekeeping Battalion after October 1997, the setting up of a joint naval unit, and the creation of a unified system of control over Baltic airspace.

Belarus

Since being elected president of Belarus in 1994, Aleksandr Lukashenko has been running his country in an increasingly authoritarian manner. In his struggle for increased power, he has alienated himself from parliament, the constitutional court, his own prime minister and most political parties.

Background

Belarus is widely perceived as an inconsequential country on the international scene, despite its geopolitically important location, its relatively developed economy, the size of its population, and the fact that it retained nuclear armaments after the fall of the Soviet Union. The main reason for this perception is that Belarus has not revealed a drive for a high profile internationally – or, indeed, for independence.

The major issue in Belarusian politics since 1991 has been the country's relationship to Russia. The public mood generally favours close ties with Russia, and Lukashenko has strongly favoured a union of the two countries.

Russia and Belarus are very close culturally. Many Russians consider Belarusian (also known as Belorussian) to be merely a Russian vernacular; in any case, only about 10% of Belarusians speak Belarusian. Russian nationalists typically include Belarus, together with Ukraine and northern Kazakhstan, in their image of a greater Russia uniting closely related peoples. Out of Belarus's population of 10.4 million, approximately 80% are Belarusians, 13% Russian, 4% Polish, 3% Ukrainian and 2% belong to other groups.

Russia's dominance over Belarus is illustrated by the fact that more than half of Belarusian military officers are Russian citizens. And when Belarus became independent, not a single Belarusian diplomat in Moscow was Belarusian. Russia accounts for some 80% of Belarus's foreign trade, and it supplies 90% of Belarus's energy and 80% of its raw materials. Thus, Belarus is highly vulnerable economically in relation to Russia. Belarus's

Belarus

debt to Russia by mid-1996 amounted to some USD 1.2 billion – a strong motivating factor for further integration with Russia.

Belarus's weak drive for independence can be at least partly accounted for by the fact that the country's history lacks any real statehood that the contemporary state could present itself as reincarnating.

With the partitions of Poland in 1793 and 1795, Belarus, which had been under the Polish-Lithuanian monarchy for centuries, became part of the Russian Empire. Among Belarusian nationalists today, there is a tendency to point to rebellions against the tsarist state, particularly the uprising in 1794, on the territory of contemporary Poland, Belarus and Lithuania, led by the

Belarusian nobleman Tadeusz Kosciuszko, and the Polish uprisings in 1830 and 1863, which attracted some support in Belarus.

With the retreat of revolutionary Russia in World War I, Germany began its annexation of the territory of Belarus. In March 1918, under occupation, an All-Belarusian Congress Executive Committee declared the creation of the Belarusian People's Republic. In 1919, however, hopes of independence were crushed as the Red Army took control. During World War II, German troops occupied all of Belarus. A quarter of the population was lost in the war against Nazi Germany.

In 1988, early in the period of perestroika, a Belarusian independence movement emerged in the form of the Belorussian Popular Front (BNF). However, this organization did not play a decisive political role, as did popular fronts in some other Soviet republics, notably the Baltic states.

Since independence, Belarus, formerly among the most developed Soviet republics, has suffered a sharp economic decline. The republic has consistently lagged behind most other former Soviet republics in instituting political and economic change.

Post-Soviet Developments

In 1990, the first multi-party elections to the Supreme Soviet were held. However, the republican Communist Party controlled most of the media at the time, and most of the prominent candidates were members of the party. Thus, the Communists won a large majority of the seats. The main opposition party at the time, the liberal, moderately nationalist National Front, received a mere 10% of the vote.

The Supreme Soviet elected in 1990 remained the republic's legislative organ until the 1995 parliamentary elections. During its five-year term, however, the political circumstances in the country changed significantly. The major change was, of course, the 1991 breakup of the Soviet Union. But a new constitution in March 1994 also introduced new rules to the political game.

As independent Belarus was being governed by Soviet laws, its first post-Soviet leader was the chairman of the Supreme Soviet, Stanislav Shushkevich, who succeeded Nikolai Dementyev in September 1991. Politically, Shushkevich was generally a centrist. However, the Soviet constitution did not give him great powers, and the conservative parliament, as well as financial limitations, blocked most of his liberal initiatives.

Reforms were taking place much more slowly in Belarus than in Russia, and the BNF decided that nothing would change unless the government and parliament were changed. Therefore, in early 1992 the party initiated a petition calling for a referendum on the issue of new elections. Nearly half a million signatures were collected, but the call was ultimately rejected by the parliament in late October that year.

After gaining its independence, Belarus, under the leadership of Shushkevich, took some steps towards economic reform: a new internal currency, the Belarusian ruble, was introduced in May 1992, and some privatization was initiated. However, the conservatism of the parliament blocked significant reforms. Allegations of corruption were frequently heard in relation to the sale of state property.

The major developments in Belarusian politics in 1993 related to the struggle for influence between Shushkevich and the Supreme Soviet. In April, the Supreme Soviet voted overwhelmingly in favour of Belarus's joining the collective security pact of the CIS, signed by the majority of CIS members in May 1992. Shushkevich, however, blocked Belarusian membership, arguing that it would go against Belarus's self-pronounced neutrality.

In July, Shushkevich was defeated in a Supreme Soviet vote of confidence, following his refusal to sign the CIS treaty on collective security. However, as the parliament was inquorate because of a boycott by the BNF, Shushkevich was able to remain in office.

Still, throughout 1993, his position gradually weakened in relation to that of Prime Minister Vyacheslav Kebich. Kebich was more strongly oriented towards Russia than was Shushkevich. He supported Belarus's participation in the collective security pact and was willing to cede Belarusian sovereignty to Russia in exchange for an economic union. The largest parliamentary faction, the conservative 'Belarus', supported Kebich, thereby enabling him to impose his policies over Shushkevich's.

Ultimately, Shushkevich was ousted as head of state following a parliament vote of no confidence in late January 1994, on charges of failing to tackle government corruption that were brought by Lukashenko, then head of the parliament's anti-corruption commission. A vote aimed at Kebich was defeated. The vague nature of the charges against Shushkevich – he was accused of 'personal immodesty' – suggested that they were simply a pretext for removing him. Shushkevich had become increasingly unpopular among the conservative parliamentary majority. He was succeeded by one of Kebich's cronies, Interior Ministry General Mechyslav Hryb (Grib), who was also

supported by 'Belarus' in the parliament. Hryb did not, however, command as much authority as Shushkevich.

With Shushkevich out, Kebich was free to join both the security pact and a monetary union with Russia. The monetary union treaty was signed in April 1994 by Prime Ministers Kebich and Chernomyrdin. The treaty implied significant concessions for Belarus – in a two-stage process, the country was to remove trade and currency restrictions, and abolish the Belarusian ruble.

During the political struggles, little of significance was done to improve the Belarusian economy. Inflation was running higher than in Russia, at about 30% per month. As Russia increased fuel prices, the energy crisis worsened. Steps were taken towards greater state control of prices. Harsh public reaction to a state initiative to raise the prices of food, electricity and municipal services led the government to announce measures – including wage compensation and subsidies for money-losing companies – which further spurred inflation. The parliament approved a three-year plan to privatize 50% of the republic's enterprises, but it went largely unimplemented.

The next major development in Belarusian politics took place in March 1994, when the Supreme Soviet first agreed to create the post of president and then almost unanimously adopted a new constitution to replace the Soviet one, which had been in effect since 1978. The constitution turned Belarus into a presidential republic, described as 'a unitary, democratic, socially oriented, law-governed state', and proclaimed the goal of becoming a nuclear-free, neutral power. The constitution granted extensive powers to the president.

The first Belarusian presidential elections were held in May and June 1994. In the run-off, Lukashenko won a surprise victory over Kebich, garnering 81.5% of the vote. A former collective farm boss and an MP since 1990, Lukashenko had gained a name in Belarusian politics as the leader of the Supreme Soviet's controversial Interim Anti-Corruption Commission, which was abolished a few months before the presidential elections.

Lukashenko had run a populist campaign, making some highly contradictory political statements. As president, he had said, he would 'stop inflation, fight corruption, crush crime and restore ties with the republics of the former Soviet Union'. His enthusiasm for integration with Russia was a striking element of his programme. In a speech to the Russian State Duma shortly before his election, Lukashenko called for reuniting Russia, Ukraine and Belarus into a single state. He also called for 'acknowledging' that the creation of the CIS had been a 'mistake'. On other occasions, he gained

attention by expressing his admiration for the leadership qualities of Adolf Hitler and KGB founder Feliks Dzherzhinskiy.

Upon assuming office in July, Lukashenko sent out a variety of signals with regard to what policies he intended to pursue. Whereas he had campaigned in favour of a state-controlled economy, he appointed a cabinet that was a mixture of conservatives and reformers. It was to be led by Mikhail Chigir, a pro-market banker whose views on the economy coincided more closely with those of reformist Central Bank President Stanislav Bahdankevich than with what Lukashenko had promoted.

Despite his campaign promises to halt privatization, Lukashenko in the first few months made moves towards implementation of market reforms. In the autumn, he lifted price restrictions on a number of consumer goods. However, mass protests led him to demand a retraction of the reforms. As the prime minister and the International Monetary Fund (IMF) refused, he had to relent. However, shortly afterwards the president acted to water down the effects of the move by doubling the minimum wage. Otherwise, Lukashenko kept his campaign promises to effectively continue an anti-market economic policy. Privatization was halted.

During Lukashenko's campaign, Russia had actually been rather lukewarm towards his overtures; the larger neighbour preferred Kebich, with his low-key, friendly ways, to the erratic Lukashenko. The February 1995 Russian–Belarusian treaty on friendship and cooperation, which called for joint efforts to protect the Belarusian border and the establishment of a single administration of the customs union, largely resembled the one that Kebich had entered into in April 1994. That treaty had gone largely unimplemented. Under both agreements, the Belarusians allowed for the stationing of Russian troops in Belarus, and in both instances, it was clear that they were doing so in the hope that Russia would respond by easing the debt burden on Belarus. By late 1994, the debt to Russia stood at USD 420 million. By then it was clear that the Russians did not intend to spend precious money on nurturing the Belarusian economy. In September, Russian Prime Minister Viktor Chernomyrdin stated there would be no monetary union with Belarus, because the two countries had diverged too much economically; he specifically pointed out that the average monthly income in Russia was 12 times higher than in Belarus.

Lukashenko's integration efforts caused so much opposition from nationalists that the president felt obliged to include the issue in a referendum, held simultaneously with the first round of parliamentary elections, in May 1995. It consisted of four questions – on making Russian a state language on a par

with Belarusian; on re-introducing the Soviet state symbols; on further economic integration with Russia; and on giving the president the right to dissolve parliament. All questions were supported by 75–85% of the voters. The question on dissolving the parliament was made non-binding. The question on economic integration was the most vaguely worded one, and the president interpreted the vote as supporting integration in general. Within days of the vote, Prime Minister Chigir announced that Moscow would move the Russian customs border to the western border of Belarus. That frontier has since been jointly patrolled by Russian and Belarusian personnel.

The public sentiments behind the referendum result were revealed in an opinion poll conducted at the time of the vote. Here, 95% agreed that price controls on food and basic goods were necessary, while only 3% disagreed. Asked whether only the state should own heavy industry and large enterprises, 67% agreed and 22% disagreed. On the question whether Belarus should continue its own independent path of development or form a new union with Russia, 35% opted for the former and 62% for the latter.

The election law governing the parliamentary elections made it very hard to fill a quorum; the law required more than 50% turnout, and that a candidate had to receive more than 50% of the votes to be declared the winner. Only 18 deputies were successfully elected in the first round, and a further 102 in the second and final round.

International observers criticized both the elections and the referendum for having been neither free nor fair. In particular, they pointed to the candidates' poor access to the media. Furthermore, the election law limited campaign spending to 600,000 rubles – some USD 50 – provided by the state. Political parties were not allowed to campaign for candidates. This ensured that many candidates remained unknown to the electorate, reducing the interest in voting. Lukashenko himself repeatedly encouraged voters not to take part in the elections; he was not in favour of having any parliament, new or old. The president said he would not vote, and purposely spoiled his ballot.

Relations between the parliament and the president soured further during 1995. The term of the Supreme Soviet elected in 1990 expired in May, but since a quorate new parliament had not been elected, it continued to serve. Lukashenko disputed its right to do so, and demonstratively boycotted its legislation. In October, the Constitutional Court ruled that the Supreme Soviet remained a legitimate body. Lukashenko retaliated by saying that he would not allow a group of judges whom no one had elected to overrule his decrees.

With two more rounds of parliamentary elections held in November and December, a quorum was finally reached – the total number of deputies elected reached 198, exceeding the minimum two-thirds required. The result suggested there is support in Belarus for the legislature to balance the president.

A majority of those elected did not have party affiliations; among those that had, most belonged to the Communist Party and the Agrarian Party. Notably, the reformist and nationalist grouping BNF failed to secure any seats, not least because of a smear campaign in state-controlled media in the run-up to the elections.

During his visit to Russia in February 1996, Lukashenko agreed with Russian President Boris Yeltsin on a 'zero option' on debts, which cancelled Belarus's USD 1.27 billion debt to Russia for gas and credits as well as Russia's USD 914 million debt for ecological damage caused by Russian troops and their stationing and as compensation for nuclear weapons removed from Belarus.

An enthusiastic Lukashenko proceeded to intensify the integration moves. In late March, he announced that a union treaty with Russia would be signed on 2 April. Some 40,000 people gathered in Minsk on 24 March to protest against the treaty, while it was being debated and approved in the Supreme Soviet. The gathering was peaceful, although some protesters were reportedly beaten by OMON (special designation police) forces. A couple of days later, 20,000 people in support of union demonstrated in Minsk as the leaders of Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Russia and Belarus signed an agreement on furthering economic and humanitarian integration – effectively a customs union – within the context of the CIS.

On 2 April, Presidents Yeltsin and Lukashenko signed a union treaty forming a Community of Sovereign Republics (SSR). That day, in Minsk, 30,000 people voiced their opposition to the agreement in a demonstration which had not been sanctioned by the authorities, as the law demands. Lukashenko responded by arresting hundreds of protesters, journalists who were covering the event and anti-government leaders. Most of those arrested were convicted in 'administrative trials' and then jailed for three to ten days.

The union treaty contained wide-ranging provisions covering political, economic and military cooperation. It provided for a common foreign policy and shared use of 'military infrastructure'; the formation by the end of 1996 of a common transportation system, a common power grid, a common science and technology development centre and a common news information agency; the use of the production capacities of both sides for common

interests from the beginning of 1997; and, by the end of 1997, an economic unification that will prepare the countries for the introduction of a common currency.

The SSR's ruling body would be a supreme council, comprising the heads of state and government, parliamentary leaders and the chair of an executive committee. The executive committee would be formed to act as a permanent body, monitoring compliance with the treaty. A parliamentary assembly would also be established, with an equal number of representatives drawn from the two parliaments. Russia's prime minister, Viktor Chernomyrdin, was appointed chair of the executive committee on 2 April.

Outside observers quickly noted that the agreement greatly enhanced Yeltsin's appeal to segments of the Russian electorate in his battle for the presidency with Communist Party leader Gennady Zyuganov. They also pointed out weaknesses in the deal, noting in particular that the exact nature of the integration was unclear, since the countries are to be both sovereign and integrated. The treaty contains no mechanisms forcing the two sides to unite and no precise timetables for the proposed integration, and it does not provide the overseeing bodies set up to implement the process with any binding powers. The fact that the leadership of the SSR was to alternate between Russia and Belarus was enough to raise serious doubts about Russia's intentions; it was very hard to imagine the Russian leaders' ceding authority to their Belarusian counterparts.

Basically, Russia has achieved its primary interests in Belarus – keeping troops stationed there and using it as an avenue of export of goods. From a Russian perspective, the economic argument for union must make little sense. Former Bank President Stanislav Bahdankevich, whose liberal Civic Union party has grown to be the largest opposition party, holding 20 seats in parliament, has called the union 'an ordinary bluff', since Russia would not spend hard currency to prop up Belarus. Given Yeltsin's victory over Zyuganov in the Russian presidential elections, this seems true. Basically, after struggling to win the votes of Soviet nostalgists, the Yeltsin regime is now back to business as usual.

Unlike his Russian counterparts, Lukashenko remains strongly committed to a state controlled economy: in 1995, strict foreign currency regulations were re-imposed and privatization was again halted. In late March 1996, the president got a budget through parliament with a fiscal deficit above 6%, which is bound to cause further inflation.

On 26 April, the third major rally in a month protesting Lukashenko's policies took place in Minsk, when 50,000 people demonstrated on the tenth

anniversary of the Chernobyl accident. Protesters clashed with OMON forces, and several were taken to hospital with injuries. Some 200 were arrested. A few days later, arrest warrants were issued for BNF leaders Zyanon Poznyak and Syarhei Naumchyk for their role in organizing the unauthorized demonstration. The two responded by fleeing the country; eventually, they applied for political asylum in the United States, thus finally putting Belarus in the headlines in the international press.

In late July, Lukashenko, in a new turn in his battle with the Supreme Soviet, demanded that the assembly amend the constitution to extend his term from five to seven years, until 2001. He also called for the creation of an upper legislative house whose members would be presidential appointees. If the Supreme Soviet refused to meet his demands, he warned, he would bypass the assembly with a national referendum.

Not surprisingly, the Supreme Soviet did refuse, and the president responded by announcing that a referendum would be held on an amended version of the constitution. Furthermore, it was reported, the amendments to be voted on would include changes whereby the president would appoint half of the judges in the Constitutional Court, private ownership of land would be outlawed, and the president could not be removed unless he changed his citizenship.

In the period leading up to the referendum, which following a compromise was set to be held on 24 November, antagonism grew in Belarusian politics. Several demonstrations were held to denounce Lukashenko's regime. A few days before the referendum, Prime Minister Chigir resigned, stating that he did so as a protest against the president's dictatorial tendencies.

Officially, the referendum ended with over 70% of the vote in favour of Lukashenko's constitutional proposal. With that, the president had secured support for a very strong concentration of power in his own hands.

But this was not the last word regarding the division of power in Belarus. The opposition disputed the referendum result, claiming there had been widespread voting irregularities. Furthermore, debate raged about whether the referendum should be considered binding; Lukashenko had earlier insisted it must be.

In late November 1996, confrontation still loomed in Belarus. The strongest figure in the conflict was undoubtedly Lukashenko. However, his unconciliatory approach had prompted the opposition to act in a more unified manner, and it had become a stronger force.

Belarus Today

Concerns are growing inside and outside Belarus over Lukashenko's increasingly authoritarian ways. The circumstances surrounding the 1995 parliamentary elections have already been mentioned. One consequence of the development is that inside Belarus, the once-scattered opposition parties and movements are moving closer to each other, forming an embryonic anti-Lukashenko coalition. (The parliament is still left-leaning; the largest parties are the Communist Party and the Agrarian Party, which hold 42 and 33 seats respectively. About half of the representatives are independent; most of these are left-wingers.) In late July, the leaders of Belarus's seven most influential parties issued a statement claiming that Lukashenko's intention regarding the referendum was to institutionalize 'the unchecked power of a single person for many years to come. The country can be turned into a totalitarian state.' Lukashenko responded that he found such statements 'humorous'.

International observers are becoming increasingly alarmed over the character of Lukashenko's regime. In early 1996, the US State Department reported that the Belarusian government's record on human rights had 'worsened markedly as Belarus turned back towards Soviet-era authoritarian practices'. According to the State Department's 1995/96 report on Belarus, special formations of Interior Ministry troops occasionally used force against members of parliament, opposition political gatherings and union activities.

The Soviet law on demonstrations, which is still valid, requires an application at least ten days in advance to local officials. The government has sharply curtailed the rights of workers to organize and bargain collectively. The judiciary is not independent and has encountered difficulty acting as a check on the executive branch and its agents. While the constitution establishes a presumption of innocence, conviction rates have not changed from the Soviet era. Nearly 99% of completed cases result in conviction.

According to the US report, government restrictions on freedom of speech and the press, peaceful assembly, religions and movements have increased. Despite the circulation of more independent publications, freedom of the press has not increased. Most newspapers, magazines and journals are state-controlled, and the state increasingly censors the press. Furthermore, it often interferes with the independent media.

One particularly worrisome episode occurred in December 1995, after a deputy read a report on corruption in the president's administration in parliament. Although the report later proved to be merely a ploy for attention, it became significant when it was revealed that the government had attempted to prevent the press from informing the public about it. That month, Lukashenko temporarily banned four independent newspapers. Over the next few months, he fired five chief editors of major state-subsidized papers.

In late July, at a press conference regarding harvesting, Lukashenko declared that he categorically prohibited 'all meetings and demonstrations during the time when the peasant is in the field, when he is working. Everything must be put off until winter.'

The Lukashenko regime has made little progress in terms of economic reform. The economy remains largely state-controlled – not much more than 10% is in private hands. On 14 September, Central Bank President Bahdankevich, a leading advocate of liberal reform, was removed from the government.

In the autumn of 1995, the IMF approved a 12-month standby credit of some USD 300 million in support of the government's economic programme for 1995/96. However, in early 1996, the IMF put a hold on the loan, citing its alarm over the state of affairs in Belarus. Tellingly, in July 1996, Belarus lost its right to vote in the Council of Europe because it failed to pay its dues. By then it had not paid in nine months, and on 1 June its debts to the council stood at USD 10 million.

Belarus's annual per capita income has fallen dramatically over the last five years. In 1995, the GDP fell by 10%. Official unemployment runs at less than 5%, but underemployment is significantly higher. Claims from the regime that it is achieving macro-economic stability appear dubious. The implementation of the February 'zero option' is still dragging on, although it was reported in late July that Russia and Belarus had reached an agreement on a mechanism for the repayment of the latter's debt, similar to the 'zero option'.

Scepticism regarding the market was most recently revealed in the summer of 1996 when, as part of a 'reformation' of the banking business, a number of small commercial banks were forcibly merged with the state-controlled international BelvneshekonomBank.

To the West, Belarus has been interesting mostly from a security standpoint, in particular by virtue of its possession of nuclear weapons from the Soviet years. Upon the dissolution of the USSR, Belarus had the highest concentration of military personnel and equipment of any Soviet republic.

Up to 80% of Belarusian industry was associated with the Soviet military-industrial complex. The republic has, however, not shown any interest in maintaining a large military force; at present, among Europe's former Communist states, only Albania has a smaller military budget.

Several recent actions by the Belarusian leadership have strained the country's relationship with the West. In September 1995, the Belarusian air force shot down a US hydrogen balloon which had entered Belarusian airspace, killing the two pilots. In February 1996, the country halted its reductions of conventional arms under the Conventional Armed Forces in Europe Treaty. And in June, it stopped transferring nuclear missiles to Russia – according to an earlier plan, the last missiles should have been out of Belarus by that month.

Then, in late July, in an episode reminiscent of the Soviet years, Russian friends of Belarus spread the word of an alleged US plot against Lukashenko: Viktor Ilyukhin, a Communist Party deputy and chairman of the Duma's security committee, claimed that the CIA was planning to assassinate 'one or two' members of Lukashenko's opposition and then blame the killings on him. The chairman of the Belarusian KGB, Vladimir Matskevich, said he doubted the reliability of Ilyukhin's sources.

Anti-Westernism is not a characteristic of the Belarusian regime as much as pro-Russianism is. It is most likely that the halt in disarmament is largely motivated by economic considerations, not by Lukashenko's fear of NATO encroachment. This assessment is supported by the fact that Belarus joined the Partnership for Peace treaty in January 1995. The country also ratified the START I and Non-Proliferation (of nuclear weapons) treaties in 1993.

Conclusion

Since gaining power, Lukashenko has proved to be just as erratic as his 1994 election campaign suggested he would be. In his struggle to amass more power in the hands of the executive, he has alienated the parliament, the constitutional court and most political parties in the country.

Being close to Russia and the Russians does not bother most Belarusians; on the contrary, they regard their larger neighbour as a possible saviour from the torrents of post-Soviet developments. However, the extent to which Russia is willing to take on the burdens of further integration, having already gained most of what it could wish for, is an open question.

Lukashenko looks set to continue the pursuit of his 'double project' of gathering power in his own hands and simultaneously ceding it to Russia. But considering his lust for power and admiration of those who wield it, one is free to speculate about his motives for doing so.

Moldova and the Dniester Republic

Moldova is the only country in the European part of the former Soviet Union which has experienced large-scale armed conflicts on its territory. In 1992, a civil war in the eastern part of the country, the Dniester region, led to perhaps as many as a thousand deaths. While there is an ethnic element to this conflict, it is probably more apt to describe it as a case of politicized regionalism. The chances that renewed hostilities will break out are, at present, very small.

Background

The Republic of Moldova (capital city: Chisinau) borders on Romania to the west and on Ukraine to the north, east and south. In the Late Middle Ages, this area was the north-eastern part of the Danubian principality of Moldova. The main part of present-day Moldova – between the Prut and Dniester rivers – was in the 19th century called Bessarabia. Modern Moldova also covers a small, originally Ukrainian, strip of land east of the Dniester river of approximately 4,000 square kilometres. This area in 1991 declared independence from Moldova, with Tiraspol as its capital. While not internationally recognized, the Dniester Moldova Republic (PMR, in the West sometimes also referred to as 'Transdniestria') today functions as a separate 'statelet'.

During the second half of the 15th century, the principality of Moldova was ruled by Prince Stephen the Great, who is a symbol of freedom in present-day Moldova. Upon his death in 1504, Moldavia became a Turkish dependency, and from the 18th century it came increasingly under Russian dominance. In 1812, Bessarabia was incorporated into the Russian Empire, but during the Russian Civil War, in 1918, the territory was joined to Romania. Soviet authorities never accepted this territorial loss, and in 1924 they created the Autonomous Soviet Socialist Republic of Moldavia (MASSR) east of the Dniester to serve as a springboard for a reconquest. In 1940, following the conclusion of the Molotov–Ribbentrop Pact, this reconquest was achieved.

Moldova and Transdniester

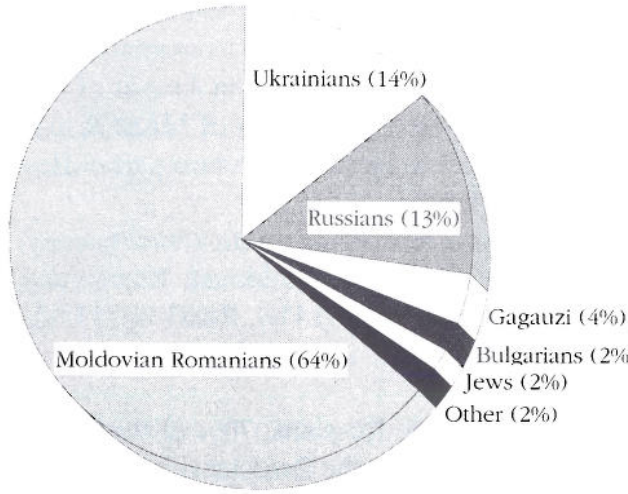
During World War II, Bessarabia, along with a large swathe of Ukrainian lands to the east, was briefly occupied by Romania. Bessarabia was finally annexed by the Soviet Union in 1944, and in August of the same year it was joined together with the westernmost parts of MASSR to form the Socialist Soviet Republic of Moldavia. The southernmost part of Bessarabia – Budjak – was integrated into Ukraine.

For centuries, Moldova has been a multicultural society. A good 64% of Moldova's 4.3 million people are Moldovan Romanians. The remaining population consists of Ukrainians (14%), Russians (13%), Gagauzy (Turkish-speaking Orthodox, 3.5%), Bulgarians (2%), Jews (1.5%) and other nationalities (1.8%).

Approximately 70% of the Russians, 70% of the Ukrainians and almost all of the Bulgarians live west of the Dniester river, but the Dniester republic also has a multi-ethnic population. Among the left-bank population of 750,000 inhabitants, 40% are Moldovans, 25% Ukrainians and 23% Russians. While many outside observers have seen the stand-off between Chisinau and Tiraspol as a conflict between Moldovans and Russians, the parties themselves deemphasize the ethnic element. The two other conflict dimensions are the political and the regional. While the Moldovan national liberation movement under perestroika proceeded under the banners of anti-Communism, the Dniester authorities have stuck to a planned economy, some Communist symbolism, and in general to the Soviet way of life.

Probably more important, however, is the territorial element. Irrespective of their ethnic background and political convictions, most Dniestrians have developed a strong sense of regional identity. The left bank is cut off from Bessarabia by the river and has never been part of Romania. While the Moldovan economy on the right bank is predominantly agrarian, the Dniester area is much more industrialized and, as a result, more Sovietized. Many Moldovans and Ukrainians in the area are linguistically Russified, particularly in the towns and cities. The most ardent pro-Soviet and anti-Moldovan faction in the PMR leadership has, in fact, been headed by Russified Moldovans.

In addition to the Dniester conflict, another political-cum-ethnic-cum-territorial conflict has plagued the young Moldovan state. In the south, the Gagauzy in the Comrat region declared independence in September 1990. Like the Dniestrians, the Gagauzy are generally Russified, but in contrast to them they inhabit an underdeveloped, poor agricultural region. The Gagauz conflict was resolved when Gagauzia was granted a measure of autonomy in January 1995. Negotiations over the settlement of the Dniester conflict,



Ethnic composition in Moldova

however, have stalled. Escalation of the conflict between Tiraspol and Chisinau in the spring and summer of 1992 led to an outright war in which perhaps as many as 500 people on both sides were killed. Memories of these hostilities have made reconciliation much harder. In addition, the presence of a large Russian army in the Dniester republic has strengthened the Dniestrians' hand. Although they cannot take Russian support for granted, this circumstance has made them less flexible in the negotiations.

The vast majority of the Moldovan population – Moldovans, Russians, Ukrainians, Bulgarians and Gagauz – are Orthodox Christians. Contemporary political conflicts in Moldova, therefore, have no religious overtones.

National Liberation

Language issues played a decisive role in the Moldovan liberation from the Soviet Union and in the national revival. The Soviet regime tried to legitimize the annexation of Bessarabia by maintaining that Moldovans belong to a different ethnic group than the Romanians. Pointing out certain features in the Moldovan dialect which sets it apart from mainstream Romanian, Stalin insisted that 'Moldavian' was a separate language to be written with Cyrillic characters, as is Russian.

In August 1989, a language law was passed by the Moldovan Supreme Soviet making Moldovan the 'state language'. The Cyrillic alphabet was replaced by the Latin, while Russian was classified as a 'language of inter-ethnic communication'. The letter of this law was rather liberal, and both Russian and Moldovan continued to be spoken in the Moldovan Parliament. However, in many places the language law was used by local zealots as an effective means to fire or demote non-speakers of Moldovan.

The nationalist Moldovan Popular Front won the parliamentary elections in the Soviet Moldavian Republic in the spring of 1990, and for a while it completely dominated Moldovan politics. The loser was the Yedinstvo (Unity) movement, which represented the non-titular population on both sides of the Dniester river. Moldova declared itself an independent state on 27 August 1991, following the attempted coup in Moscow in the same month. Mircea Snegur was elected president in December 1991, running as the only candidate and with the support of the Popular Front.

While the Moldovan Popular Front during perestroika had rallied under the banners of national independence, it switched to a programme of reunification with Romania as soon as independence had been achieved. To its immense surprise, however, it soon realized that it was out of step with the population at large as well as with the Moldovan elite. Not only the minorities but also most ethnic Moldovans reached the conclusion that Romania was no rose garden, politically or economically. Bleak memories of hard times under Romanian rule in the interwar period resurfaced. President Snegur and his entourage switched to a programme of cultural 'Romanianness' and political 'Moldovanness'. In a referendum on 6 March 1994, more than 95% of the voters supported independent Moldovan statehood. Snegur parted ways with the Popular Front and instead began to rely on the Moldova-oriented Agrarian Party.

The Popular Front (which dropped the word 'Moldovan' from its name in 1992) stuck to its irredentist guns and became politically marginalized. The question of reunification nevertheless lingers on, by dint of demographic and cultural realities. The issue is also kept alive by nationalist forces in Romania. Many Moldovans remain uncertain about their national identity. The 1994 constitution confirms 'Moldovan' as an official language, and states that the constitution shall 'maintain, develop and express an ethnic and linguistic identity'. In the spring of 1995, however, huge student demonstrations in Chisinau demanded that Moldovan be replaced by Romanian in the constitution as the official state language. Snegur suddenly decided to support them, and as a result ran afoul of the Agrarian Party.

The Dniester Conflict

The Language Act was the major catalyst in the conflict between the russophones in the Dniester region and Moldovan authorities, although important economic interests also were at stake. In August 1989, 'The United Council of Work Collectives' (OSTK) was established in Tiraspol with the goal of 'combating Romanian nationalism' in Chisinau. This organization enjoyed the support of the factory leaderships, and in August–September it organized a general political strike. At this time, the idea of territorial self-rule for the Dniestr region cropped up. In the period between December 1989 and August 1990, a series of plebiscites were conducted in various parts of the left bank 'on the desirability of creating an autonomous Dniestr republic as a constituent part of MSSR'. At the same time, elected leaders from Dniestria continued to participate actively in republican Moldovan politics. In the elections to the Moldovan Supreme Soviet in February 1990, OSTK won most of the left-bank seats, while the Moldovan Popular Front was by far the most successful contender on the right bank. However, soon afterwards, the Dniestr faction withdrew from Chisinau, complaining about repeated threats and acts of violence perpetrated against them by Popular Front supporters. On 2 June 1990, the First Congress of Dniestr Peoples' Deputies at all levels voted in favour of the establishment of a Dniestr free economic zone and appealed to Chisinau to address the issue.

On 19 August 1990, the Gagauzy in southern Bessarabia established their own republic. This event spurred the Dniestrians to create on 2 September their own 'Dniestr Moldovan Soviet Socialist Republic' as a constituent part of the USSR. In Chisinau, this resolution was interpreted as an attempt to break away completely from Moldovan jurisdiction. However, official Tiraspol spokesmen claimed, and still claim, that the proclamation of 'sovereignty' should not be seen as a drive for full state independence.

The sovereignty proclamations of the Gagauz and Dniestr republics seriously exacerbated the political situation in Moldova. In the fall of 1990, the first violent encounters took place between Popular Front supporters and Moldovan police on the one hand and Gagauz and Dniestr paramilitary units on the other. In one particularly bad incident in Dubossary in November, three persons were killed. This bloodshed created an uproar on both sides of the river and swayed most of the Dniestr population into supporting PMR state sovereignty.

Russian President Mikhail Gorbachev tried to influence the tense situation in a presidential decree of 22 December 1990, which declared null and void

the Gagauz and Dniestr sovereignty declarations. This decision was balanced by an appeal to the Moldovan authorities to reconsider a number of legal acts which were deemed detrimental to the national minorities in the republic. However, at this stage, Soviet authorities were no longer in a position to exert any influence in the turbulent republic. The decisions made in Moscow were ignored by both Moldovan parties.

The attempted coup d'état in Moscow in August 1991 was supported by certain Dniester leaders, particularly in the OSTK. The OSTK leader, Igor Smirnov, was kidnapped from Ukrainian territory and incarcerated in Chisinau in September. However, when a women's committee in Tiraspol organized a blockade of the railway connecting Moldova with Ukraine – in effect strangling the Moldovan economy – Smirnov was released. In December the same year, he was elected to a new office as Dniester president with 65% of the vote, running against two other candidates. In a referendum the same month, approximately 75% of the Dniester population voted in favour of Dniester state independence.

In the spring of 1992, armed clashes between Moldovan government troops and the Dniester Republic National Guard became almost everyday occurrences. The Dniester Guard was reinforced by Cossacks coming from Russia as well as by volunteers from the 14th Soviet Army stationed in Tiraspol. This huge army was a remnant of the Cold War, having been assigned the task of charging south through the Balkans in case of a global conflict. The army command strenuously tried to keep neutral, but many of the officers and soldiers were local Dniester citizens clearly sympathizing with the PMR separatist efforts. On 1 April 1991, Russian President Boris Yeltsin issued a decree to put this free-floating military machine under Russian jurisdiction.

In March 1992, armed battles for the control over left-bank police headquarters loyal to Moldovan authorities led to 50 casualties. On 28 March, Snegur proclaimed a state of emergency, together with direct presidential rule, and issued an ultimatum to the Dniester leaders – which they ignored. On 2 July, Moldovan forces tried to recapture the city of Bendery, the only part of PMR territory located on the right bank. The heavy fighting ceased only when tanks from the 14th Army started to roll over the bridge from Tiraspol.

On 21 July, a bilateral agreement between Snegur and Yeltsin in Moscow resulted in a lasting ceasefire. The military line between the territories controlled by Chisinau and Tiraspol is patrolled by joint peace-keeping forces made up of three Moldovan, three Dniester and six Russian battalions.

The Dniester Republic after the 1992 War

In June 1992, Gen. Aleksandr Lebed took over the command of the 14th Army. He had a very high political profile. While strongly defending Dniester independence, he also publicly denounced the civilian PMR leadership for corruption and alleged illegal arms sales. In January 1994, the PMR was on the brink of internecine war. However, when Lebed was called back to Moscow in July 1995, the PMR leadership still remained in the saddle, albeit not firmly. The weak performance of the Dniester economy and drastically falling living standards had undercut much support for the regime, which was being challenged both by hardline Communists on the left and by Russian nationalists on the right. Nevertheless, elections to the Dniester Supreme Soviet in December 1995 did not bring any changes in the government.

Several Russified Moldovans have prominent positions in the PMR leadership (e.g., minister of defence, speaker in the Supreme Soviet), while those who are oriented towards Moldova and Romania are politically marginalized. Six members of the Moldovan Popular Front were arrested in Tiraspol in 1992, accused of terrorism and political murder. The trial against them was criticized by international human rights organizations as not being in accordance with generally accepted legal standards.

In the Dniester republic, there are three official languages – Russian, Ukrainian and Moldovan. In practical politics and everyday life, Russian predominates. It is insisted that the third language is Moldovan, not Romanian, and it has to be written with Cyrillic characters. For a long time, the ban on the Latin alphabet was not strictly enforced, but in the autumn of 1993, a 'school war' raged. Teachers and officials who opposed the use of the Cyrillic alphabet were removed from their positions. Pro-Moldovan mass media in the region are under strict control, but Moldovan papers from the right bank may be bought at Dniester newsstands. By contrast, PMR publications are not freely sold in Moldova.

In late December 1995, voters in the Dniester republic overwhelmingly approved a new constitution and voted in favour of membership in the CIS. In 1991–92, the standard of living in Dniestria was among the highest in the CIS area. However, from that time on, a serious economic recession set in, from which the region has not yet recovered. Hardly any economic reconstruction or marketization has taken place. When the PMR was forced to leave the ruble zone in 1993, special PMR rubles were printed. In response to Moldovan protests, their introduction in Dniestria was postponed until

1995. The Dniestr ruble is not a currency, but serves the function of payment coupons only. Since its introduction, the exchange rate has plummeted, and in the summer of 1995, one US dollar could buy 35,000–40,000. In 1995, the average monthly wage in Dniestria hovered around USD 7–10, only half of the official subsistence level. Today, Dniestria is one of the poorest regions in the former USSR. Privatization proceeds at a snail's pace. The state subsidizes the production of the most essential food products and keeps the prices low in the state stores; when these subsidies were removed in 1996, the prices of most staple foodstuffs tripled. At the same time, in Dniestria, as in most places in the former Soviet Union, a few people have been amassing fortunes by sometimes dubious means.

Negotiations and International Initiatives

Negotiations began in April 1992, involving Moldova, Russia, Ukraine and Romania, but did not lead to any results and were recognized as a failure. Since the June hostilities, the negotiations have been organized by the OSCE mission to Moldova, but with a strong Russian involvement. In their joint statement in Moscow on 21 July 1992, Snegur and Yeltsin declared that the Dniester area should be granted a 'special status' within an undivided Moldovan state. The precise nature of that status has since been the topic of an endless series of negotiations.

The official Moscow position on the Dniestr conflict has been ambiguous. Russian public opinion has compelled the authorities to back up 'compatriots in the near abroad', but, at the same time, Moscow is keenly interested in keeping Moldova as an active member of the CIS partnership. For that reason, the Kremlin has tried to induce Tiraspol to make greater concessions to Chisinau. Moscow's position on the Dniester question, however, always reflects the balance of forces in Russian politics, which is constantly in flux. Also, on principle, Russia strongly supports the territorial integrity of the Soviet successor states, particularly so since the outbreak of the Chechen War.

The linkage between a political solution to the Dniester conflict and withdrawal of the former Soviet 14th Army has complicated the negotiations. Chisinau has insisted that withdrawal is a precondition for a settlement. The Moldovan constitution of 28 July 1994 establishes the 'permanent neutrality' of Moldova and prohibits the stationing of foreign troops on Moldovan territory. On 21 October 1994, Russia and Moldova signed an agreement on complete withdrawal of Russian troops from Moldova within

three years. However, this agreement has not been ratified by the Russian State Duma. On the contrary, in November 1995, the Duma passed a resolution declaring the Dniester region to be a 'zone of strategic Russian interests'.

In a referendum in April 1995, a great majority of the voters in the Dniester republic voted against the withdrawal of Russian troops. Nevertheless, the size and the capabilities of the army – in July 1995 renamed 'the Operational Group of Russian Forces in Moldova' – is being steadily trimmed. By mid-1996, it numbered some 6,000 men, most of whom have grown up in the region. Since 1995, the soldiers have primarily busied themselves with demolishing the huge stockpiles of obsolete Soviet weapons.

In 1992, Romania and Hungary became the first states to establish bilateral diplomatic relations with Moldova, followed by Russia in April that year. Romania and Ukraine have proclaimed their support of the Moldovan government in the Dniester conflict. The relationship with Romania, however, has cooled, while Ukraine and Moldova have been drawn closer together by their shared proximity to a powerful and unstable Russia.

Moldova is a member of the CIS, but does not take part in the monetary or military part of the cooperation. The country is also a member of the Council of Europe, the North Atlantic Cooperation Council and the Partnership for Peace. Furthermore, Moldova is a member of the International Monetary Fund, from which it has received several generous credits.

The OSCE has a mission to monitor the human rights situation in both Moldova and the Dniester republic and assist the parties in the difficult negotiations. The work consists of easing the dialogue and negotiations, gathering information, supplying expertise and advice in relation to legislation and constitutional aspects, making visible the presence of the OSCE in the area, and establishing contacts with all the parties to the conflict. The goal is to assist the parties in striving to find a lasting political solution to the conflict between Dniestria and the Moldovan Republic, on the basis of the principles and obligations of the OSCE. In December 1993, the mission presented 'Report no. 13', outlining a framework for a future status of Dniestria. It pointed out that there existed a 'separate Dniestrian feeling of identity' and suggested that the introduction of three levels of jurisdiction in Moldova – central, regional and mixed. Although both sides expressed some approval of this document, it has not managed to pull the negotiations out of the doldrums.

In April 1995, the Moldovan negotiation team presented its Dniestrian counterpart with a draft law on the special status of the Dniestr region based

on the OSCE recommendations. The stated aim of the law was to 'secure the preservation, development and expression of the ethnic, cultural, linguistic, and religious distinctiveness of the region's population'. The meeting between Snegur and Smirnov on 5 July 1995 was greeted with a certain measure of optimism, but did not lead to a political breakthrough. Even so, the parties did agree on a number of important documents, including a banking agreement and an appeal to Ukraine to participate in the peacekeeping process currently under the auspices of OSCE and Russia. Most important was the signing of an 'Agreement on Non-use of Force'. This agreement was proposed by the Dniestr side, but was immediately denounced by the Dniestr leftist opposition. The September round of negotiations saw the PMR delegation more entrenched in their positions than during the summer.

After the aborted breakthrough in September 1995, negotiations were broken off until January 1996. A new series of meetings in February, March and April failed to give the talks a new impetus. The PMR leadership clearly wanted to know the outcome of the presidential elections in Moscow before they made any significant concessions: if Zyuganov or Zhirinovsky won, they could hope for more sympathy in the Kremlin than they enjoyed in the Yeltsin administration. On the opposite side of the fence, Snegur knew that if a reunification of Moldova and the PMR took place before the Moldovan presidential elections in November 1996, his chances of re-election might diminish: the left-bankers held him responsible for the 1992 war, and he could not hope for more than a handful of votes in the region.

Only Yeltsin had a clear incentive to act. If he could broker a resolution to the Dniester impasse on the eve of the Russian presidential elections, it might boost his re-election chances. On 27 June 1996, he felt confident enough that a solution was imminent to send invitations to Snegur, Smirnov and the Ukrainian president, Leonid Kuchma, to attend a signing ceremony in Moscow. But two days before the presidential run-offs, the signing was called off, either as a result of Yeltsin's heart attack or because of a failure to secure the consent of all parties. As it had the year before, a hectic and upbeat summer season fizzled out without any enduring results. However, the change of leadership in Chisinau in December 1996, when pro-Russian candidate Petru Lucinschi beat the incumbent Snegur, once again rekindled expectations that the parties might soon draw closer together.

The negotiation process between Moldova and the PMR continues. Both parties have agreed to retain the integrity and unity of Moldova, and that Dniestria shall be granted a special status within that state. The Moldovan

and PMR negotiation teams have been taken by international human rights organizations on guided tours of various zones of conflict and harmony around the world – Northern Ireland, Cyprus, South Tyrol, the Åland Islands – to study the experiences of others. The PMR secretary of State, Valerii Litskai, claims that the travels have not been in vain: the optimal model has been found. It is called 'associate membership', embodied in the relationship of Puerto Rico to USA, Liechtenstein to Switzerland, and Åland to Finland. In particular, the latter arrangement is favoured by the PMR leadership. While an integral part of the Finnish state, Åland is at the same time free to conclude international agreements. It remains to be seen whether the new Moldovan leadership will be equally intrigued by the Åland model.

Leading Moldovan officials concede that the left bank has distinctive features that must be recognized in any agreement. The economic problems, which neither the left nor the right bank can cope with alone, pull the parties slowly towards each other. There is no insuperable ethnic antagonism between the protagonists, and multifarious social and economic contacts between Moldova and Dniestria have been retained all along.

Nevertheless, the negotiators face formidable psychological and practical hurdles. The PMR and Moldova have disparate economic systems and separate armed forces and security systems. An integration will require a radical reorganization of these structures. Deep-seated mutual distrust reigns. In the PMR, many careers depend on continued separation, and many Moldovan officials oppose reunification with Romania for similar reasons. When and if the left bank becomes merely an autonomous region, they will lose their impressive titles and become redundant.

Overcoming these problems will require the active participation of international organizations such as the OSCE, but also of Russia, whose prestige in Dniestria is very high. No long-term implementation programme can be elaborated before the principal issues are settled. Resolution of the Dniestr conflict will probably have to proceed as a step-by-step process rather than as a single act.

Ukraine

After decades of Soviet rule, independence represents an enormous challenge for Ukraine. An economy devastated by 70 years of Soviet rule, an ethnically divided population and an uneasy geopolitical position between east and west are all major challenges for the new Ukrainian leadership.

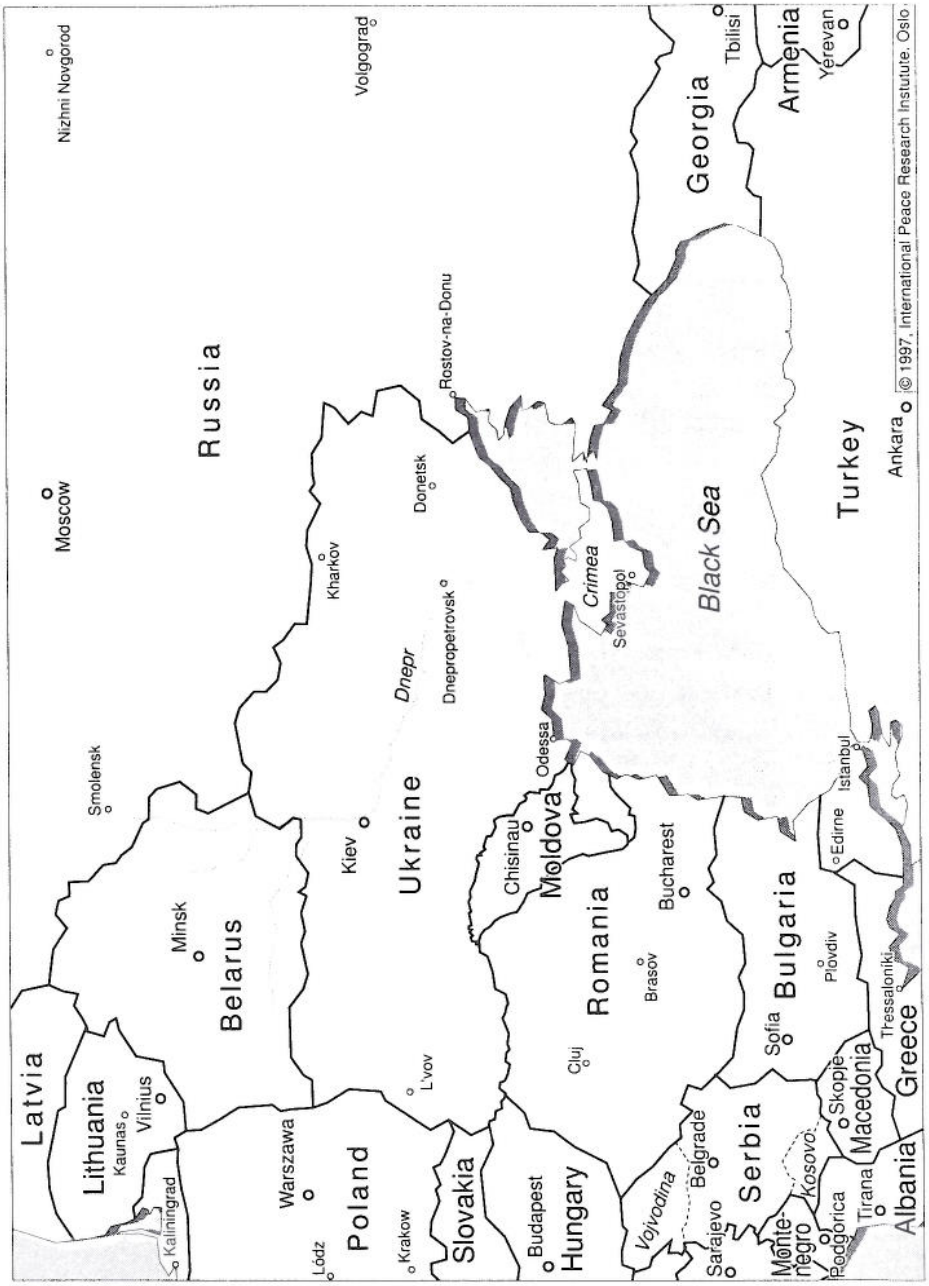
Social Conditions

Ukraine has a population of 52 million, the fifth largest in Europe. Nationalities other than Ukrainians make up more than one-quarter of the population; most prominent among these are the 11 million Russians. Since independence, Ukraine has pursued a liberal citizenship policy. All people living in the country when the Nationality Act was passed in 1991 were offered Ukrainian citizenship.

Ukraine is Europe's second largest country in area (604,000 sq. km). It is as large as Poland, Hungary, former Czechoslovakia and Austria combined. During the Soviet era, Ukraine produced much of the USSR's metallurgic equipment, heavy electrical machinery, electric motors and turbines. A large part of the Soviet military–industrial and space weapons complex was also stationed in Ukraine.

Many Ukrainians hope that with the help of necessary agricultural reforms, Ukraine can be restored to the position it held at the beginning of the century as the granary of Europe. Ukraine was a major contributor to the total Soviet agricultural output, producing one-quarter of the Soviet Union's grain, approximately half of the corn and half of the sugar beet harvest. Ukraine also produces large quantities of soybeans, tobacco, linen, vegetables, eggs and beef.

The natural resources of the country are equally impressive. Production of coal and iron ore accounted for approximately half of total Soviet output. Ukraine also has large amounts of manganese, anthracite, titanium, petroleum, salt and phosphates.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Ukraine

History

Up to the time when Kiev was seized and laid waste by the Mongols in 1240, the history of Ukraine was largely identical to that of Kiev. During the 14th century, the principalities in the mid-Dnieper region (Kiev and Chernigov) and in Volhynia came under Lithuanian rule, while Galicia and Lvov passed to Poland. With the Polish–Lithuanian political union in 1569, most of Ukraine came under direct Polish rule. The extensive Polish–Ukrainian social divergences, between Polish landowners and Ukrainian serfs, led to social uprisings in which Ukrainian Cossacks (free peasant warriors) played a leading role.

An uprising under Bohdan Khmelnitsky in 1648 led to the formation of a short-lived Ukrainian state led by a hetman (Cossack leader), but foreign policy problems forced him to seek the protection of the tsar. Gradually, all of Ukraine except the westernmost province of Galicia came under Russian domination.

During the Great Northern War (1700–21), the Ukrainian hetman Mazepa entered into an alliance with Karl XII of Sweden with the faint hope of forming an independent Ukrainian state. Later the autonomy of Russian Ukraine was gradually undermined, and in the reign of Catherine II the area came under total Russian control. In the larger towns, non-Ukrainians gradually came to predominate.

Ukrainian nationalist feeling did not begin to develop in earnest until the 1800s, and was then repressed by Tsar Nicholas I. After the overthrow of the tsarist regime in 1917, a Central Council was assembled under the historian Mykola Hrushevski to act as the Ukrainian Parliament. The general secretariat, which was dominated by Mensheviks and social revolutionaries, functioned as the government. On 22 January 1918, the council proclaimed Ukraine an independent state. Council representatives participated in the peace negotiations in Brest Litovsk and concluded a separate peace agreement with the Central Powers (Germany and Austro-Hungary) in 1918. At the same time, Kiev fell to Bolshevik forces, and the Ukrainian government was forced to flee. In March and April 1918, Ukraine was once more occupied by the troops of the Central Powers. A hetman state was established by extremist nationalists led by Pavlo Skoropadski, with German support.

The defeat in World War I led to the withdrawal of the troops of the Central Powers and the overthrow of Skoropadski. Shortly after, Soviet troops occupied Kiev once more, and on 14 January 1914 the Ukrainian Soviet Socialist Republic was proclaimed. During the Polish–Soviet War of

spring and summer 1920, a final attempt was made to establish an independent Ukrainian state in alliance with Poland. At the Peace of Riga in 1921, Ukraine was divided between the Soviet state and Poland. Ukraine became a union republic of the USSR in 1923.

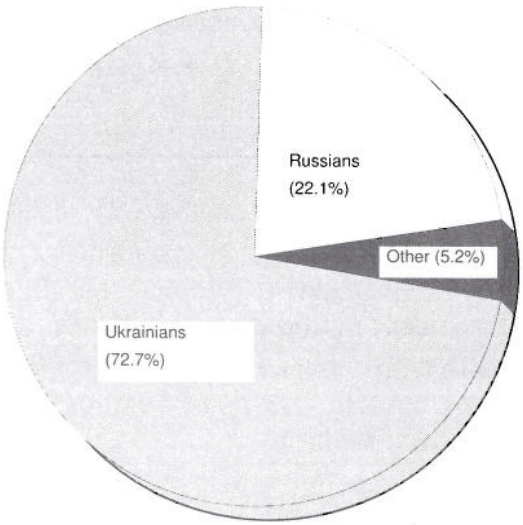
Ukrainian was introduced as the official language of Ukraine, and a government and a Supreme Soviet were set up in Kiev. Most of the prominent Ukrainian Bolshevik leaders were liquidated or deported as bourgeois nationalists in the 1930s. In World War II, Ukraine was again occupied by Germany. The outcome of the war led to the concentration of practically all Ukrainians in the Ukrainian Soviet Republic through the incorporation of Western Ukraine into the Soviet Union.

Independence

On 1 December 1991, a referendum was held on the question of declaring Ukraine an independent state. Over 90% of the 84% turnout voted in favour. The former Communist Party ideologist Leonid Kravchuk was elected president. The government was led by technocrat Leonid Kuchma until September 1993, when he resigned in protest of the considerable criticism levelled at government efforts towards economic reform. Kuchma's policies included a tighter monetary policy to restrain Ukrainian inflation. However, in the presidential elections on 26 June and 10 July 1994, Kuchma was returned to power. Kravchuk was forced to acknowledge defeat by Kuchma, who gained overwhelming support from the Russian-speaking population in the most industrialized areas in Eastern Ukraine. These areas have suffered harsh economic treatment since independence, and Kuchma's election platform included a closer economic alliance with Russia and affiliation with the Commonwealth of Independent States (CIS).

Kuchma was undoubtedly Russia's preferred candidate in the presidential elections, and his triumph at the expense of the more nationalist-oriented groups in the western part of the country was perceived as a prelude to increased political division in Ukraine.

However, once in power, Kuchma turned out to be just as staunch a defender of Ukrainian independence as Kravchuk had been. He has managed both to substantially improve Ukraine's relations with the West and, through less ideological and more pragmatic language, to improve relations with Russia. He has, however, been very careful to avoid close Ukrainian integration with Russia and the CIS. Thus, while nationally minded Western Ukrainians have to a large extent turned pro-Kuchma, Kuchma has been a great



Ethnic composition in Ukraine

disappointment to pro-Russian forces in Ukraine and to the political leadership in the Kremlin.

Galloping inflation has been Ukraine's greatest problem since independence. Progress has been slow in privatizing the Ukrainian economy. Attempted reforms have been difficult to establish in the adverse climate of a Parliament so long dominated by conservative elements. During Kuchma's time as prime minister, the economic sluggishness was further exacerbated by his conflict with Kravchuk. Parliament reluctantly called a new election in the autumn of 1993 in order to break the economic and political stalemate, on the condition that Kravchuk would agree to a presidential election as well. Ukraine's virtual bankruptcy has allowed the president and Parliament little room for political or economic manoeuvring. Serious attempts at economic reform started in earnest only with the arrival of Kuchma as president. Despite strong resistance both from Parliament and from conservative parts of the state apparatus, Kuchma initiated the first steps towards a marked economy. Although most economic indicators still look depressing for Ukraine, certain positive tendencies can be discerned. Inflation has been brought under control, employment in the private sector is on the rise, the country is being treated favourably by Western financial institutions, and the new currency (introduced in September 1996), the *hryvna*, has been stable so far.

The first parliamentary elections after independence were held in April 1994 and were won by avowed communists, socialists and representatives of the collective farmers. These initially formed the largest group in the Parliament, and they supported closer cooperation with Russia. However, because of victories by liberals in later by-elections, splits among the left-wingers, and a gradual shift by some socialists and communists in favour of both economic reform and defence of Ukrainian independence, the Parliament lost its clear socialist–communist majority. The outcome of voting in the Parliament has become dependent not on the balance between factions of communists, liberals and nationalists, but on the so-called *bolota* (swamp) in the middle. These deputies do not follow any particular ideological line, but decide their voting on a case-by-case basis.

Separatism

Widespread strikes among coal miners in the summers of 1993 and 1996, which paralysed much of the country's heavy industry, aggravated the potential conflict between industrialized Eastern Ukraine, which sees cooperation with Russia as its economic lifeline, and nationalist-oriented Western Ukraine, with its demands for more rapid integration with the rest of Europe. Tensions have been exacerbated by the election results and the still-unresolved Crimean question (see below). Separatist tendencies in the east have given rise to speculation that Ukraine could, at worst, suffer a disruptive civil war.

The eastern region, where the strikes were concentrated, voted for Ukrainian independence in 1991, but has since adopted a more sceptical attitude towards the advantages. There have been vociferous demands in the Donbass region for greater economic and political freedom and a federal structure for Ukraine. This, the residents maintain, could help them to overcome the crisis and forge closer links with Russia.

However, despite the strong scepticism in Eastern and Southern Ukraine towards Ukrainian independence and what is perceived as Kiev's anti-Russian policy, political organizations advocating either separatism or a reunification of Russia and Ukraine have failed to attract many followers. The people of Eastern and Southern Ukraine do not find Ukrainian independence so intolerable that they are willing to mobilize against it. It is also important to notice that the political and business elites in Eastern and Southern Ukraine are largely in favour of independence. Thus, the danger of separatism in Eastern and Southern Ukraine seems to be declining.

The Relationship with Russia

Nuclear Disarmament

Until recently, Ukraine had more nuclear weapons than all other countries except the United States and Russia. As of July 1994, there were 1,656 atomic warheads for use with 130 SS-19 missiles, 46 SS-24 missiles and 30 strategic bomber aircraft. In April 1993, the last of more than 10,000 tactical nuclear weapons were removed from Ukraine and stored in Russia. In July 1990, 18 months before independence, Ukraine had announced it would divest itself of nuclear weapons. But a majority in Parliament favoured the retention of some of the country's nuclear weapons, partly because of fears of an unstable Russia. In Lisbon in May 1992, together with Russia, Belarus and Kazakhstan, Ukraine signed an agreement to remove all nuclear missiles within seven years. Nevertheless, Ukraine refused for a long time to ratify the START I agreement and the Non-Proliferation Treaty of 1968.

In response to considerable international pressure, Parliament gave the all-clear in November 1993 for ratification of the START agreement on certain conditions: economic guarantees from the West, security guarantees from the other nuclear powers, and an exemption from the agreement for the 46 SS-24 missiles.

These conditions were later abandoned, and in January 1994 Ukraine, Russia and the United States issued a joint declaration to undertake the removal of all nuclear weapons from Ukrainian soil. Among other things, this declaration linked disarmament to security guarantees for Ukraine and technical and economic support from the USA. Eventually, in the autumn of 1994, President Kuchma declared that Ukraine was ready to join the Non-Proliferation Treaty, and in May 1996 the last 200 warheads were sent from Ukraine to Russia.

Although the controversy over the Ukrainian nuclear weapons is now over, it caused serious mutual distrust between Ukraine and Russia. The impact of the controversy on Ukrainian–Russian relations will continue to be felt for a long time.

The Crimean Peninsula

The question of the future status of the Crimean Peninsula and the Black Sea Fleet is central to the conflict between Russia and Ukraine.

In 1954, Russia gave Crimea to Ukraine in connection with the 300th anniversary of the so-called friendly union between the Russian and the Ukrainian people. Most of the Crimean population (approx. 70%) are Russian. Just over half voted for independence in the 1991 referendum.

Tensions surrounding the future of the Crimean Peninsula came to a head during the first half of 1994. In January 1994, presidential elections were held in Crimea. The elections, which were declared illegal by then-President Kravchuk, strengthened the position of the pro-Russians through the victory of Yuri Meshkov.

The pro-Russian Crimean Parliament also showed scant conciliation in relation to Kiev. For example, in June 1994 the Parliament decided that Ukrainian law was no longer to apply in Crimea, and threatened to hold a referendum on the union of the peninsula with Ukraine.

However, due to internal disagreements among the separatists over who should be in charge of privatization and a lack of support for the secessionist policies from Russia, the position of the pro-Russian forces gradually weakened in the autumn of 1994 and early 1995. In March 1995, Kiev, encouraged by the cautious Russian position and the Russian entanglement in Chechnya, felt free to deal the Crimean separatists a decisive blow. Kiev subordinated the Crimean government directly under the central Ukrainian government, abolished the Crimean presidency and transferred the authority over Crimean privatization from Crimea to Kiev. Although Crimea now has its government back under local control, the pro-Russian forces have not recovered from the March clamp-down. This, however, does not mean that separatist ideas are dead in Crimea. Anti-Ukrainian rhetoric continues to stir passions on the peninsula, and Russia continues to emphasize its special concern for Crimea.

Russia and Ukraine had originally agreed to divide the Black Sea Fleet between them by 1995. The fleet, which consists of 300 vessels, has both Russian and Ukrainian crews. An agreement in September 1993 between Russian President Boris Yeltsin and Ukraine's Kravchuk was based on Ukraine's giving up its share of the Black Sea Fleet in exchange for a writing-off of its debts to Russia. Parliament subsequently refused to approve the agreement. The fleet is now divided in practice, but the terms on which

the Russian part of the fleet will continue to be based in Sevastopol remain an issue of controversy between the two countries.

At the request of Ukraine, the UN Security Council took up the question of Russian demands in Crimea. Previously, the Russian Parliament had unanimously demanded sovereignty over the naval base at Sevastopol. The Security Council rejected this demand on the grounds that it was not in accordance with the UN Charter. The Russian demand, which also included a request that Ukraine withdraw its troops from the area, weakened Ukrainian interest in disarmament, even though Yeltsin had disassociated himself from the vote in Parliament.

A central argument underlying the Ukrainian insistence that the Crimean Peninsula belongs to Ukraine is that the area borders only Ukraine. Furthermore, Ukraine upholds the principle that the borders from the Soviet era should remain unchanged.

Energy

Ukraine is dependent on extensive supplies of oil and gas from Russia. Since Ukrainian independence, Russia has raised the price of oil and gas to the international market level, and Kiev has had to reluctantly go along with correspondingly higher payments. The dependence on Russia for energy supplies has made Ukraine vulnerable. In August 1993, for example, all export of energy to Ukraine was stopped because of lack of payments. In Ukraine, stoppages in the supply of Russian oil and gas are seen not only as reactions against non-payment, but also as a form of political pressure aimed at making Ukraine more willing to integrate with the other CIS countries.

A record grain harvest in 1993 made it possible for the government to suggest paying off the loan of USD 1 billion through grain exports. Later, Ukraine managed to pay its energy dept to Russia because Russia, under Western pressure, agreed to reschedule some of the payments and because Ukraine has received credits for repayment from the International Monetary Fund and the World Bank.

In July 1994, the G-7 countries agreed to an aid package of USD 200 million to close the notorious nuclear plant in Chernobyl. It will cost an estimated USD 1.5 billion to shut down the plant. One condition of this package is that Ukraine undertake the development of alternative sources of energy. Ukraine has agreed to allow independent international inspection of the country's nuclear plants.

At the same time, Ukraine plans to increase its domestic oil and gas production considerably by the year 2000. According to the plan, with the help of modern technology, gas production is to be stepped up by 40% and oil production by 20%. Furthermore, Ukraine has entered into agreements on the purchase of oil and gas from Algeria, Iran and Turkmenistan.

Between East and West

Situated in the geographical heart of Europe, and with its vast natural resources, Ukraine should be able to play a far more important role in European politics than at present, given continued modernization and successful economic reforms.

The strategic aim of the Ukrainian political leadership is clear: to integrate as much as possible with the West and with Ukraine's neighbours in Central Europe, while simultaneously maintaining good relations with Russia. This strategy is exemplified most clearly by Ukraine's position on NATO expansion. Clearly understanding that NATO expansion is likely to make the Russian political pressure on Ukraine even stronger, and that the expansion in this respect is to its disadvantage, Ukraine still expresses no reservations against this expansion. The Ukrainian leadership figures that such reservations could jeopardize relations with the West. However, to reassure Russia, the Ukrainian leadership has repeatedly stated that Ukrainian membership in NATO is not an issue at present. The Ukrainian leadership is, however, unwilling to rule out membership some time in the future.

The real crux of the matter, however, is whether Ukraine succeeds in developing a national concept acceptable to all its citizens and whether it will be able to reform its economy successfully.

Russian Minorities in the Former Soviet Union

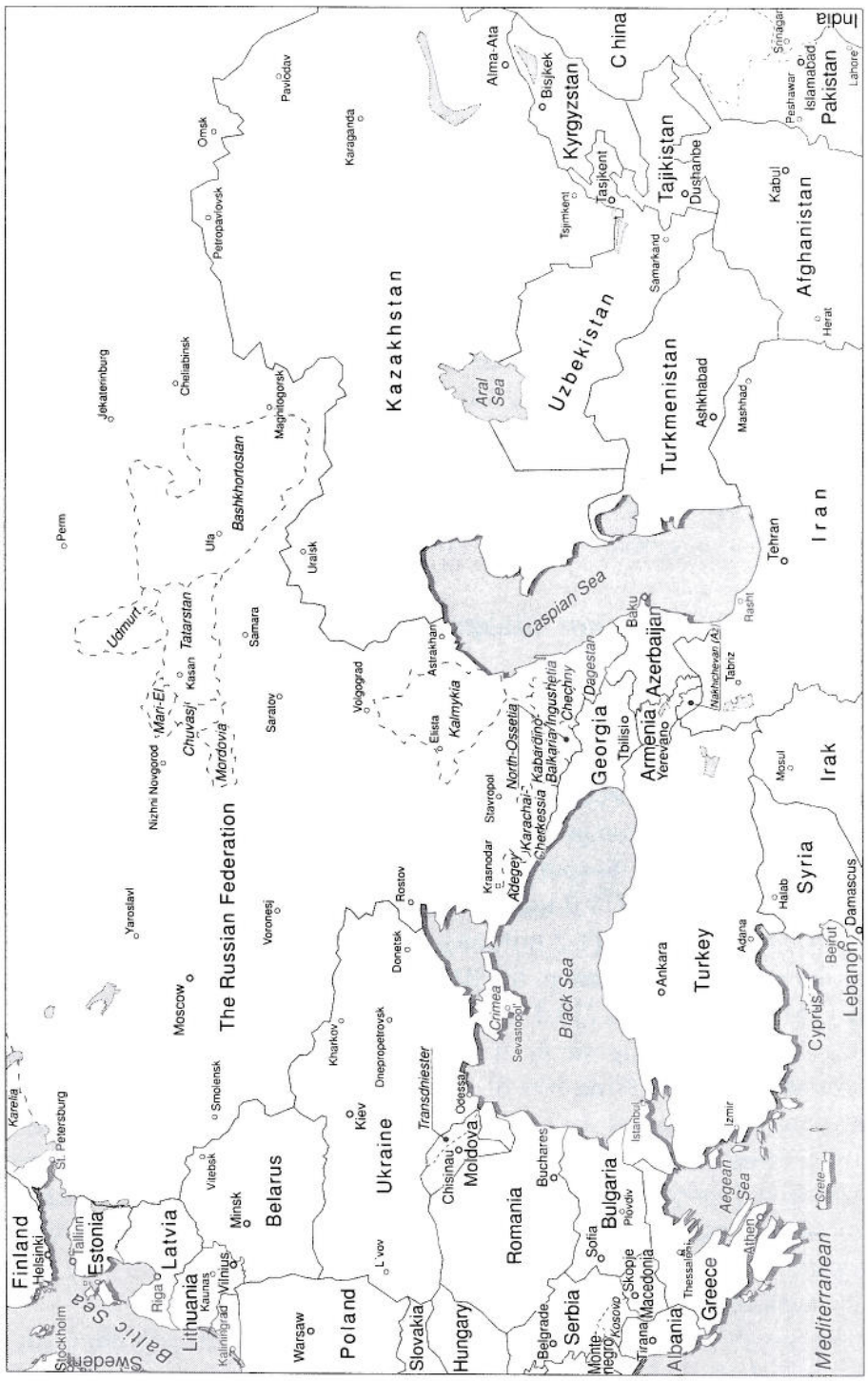
The problem of Russian minorities in the former Soviet Union is threefold: they present problems for (1) Russian foreign policy, inevitably enmeshed in internal political struggle; (2) the 14 newly independent states, of varying intensity and scale; and (3) the minorities themselves. These dimensions are tightly interdependent. The escalation of a conflict involving Russians in any part of the former USSR will immediately influence political developments in other states and regions – and in Moscow.

The Russian Diaspora and Its History

According to estimates based on the 1989 census, there were approximately 25 million Russians (17% of all ethnic Russians) living outside the Russian Federation. To this figure it is in many contexts reasonable to add the many millions of 'Russian-speakers', that is, people of other nationalities who call Russian their native language. Russians are living in all 14 newly independent states (the 'external' diaspora will not be discussed here), with the biggest communities in Ukraine (11.4 million), Kazakhstan (6.3 million), Uzbekistan (1.6 million) and Belarus (1.2 million). As percentages of the total population in their states of residence, the Russian groups in Kazakhstan (37.8%), Latvia (34%) and Estonia (30.3%) are the largest.

Russians began to migrate from their core areas in the north towards the southern and western peripheries of the Russian Empire as early as the 17th century, but only towards the end of the tsarist period did these movements gain momentum. We can distinguish between two kinds of Russian migration: traditional (or premodern) migration, meaning Russian peasants searching for land to till; and modern migration, meaning workers and technical intelligentsia attracted by jobs in the burgeoning industries in the non-Russian regions of the empire.

In the Soviet period the second, modern type of Russian migration completely overshadowed the former. Russians played a pivotal role in the



Russia and the 14 former Soviet Republics

shock-industrialization of the non-Russian regions after 1930. The only major rural–rural migration after 1917 was a result of Khrushchev's campaign for the development of virgin lands in Kazakhstan. The Russians were modernized and urbanized earlier than most other ethnic groups in Russia, with higher social and geographic mobility as a result. Also, until the 1960s they had high birth-rates and therefore a population surplus to export.

By the early 1970s, however, large-scale emigration from Russia had practically stopped, primarily as a result of falling birth-rates among Russians. So even the newest Russian communities in the 'near abroad' are now some 30 to 40 years old. Beginning in the late 1970s, a remigration of Russians to Russia could be registered in certain areas, first from the Caucasus, then from Central Asia, but not from the Baltics or the Slavic states.

Who is a Russian? In the Communist period, every Soviet citizen was ascribed an 'official nationality' which was written into his or her passport. Each new generation automatically inherited the nationality of their parents (children of ethnically mixed marriages could choose nationality at the age of 16). Russified minorities, for instance non-practising Jews speaking Russian only, were stuck with their ascribed nationality. True, in the censuses conducted every decade, the citizens were allowed to tick off any nationality, but for most people the choice was strongly influenced by what was written in their passport.

Since the basic trend in the ethnic processes in the Soviet Union was towards assimilation into the Russian group, great numbers of people, probably millions, regarded themselves as Russian without being registered as such. The exact size of this 'russophone' group today is impossible to establish. However, with regard to most areas in the Baltics, Caucasia and Central Asia, it is probably fair to say that the majority of the Ukrainians, Belarusians, Tatars, Jews and Poles belong to this group, in addition to many smaller nationalities.

At the same time, the habits, mores and local dialects of the Russian communities outside Russia were clearly influenced by the culture and lifestyle of the ethnic groups with whom they came into close contact. As the Russian diaspora communities became increasingly settled and stable, the cultural distance between them and the Russian core group in Russia increased. Also, the Russian communities in each of the 14 non-Russian Soviet successor states acquired their own particular qualities, setting them off from each other and reflecting the specific social, cultural and demographic conditions in the societies in which they were living.

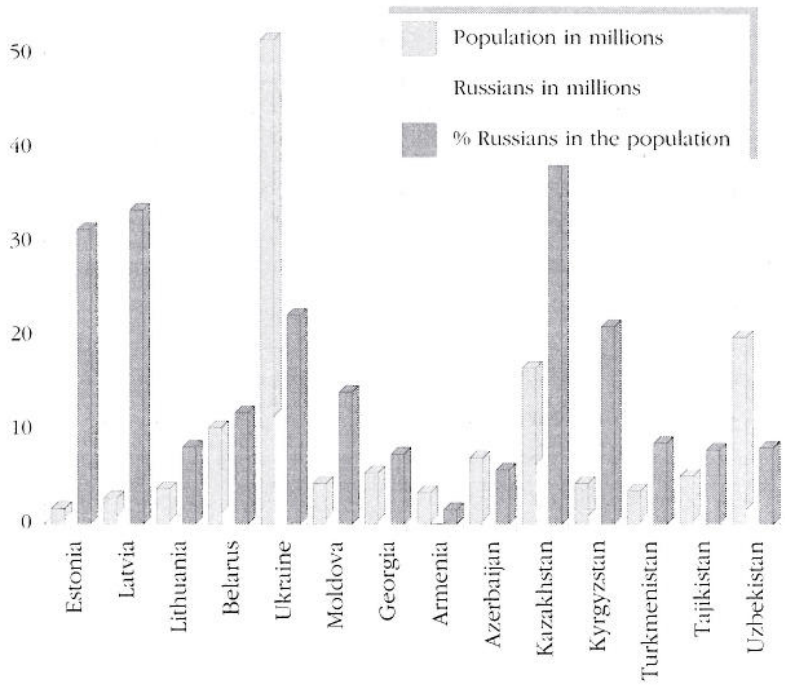
Russians in 14 Newly Independent States

Belarus (1,200,000 ethnic Russians in 1989 – 13.2% of the population) has so far remained free of ethnic tensions. The Russian population is distributed fairly evenly and is mostly urban. There is even some increase in the number of ethnic Russians because of immigration – mainly not from Russia, but other former Soviet republics. Belarusian culture and society is heavily Russified. Most Belarusians prefer to use Russian rather than their 'mother tongue' for everyday conversation, and in May 1995 a clear majority of the Belarusian population voted in favour of greater integration with Russia. To be a Russian in Minsk, then, is for all practical purposes no different than being a Russian in Russia.

Ukraine (11,400,000 ethnic Russian in 1989 – 22.1% of the population) is sharply divided internally by the 'Russian' factor. The eastern parts of the country and most of the south have a strong predominance of Russian-speakers, while the western regions are the stronghold of Ukrainian culture and society. 'The Russian factor', therefore, is in a sense more territorial than ethnic.

In political terms, Crimea has presented the trickiest problem. Here Russians constitute up to 70% of the population, and practically all of the Ukrainians on the peninsula (25%) are Russian speakers. The Ukrainian government has agreed to accept special status for the Crimean republic, but has raised objections concerning the provisions of the Crimean constitution introduced after the landslide victory of pro-Russian candidate Yury Meshkov in the presidential elections of January 1994. A catalyst to the confrontation could be the issue of the Black Sea Fleet, which remains extremely sensitive despite several preliminary agreements reached at Russian–Ukrainian summits in 1993–94.

The strike in the coal mines of the Donbass in June 1993 brought another cultural–regional problem to the surface. Although Russians make up only 35–40% of the population in eastern Ukraine, another 20% are Russified Ukrainians who use Russian as their mother tongue. A similar problem can be found in traditionally multi-ethnic Odessa oblast (more than 25% are Russians). In the Ukrainian presidential election of July 1994, Russians gave strong support to Leonid Kuchma and secured his victory over former president Kravchuk, who had most of his support in the nationalist-oriented western Ukraine. Since his election, however, Kuchma has moved closer to the ukrainophone position, pursuing a determined, albeit soft-pedalling, Ukrainification of the school system and official state ideology.



Moldova (550,000 ethnic Russians in 1989 – 13.0% of the population) is the only state where a Russian community has been directly involved in a violent conflict. In the territory to the east of the river Dniester, 200,000 Russians constitute 23% of the population, Ukrainians another 25% and Moldovans up to 40%. The local Russians in Dniestria were very active in the drive for separatism, which in 1992 resulted in bloody confrontations. The peace-making operation initiated by Russia in August 1992 has resulted in freezing the status quo and actually backed the secession. The self-proclaimed Dniester Republic relies for protection not so much on the peace-keeping forces or several hundreds of Cossacks, but on Russia's 14th Army, which is gradually becoming indigenous (its current strength is estimated at 6,000). Moldova continues to insist on withdrawal of these troops and on restoration of its territorial integrity.

Transcaucasia never was an area of intensive immigration; the Russian population there is concentrated mainly in the industrial centres. The numbers of Ukrainians and Belarusians are insignificant. The escalation of several military conflicts in the area, while not involving the Russians directly, has nevertheless caused massive emigration of Russians, mainly to the

Krasnodar, Stavropol and Rostov regions. Net migration to these three regions is estimated as 130,000 in 1992 and 140,000 in 1993.

Armenia (fewer than 50,000 ethnic Russians in 1989 – 1.5% of the population) has the smallest Russian community of all the former Soviet republics. This group has further shrunk because of repatriation forced by escalation of the conflict with Azerbaijan, and by economic dislocation.

In *Azerbaijan* (400,000 ethnic Russians in 1989 – 5.6% of the population), the Russian community was involved mainly in the oil industry and in manufacturing. The massive repatriation of Russians, started after the Soviet military assault on Baku in January 1990, is continuing because of high political instability in the country. One of the concerns for Russia is Azerbaijan's open border with Iran.

In *Georgia* (400,000 ethnic Russians in 1989 – 7.4% of the population), the Russian community was involved in heavy industries (especially mining and metallurgy) and in tourism. The civil war in Georgia directly involves the Ossetians and the Abkhazians, who have strong ties with the peoples of the North Caucasus. In late 1992, ethnic Russians were evacuated from Abkhazia, but several hundred Russian volunteers arrived there to fight against Georgian troops. The Russian–Georgian Treaty signed in February 1994 and the Russian peace-keeping operation in Abkhazia launched in June 1994 may have created a functioning framework, but they are by no means a solution to Georgia's problems.

Kazakhstan (6,300,000 ethnic Russians in 1989 – 37.8% of the population) is the only newly independent state where the titular nationality – Kazakhs – are a minority (39.7%). The russophones constitute a clear majority in the northern *oblasts* (from 40% to 80% of the population). This situation dictates a very cautious national policy for the government, which must constantly keep in mind the nationalistic riots in the capital Alma-Ata in December 1986. President Nazarbayev is strongly opposed to any ethnic separatism and thus also dual citizenship. However, in January 1995 he agreed to a system of simplified procedures for change of citizenship for persons moving to or from Russia.

Nazarbayev has also spared no efforts to increase bilateral ties with Russia (though he has often reacted negatively to Moscow's demands for protection of Russians in the 'near abroad') and remains an ardent advocate of transforming the CIS into a more integrated Euro-Asian Community.

The Kazakhstani state concept envisions the establishment of a supra-ethnic, civic nation-state in which all ethnic groups have equal rights. A

persistent Kazakhification of culture, politics and administration is nevertheless taking place, locally and centrally.

Central Asia has a Russian population which is mainly urban, involved in industrialization of the area (mostly as engineers) and to a certain degree in administrative business. The increasing repatriation of Russians is linked not only to violent conflicts but also to the general indigenization of politics, society and culture in most of these states. Much of the re-migration is also economically motivated. In the sagging Central Asian economies, many industrial plants are more or less standing idle, while their well-qualified Russian workers have skills enabling them to compete for jobs in Russia and elsewhere.

Kyrgyzstan (900,000 ethnic Russians in 1989 – 21.5% of the population) is currently enjoying relatively stable national relations, except for some tensions with Uzbekistan. In 1992–93, Russian emigration from Kyrgyzstan was almost at the same level as that from the rest of Central Asia, about 5% a year. In 1994–95, however, President Akayev introduced a number of apparently effective measures to induce the Russians to stay. Also, some who had already left have returned, often explaining that they felt less 'at home' among Russians in Russia then in Central Asia, where they had grown up. Akayev's flexible national policy (though not going as far as to allow dual citizenship) was a major reason for the strong vote of confidence given in the referendum of January 1994.

Tajikistan (400,000 ethnic Russians in 1989 – 7.6% of the population) has lost nearly all of its Russian community because of emigration forced by the ongoing civil war. Russia openly supports the present government by military force and is trying to seal off the border with Afghanistan, but the sustainability of these efforts remains questionable.

In *Turkmenistan* (350,000 ethnic Russians in 1989 – 9.5% of the population), special efforts have been made to keep the Russian population, which is involved in the crucially important gas industry, providing a relatively high level of income. The Turkmen government even agreed in December 1993 to allow dual citizenship – a solution strongly favoured by Moscow. At the same time, gradual Islamization of the society and the rise of nationalism are factors stimulating the emigration of ethnic Russians.

In *Uzbekistan* (1,600,000 ethnic Russians in 1989 – 8.3% of the population), the large Russian community is involved mainly in various industries as well as in administration and services. The relatively high level of political stability so far has prevented massive Russian emigration, but the authoritarian character of the present regime, economic problems and a sense of

marginalization in an increasingly 'Uzbekified' society have served to increase the incentives for repatriation. According to current estimates, by 1997 up to 40–45% of the ethnic Russians will have left the country.

The Baltic countries received several hundred thousand Russian migrants after World War II; the inflow continued into the late 1980s, leading to steady growth in the Russian communities. Russians, together with considerable communities of Ukrainians and Belarusians, constitute a majority of the industrial labour force. After the three Baltic republics gained independence, tensions in inter-ethnic relations started to grow. Contrary to earlier promises, people who had migrated to Estonia and Latvia in the postwar period were denied automatic citizenship after independence and had to pass stringent language tests and meet other requirements. Naturalization of Russians and other russophones in these states is proceeding very slowly, while the number who prefer Russian citizenship is growing (about 100,000 in Estonia in 1996).

The years 1993 and 1994 saw considerable movement of Russians from the Baltics, in the range of 100,000–200,000. However, only a small migration was registered by 1996. Most Russians prefer to stay in the Baltic countries despite the pressure which is put on them, primarily thanks to the higher living standards and greater social security.

In *Estonia* (500,000 ethnic Russians in 1989 – 30.3% of the population; Ukrainians, 3.1%; Belarusians, 1.8%), ethnic problems are aggravated by the high concentration of the non-Estonian population in the north-eastern industrial regions of Narva and Kohtla-Järve. Under Estonian law, the majority of this population are deprived of citizenship; for example, of Narva's 85,000 inhabitants, fewer than 6,000 are Estonian citizens. The promulgation of the Law on Aliens by the Estonian Parliament in June 1993 – which did not guarantee the non-citizens permanent residence rights – provoked harsh reaction from Russia, and an escalation of tensions. A referendum on autonomy was held in Narva and Sillamäe, but failed to produce convincing results. Amendments to this law and some other balanced steps by the Estonian government have helped to defuse the crisis, but the conflict potential remains high.

In *Latvia* (900,000 ethnic Russians in 1989 – 33.8% of the population; Belarusians, 4.5%; Ukrainians, 3.4%), the ethnic problem, however difficult, is not linked to territorial claims or disputes. Actually, the highest concentration of non-Latvians is in the capital, Riga, so that the tensions are often politically visible. At the same time, Latvia has had the largest accumulation of Russian troops on its territory; negotiations on their status were bitter, but

resulted in an agreement according to which withdrawal was completed by 31 August 1994.

In *Lithuania* (300,000 ethnic Russians in 1989 – 9.4% of the population; Belarusians, 1.8%; Ukrainians, 1.3%), the relatively simple procedures for acquiring citizenship have contributed to relaxation of ethnic tensions. Accordingly, the question of Russian troop withdrawal was eventually resolved in August 1993, although without formal agreement. Potentially more difficult for Lithuania is the problem of ethnic Poles (7.0% of the population), as this is linked to a territorial dispute which involves even the capital, Vilnius. The highest concentration of Russian population is in the shipbuilding centre Klaipeda and at the Ignalina nuclear power plant.

Implications for Russia's Foreign Policy

Throughout most of 1992, Russia's foreign policy operated with a liberal concept of human rights promotion and protection of national minorities in general. However, the escalation of the conflict in Moldova and the aggravation of ethnic tensions in the Baltic states made this 'Westernized' approach vulnerable to criticism from various 'patriotic' forces that had found support in the Supreme Soviet.

Recognizing this vulnerability, President Yeltsin in October 1992 berated the Foreign Ministry for a lack of well-defined policy for defending the rights of Russians in the 'near abroad'. The first attempt to introduce such a policy was the document 'The Guidelines of the Foreign Policy of the Russian Federation', developed by the Security Council and endorsed by Yeltsin in early May 1993. It adopted a far-reaching approach according to which Russian minorities should be considered not only as a priority problem, but also as an important asset for Russia's foreign policy. Trying to minimize the deviation from international standards, the Security Council insisted that the emphasis should be placed on political means.

The Russian citizenship law allows all former Soviet citizens who feel ethnically or emotionally attached to Russia to apply for Russian citizenship. Under international law, a state has a right to protect its citizens abroad, and Russian authorities have on numerous occasions insisted that they will indeed defend the rights of Russians in the former Soviet Union. However, only a limited number of them have so far taken Russian citizenship. Such a step would in most cases mean forfeiting citizenship in their country of residence and the benefits which go with that. But Russia usually does not distinguish sharply between citizens of Russia and other members of the

russophone communities abroad. They are all referred to as '*sootechestvenniki*' ('fellow countrymen').

As the internal political situation in Russia worsened in late 1993, leading politicians started to advocate an even more offensive approach to the issue of the Russian diaspora. Loud speculations on this problem contributed substantially to the success of the ultra-nationalist Vladimir Zhirinovsky in the parliamentary elections of December 1993. Seeking to recapture the initiative, the political leadership has further rigidified its rhetoric; two good illustrations are Yeltsin's 1994 New Year's Address and Foreign Minister Kozyrev's speech to the Russian ambassadors (18 January 1994), which provoked negative international reaction.

Another influential force is the Russian military leadership, which has been trying to champion the rights of Russians and 'those identifying ethnically and culturally with Russia'. The first draft of the Military Doctrine released in May 1992 identified violation of these rights as a serious *casus belli*. The Ministry of Defence used these arguments to justify several peacekeeping operations, especially the one in Moldova, and also tried to establish a linkage between the withdrawal of Russian troops from the Baltic states and protection of the rights of Russian-speaking minorities there. The Military Doctrine of the Russian Federation, approved by Yeltsin's decree on 2 November 1993, carefully limits threat perceptions to 'the suppression of the rights, freedoms and legitimate interests of citizens of the Russian Federation in foreign states'. But a new emphasis on the use of the armed forces in conflicts 'in the direct proximity of the Russian borders', especially if they involve 'attacks on military facilities' belonging to Russia, clearly indicates a readiness to employ military strength against the forces described as 'aggressive nationalism and religious intolerance'.

The issue of the Russian minorities is an important element of demands to the UN (including Yeltsin's address to the General Assembly in October 1994) and the OSCE (started at the ministerial meeting in December 1993 and renewed at the Budapest Summit in December 1994) to grant 'special security responsibilities' for Russia in the whole geopolitical space of the former USSR. At the same time, Russia's ability to shoulder these responsibilities remains questionable. When Russia was admitted to the Council of Europe in February 1996, this provided the country with an additional rostrum from which to express concern for the plight of the Russian minorities abroad.

As to solutions, all of the conflicts involved allow three basic alternatives: migration, border revisions, diplomatic settlement.

(1) *Migration*. Migration figures for the post-Soviet space are extremely unreliable. Official figures include only those migrants and refugees who register with the authorities, and are usually very much on the low side. Unofficial estimates of international observers, on the other hand, are sometimes clearly exaggerated. Figures drawn from different sources, therefore, cannot be compared with each other.

Normal migration in the former USSR in general and the repatriation of ethnic Russians in particular are hampered by economic dislocation and fears of rising unemployment. In Russia, the positive balance of migration remained at the moderate level of 80,000–100,000 in 1993 and 1994, since most families considering migrating have been inclined to stay until the escalation of conflicts or other factors finally force them to seek refuge in Russia. According to official data, some 350,000 refugees had arrived in Russia by the end of 1992, but only about 30% of them were ethnic Russians. The incomplete estimates for 1993 raised the total figure to more than 500,000, and it remained at this level until autumn 1994. The crisis in Chechnya produced some 350,000 internal refugees, according to preliminary figures. The Federal Migration Service is preparing contingency plans to deal with streams of refugees numbering 800,000 to 6,000,000 during the next few years. It is symptomatic that even radical nationalists in the new Russian Parliament have been paying very little attention to the protection of ethnic Russians in Central Asia, since their exodus is considered unavoidable.

(2) *Border Revisions*. The relevance of this option was first stressed in a statement by Yeltsin's press secretary on 26 August 1991 (one week after the abortive coup in Moscow). Demands for border revisions can hardly be made on historical grounds (since the borders of all new independent states have no historical parallel), but rest mainly on the basis of three factors: the compactness of the Russian populations, their proximity to the territory of the Russian Federation, and the express will of these groups. Three cases could meet these criteria: eastern Estonia, northern Kazakhstan and – with some reservations – eastern Ukraine. In two cases that fail the test of contiguity – Transdniestria and Crimea – demands for border revisions are strengthened by certain historical and legal circumstances. For instance, the Russian Supreme Soviet declared in May 1992 that the transfer of Crimea to Ukraine in 1954 had been unconstitutional. However, the Russian executive branch has been much more cautious on this and other territorial issues than has the Russian legislature, and clearly prefers diplomatic solutions.

(3) *Diplomacy*. Bilateral negotiations and involvement of international organizations are the most appropriate instruments for ensuring the rights of Russian minorities at minimum cost. So far, Russia had relied mostly on bilateral diplomacy, most successfully with Kazakhstan. In several cases (such as Transdniestria), Russia is even trying to prevent international organizations from playing any role except legitimizing Russia's 'special responsibilities'. Consistent efforts to turn to international organizations and partners were made only for the case of Russian minorities in the Baltic states. These efforts met with limited success, since various commissions provided reports that the three Baltic republics were in fact complying with human rights standards. Russia's attempt to block the Estonian application to the Council of Europe also failed.

Conflict Potential

As the problem of Russian minorities is becoming a top-priority issue for Russia's foreign policy, the possibility of escalation of related conflicts is increasing accordingly. Currently, three trouble spots with major conflict potential can be identified: Transdniestria, Crimea and Estonia.

The importance of Transdniestria in this context arises not so much from the possibility of a new outbreak of violence (which is not likely), but from the precedent of de facto revision of European borders through a peacekeeping operation. If such secession were to become a recognized (at least by Russia) fact of life, it could lead to the disappearance of Moldova as an independent state. Here it should also be mentioned that militant nationalists in Transdniestria have established a well-developed network of contacts with other nationalist groups in Russia.

Ethnic tensions in eastern Estonia had the potential to develop into a territorial conflict, as Estonia presented counterclaims on some Russian territories which belonged to Estonia in the interwar period. However, in late 1996, Estonia dropped these claims, and the vitriolic Estonian–Russian crisis seemed to be slowly edging towards a diplomatic solution.

The ineffectiveness of multilateral diplomacy is increasing the incentive for Russia to rely more on power instruments. The Estonian government possesses substantial space for political manoeuvres to defuse the crisis, and some pragmatic steps have already been taken, but the strong vote from the Russians living in Estonia in the December 1993 elections indicates that a solution is yet to be found.

The Crimean problem lies at the core of the strained relations between Russia and Ukraine. The permanently unstable political situation in Crimea after clashes between the president and the parliament in autumn 1994 allowed Russia to fish for a while in troubled waters. However, the outbreak of the Chechen War in December the same year reminded Russian authorities that preservation of territorial integrity is a top priority for all Soviet successor states, including Russia. When the local Russians in Crimea began to fight among themselves, Kiev in April 1995 was able to annul the separatist Crimean constitution. Although the Crimean knot has still not been completely untied, the chances that it will lead to a violent or international conflict seem as remote as ever.

Minorities and Separatism in the Russian Federation

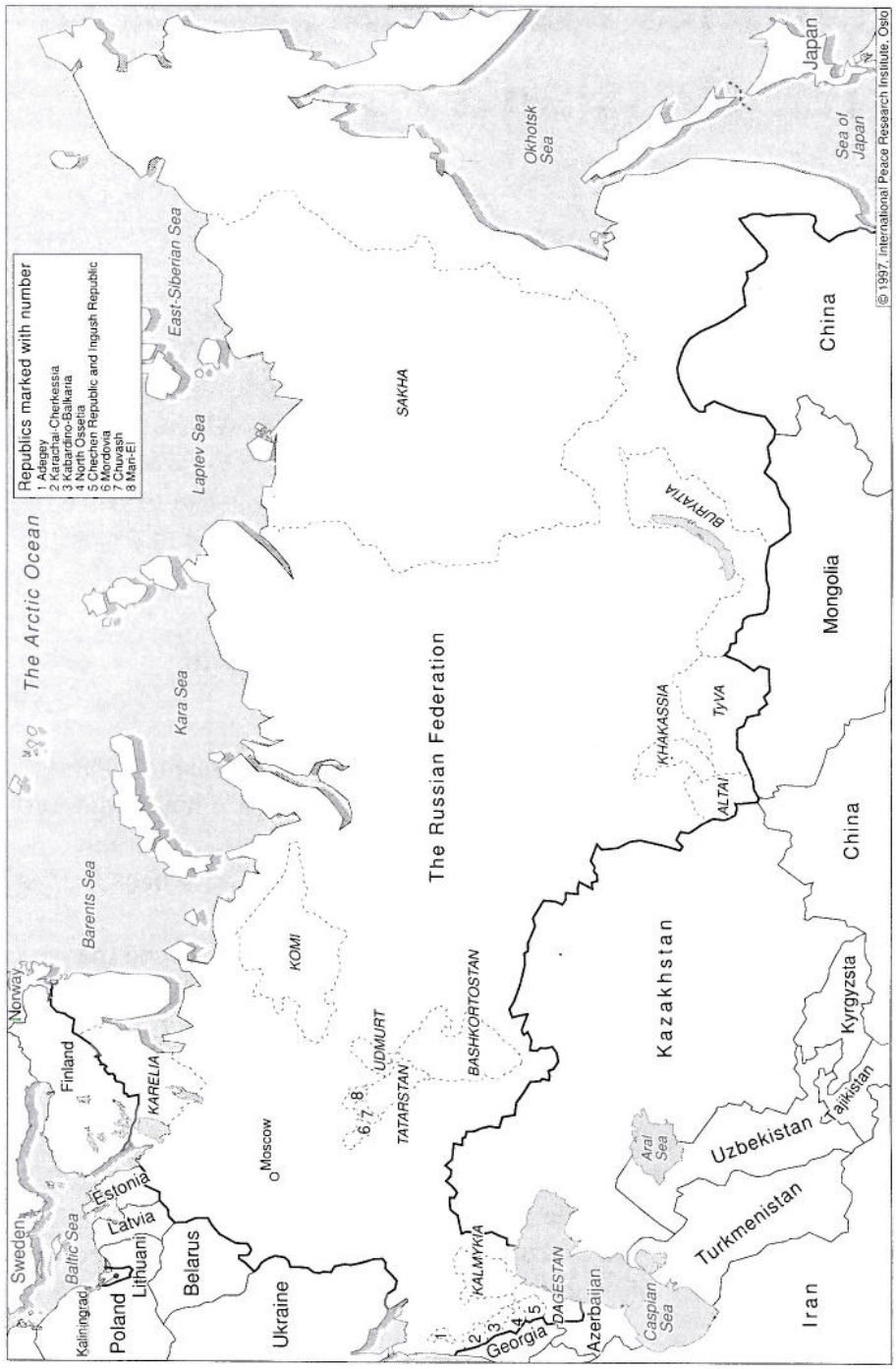
The disintegration process that shattered the Soviet Empire in the late 1980s has threatened to spill over into the Russian Federation itself. The unity of the new federation is fragile, largely because ethnic tensions and regionalization processes are parallel trends which strengthen each other. As the central authorities have proved themselves largely unable to fill the power vacuum left by the Communist Party, national conflicts have been left unchecked. The protracted war in Chechnya is but one of a series of challenges to the viability of Russia as a unified state.

Ethnic and Administrative Structure of the Russian Federation

According to the 1989 census, the total population of the Russian Federation was 147.0 million, of which 119.9 million (81.5%) were ethnic Russians. Among more than 60 ethnic groups numbering more than 5,000 people, the largest ones are the Tatars (3.8% of the total population), Ukrainians (3.0%) and Chuvash (1.2%).

The administrative structure of the Russian state has undergone several changes. In the Soviet period, the Russian Socialist Federate Soviet Republic (RSFSR) included 16 autonomous republics, 5 autonomous regions (*oblasti*) and 10 autonomous districts (*okruga*). In connection with the formal establishment of the Russian Federation, four autonomous oblasts (Adygey, Altai, Karachai-Cherkessia and Khakassia), along with the autonomous republics, were upgraded to republics. However, except for the subsequent division of Checheno-Ingushetia, no borders were redrawn. In addition to the ethnic autonomies, there are also 55 territorially defined regions (*oblasti, kraya* and two federal cities). Officially, although the Chechen Republic still has not signed the Federal Treaty, the federation comprises 89 units.

Altogether, the 21 republics recognized by the new constitution accounted for approximately 15.5% of the total population of the Russian Federation.



Autonomous republics in The Russian Federation

As to their ethnic composition, the republics vary greatly: In nine of them, Russians constitute more than half the population (68.0% in Adygey, 60.4% in Altai, 69.9% in Buryatia, 73.6% in Karelia, 79.5% in Khakassia, 57.7% in Komi, 60.8% in Mordovia, 58.9% in Udmurtia, and 50.3% in Sakha). In these republics, therefore, the national factor is of limited importance for the political processes, and the focus is mainly on maximizing the economic benefits of republican status.

In three other republics, Russians make up the single largest ethnic group – in Bashkortostan, ethnic Russians constitute 39.3%; in Karachai-Cherkessia, 42.4%; and in Mari-El, 47.5%. In the remaining nine republics – Chechnya, Chuvashia, Dagestan, Ingushetia, Kabardino-Balkaria, Kalmykia, North Ossetia, Tatarstan and Tyva – Russians are clearly in the minority, ranging from 43.3% of the population in Tatarstan to only 9.2% in Dagestan. Within this last group, nationalism is a dominant political factor – sometimes with an anti-Russian focus (as in Chechnya and Tyva), sometimes with an inter-ethnic focus (as seen in the growing tensions between various peoples of Dagestan, and in the Ingush–North Ossetian conflict).

Regionalization and National Problems

National problems differ substantially in character and intensity from region to region in the Russian Federation. Four broad areas with similar ethno-political processes can be identified: North Caucasus, Middle Volga, South Siberia, and the North and Far East.

North Caucasus is the most ethnically mixed and conflict-ridden area in the Russian Federation. Some 20 significant ethnic groups (comprising 5,000 people or more) consider the northern slopes of the Caucasus as their ethnic homeland. Today, these groups are spread throughout seven republics: Adygey, Chechnya, Dagestan, Ingushetia, Kabardino-Balkaria, Karachai-Cherkessia and North Ossetia. The majority of North Caucasian peoples are Sunni Muslims, and the Ossetians represent the only significant Orthodox Christian group. Ethnic Russians are a minority group in all but Adygey and Karachai-Cherkessia.

The area has a long historical record of ethnic tensions and anti-Russian resistance. The declaration of independence by the Chechen Republic in October 1991 is so far the only outright bid for independence, but there has been a noticeable growth in republican parochialism and tribalism. The complicated ethnic pattern may explain why more republics have not opted for independence. Inter-ethnic tension and power struggles between rival clans have diverted

the nationalist energy in the region. Ethnically based cleavages thus exist not only between the central government and the republics, but also at an intra-republican level. So far, only Checheno-Ingushetia has been split according to ethnic criteria, but several other groups, notably the Balkars, have been advocating further dismemberment of the North Caucasian republics.

The Yeltsin administration has enjoyed limited support in North Caucasus. For instance, in the constitutional referendum in December 1994, Dagestan, Karachai-Cherkessia and Adegey rejected the new constitution (only 20%, 28% and 39% respectively voted for it), while Chechnya boycotted the elections. This tendency has been confirmed in subsequent federal elections. Actually, North Ossetia is considered Russia's sole reliable ally in the region, largely because of two conflicts. The first one involves Georgia and South Ossetia. In July 1992, Russia initiated a peace-keeping operation, in effect assuming the responsibilities of peace guarantor while implicitly leaving open the possibility for closer integration and even unification of North and South Ossetia under Russian aegis. The second conflict involves North Ossetia and Ingushetia. After armed clashes between North Ossetia and Ingushetia in October 1992 over control over the Prigorodniy region, Russia had to deploy troops in the border area between the two republics to enforce cessation of violence. At present, the situation in both hot-spots is relatively stable, but viable solutions are nowhere in sight.

The most serious crisis in the region, however, erupted in the autumn of 1994, as Moscow intensified its attempts to overthrow President Dudayev's regime in Chechnya. This republic had enjoyed de facto independence since 1991 and had refused to sign the new Federal Treaty. The failure of clandestine intervention led to a massive Russian military invasion in December 1994 and a disastrous war that proved Moscow's inability to control developments in the region. After a series of humiliating defeats, the Russian authorities were forced to enter into negotiations with the separatists over the republic's future status. Depending on the outcome of the present negotiations, Russia's apparent inability to solve this conflict by force may serve as an incentive for an upsurge of secessionism.

In the Middle Volga area, we find a remarkable diversity of ethno-political processes spread over six republics: Tatarstan, Bashkortostan, Mordovia, Chuvashia, Mari-El and Udmurtia. (Kalmykia, located further south, can also be included in this group.)

Tatarstan (along with Chechnya, albeit in a less violent way) has been at the forefront of championing separatism among the republics of the Russian Federation. The Tatars, while constituting the largest ethnic minority within

the Russian Federation, still make up only slightly half of the population in Tatarstan. Partly because of the traditional Tatar migration pattern, and partly as a result of Stalin's minority policy, almost 70% of the Tatars currently reside outside the republic's borders.

Tatarstan's leaders refused to sign the Federal Treaty in March 1992, and a referendum the same month showed that more than 60% of the voters supported the idea of Tatarstani independence. In November 1992, a new republican constitution was introduced, defining Tatarstan as 'a sovereign state, a subject of international law, associated with the Russian Federation on the basis of a treaty of mutual delegation of power.' No such treaty existed at the time, and since the new Russian Constitution made no provisions for it, Tatarstan in fact boycotted the referendum (only 14% of the electorate voted).

Seeking compromise, Moscow in February 1994 agreed to sign the bilateral Treaty on Delimitation of Spheres of Authority and Mutual Delegation of Powers. Substantial pressure was brought to bear on Tatarstan to agree on the definition of its status as 'a state united with Russia'. Strong opposition to the power-sharing treaty manifested itself both in the Russian Duma and in such radical organizations in Tatarstan as Ittifak and the Tatar Public Centre (TOTs). Still, the treaty was ratified by both sides.

Although a signatory to the Federal Treaty, Bashkortostan followed Tatarstan closely, and voted against the new federal constitution in the December 1993 referendum. The development of Bashkir nationalism has been hampered by the titular group's numerical weakness (only 21.9% of the total population of the republic), being outnumbered by Russians (39.3%) and Tatars (28.4%). Still, the Bashkortostani parliament in 1994 adopted a new republican constitution which maintains the supremacy of republican laws and that relations with Russia – of which Bashkortostan forms a part on a voluntary basis – are defined by a bilateral treaty. A power-sharing treaty along the lines set out in the Tatarstani model was signed in August 1994. The signing of bilateral treaties led to a normalization of relations between Moscow and the two republics. This was confirmed during the 1996 presidential elections, when both Tatarstan's Minitmer Shaymiyev and Bashkortostan's Murtaza Rakhimov gave unconditional support to Yeltsin.

In the other Volga republics, economic, rather than national, problems dominate the political agenda. The guidelines for reform vary considerably. For example, in April 1993, a young billionaire named Kirsan Ilymzhinov was elected president of Kalmykia on a platform favouring authoritarian methods to instigate market reforms. Although Ilymzhinov's promises to make Kalmykia into a 'second Kuwait' have not been fulfilled, and the

republic's economy is in dire straits, Ilymzhinov was re-elected unopposed in the 1995 presidential elections.

The three republics of Mordovia, Chuvashia and Mari-El have all followed a more conservative course, with continued strong support for Communist forces. For instance, Gennady Zyuganov won the majority of votes in all three republics in the 1996 federal presidential elections. In both Mordovia and Chuvashia, reforms have suffered under a protracted strife between conservative parliaments and more reform-minded presidents. The last of the Volga republics, Udmurtia, with its important weapons industry and highly Russified population, has developed a more pro-centre attitude.

In South Siberia, Buryats and Tyvinians are leading the revival of nationalistic feelings among the smaller ethnic groups. Both peoples are Buddhist, although religion has played a lesser role than historic injustices and social tensions. Under Stalin, the traditional Buryat territory was dismembered through administrative reforms. As a result, today there exist three autonomous Buryat units within the Russian Federation: the Republic of Buryatia and the Agin-Buryat and Ust-Ordyn-Buryat autonomous districts. Some 60% of the Buryats live in the republic (where they constitute about 24% of the population), while an additional 20% live in the two autonomous districts.

Nationalist organizations such as the Buryat Mongolian People's Party have demanded a unification of all Buryat territories and advocated a revitalization of the historic ties to Mongolia. However, the radical nationalists enjoy little support, and none of the major parties have taken up their rhetoric.

In contrast, the leadership in neighbouring Tyva has been far more prone to exploit a nationalistic agenda. Tyva represents one of the most legally complicated cases in the Russian Federation. In 1921, a Tyvinian Soviet Congress proclaimed the independent People's Republic of Tyva (from 1926 called Tannu Tyva). Although under the strong political and economic influence of Moscow, the republic remained nominally independent up to World War II. In violation of both the Tyvinian and the Soviet Constitution, Tyva in 1944 was included in the USSR.

According to the 1989 census, 64.3% of the population are Tyvinians, and 32% are Russians. The proportion of ethnic Russians had started to decline already in the Brezhnev era, but the process of out-migration process was sped up by violent inter-ethnic clashes in the summer of 1990, in which more than 100 people were killed. Although measures were taken to prevent further escalation of tensions, some 10–15,000 people left Tyva in the following years.

Despite some popular support for the idea of independence, the Tyvinian parliament in September 1992 overwhelmingly rejected a proposal to hold a

referendum on the issue. Nevertheless, in 1993 Tyva adopted a republican constitution which maintains the right to secede from the federation. Today, however, the situation seems to have been stabilized and the danger of Tyvinian secession considerably reduced.

The peoples of the North and the Far East are faced with numerous social and economic problems, but nationalism is currently not a pivotal political factor in this vast area. The Republic of Sakha (formerly Yakutia) represents a special case. The Yakuts, the largest non-Russian group in this region, make up only 33.4% of Sakha's total population, while Russians, who constitute 50.3%, tend to dominate political life. While most other units in this region are poor and dependent on federal subsidies, Sakha is rich in diamonds and gold. The republic's desire for more autonomy therefore seems to be mainly economically motivated (opinion polls show that less than 20% of the population support secession).

In March 1992, the Russian government gave Sakha ownership rights to 20% of the diamonds and 11.5% of the gold mined in the republic. Later, certain additional privileges were provided, and in 1995 a power-sharing treaty was signed with the federal authorities. That was enough to secure Yeltsin 64.8% of the vote in the 1996 presidential elections. In Komi, which got its own power-sharing treaty in 1996, the population also gave unequivocal support to Yeltsin. (For further details, see the article on North-west Russia.)

Disintegration as a Political Challenge to the Russian Federation

The danger of internal disintegration is widely recognized as a serious challenge to Russia's survival as a federal state. Yeltsin's message to the republics in the summer of 1990 – that the republics could 'take as much sovereignty as they can swallow' – is now long since forgotten, and Russian leaders are sparing no efforts to curb separatist trends and bring the federal subjects into line.

After the dissolution of the USSR, the long-debated Federal Treaty became the key issue. It was settled in March 1992, transforming Russia into a treaty federation and dividing the authorities into three levels: republics, regions (*oblasti* and *kraya*) and autonomies (autonomous *oblasti* and *okruga*).

The Federal Treaty was intended to form a part of a new constitution. Accordingly, after his victory in the April 1993 referendum, Yeltsin introduced a draft constitution which contained an unambiguous offer of more generous power-sharing between the centre and the regions, in exchange for

their support in curtailing the Federal Parliament's power. This draft was approved by the Constitutional Assembly in July, but in September, Yeltsin's decree on dissolution of the Supreme Soviet met with strong opposition from the regions. However, Yeltsin's violent crushing of the parliamentary revolt in early October intimidated provincial leaders to the extent that Yeltsin decided that he no longer needed to make concessions. The final version of the Constitution approved at the December referendum therefore omitted several of the privileges that the republics had been promised in the earlier drafts.

Most significantly, the Federal Treaty was taken out of the text. The definition of republics as 'sovereign states' also disappeared, together with the provision for separate citizenship in the republics. While the Federal Treaty, as well as earlier drafts of the new constitution, had underlined the asymmetrical character of Russian federalism with differentiated powers and responsibilities for the different categories of federal subjects, in the final version a clear point was made that all members of the federation were 'equal in their relations with the federal agencies of state power'.

The introduction of a more symmetrical concept of federalism was a result of the so-called revolt of the regions in the summer of 1993. The leaders of the 55 territorially defined units had been highly dissatisfied with the economic inequality inherent in the Federal Treaty, since their tax burden was substantially higher than that of the republics. In protest, several regions in 1993 proclaimed themselves republics. This persuaded Yeltsin to agree to give equal status to all federal units in the new constitution, which inevitably caused a storm of protest from the republican leaders. Tatarstan, Bashkortostan, Tyva and other republics claimed they were being discriminated against and blamed the centre for underestimating the ethnic factor.

It was not, however, only the republics that were dissatisfied with the new Russian Constitution and its inherent tendency towards re-centralization. A number of regional leaders also expressed their discontent with the lack of decentralization of power. Apart from falling into line with a long tradition of centralized government in Russia, the centre's reluctance to devolve power may be explained by the lack of democratization and reform in many regions. The old nomenklatura often remained in power, and in most cases the former first secretary of the Communist Party simply assumed the role of governor or president after the dissolution of Communist Party.

The single-candidate presidential elections in Kalmykia in 1995 and in Tatarstan in 1996 are signs of an increasingly authoritarian line in many republics. The federal parliamentary elections (1993 and 1995) and presiden-

tial elections (1996) also revealed a clear north–south divide within the Russian Federation, with the southern parts consistently being far more prone to support Communist forces. Thus, the centre–periphery dimension in Russian politics is complicated by a cross-cutting cleavage between north and south.

Formally, the new constitution strengthened the centre at the expense of the republics, but as the economic crisis deepened, this unitary approach looked less and less convincing. Constant shortfalls in tax revenues have undermined the centre's redistributive role. In many cases, the central authorities have simply proved unable to meet their obligations, prompting local authorities to improvise and assume greater responsibility for local development. This has resulted in an ad hoc decentralization and increasing regional differences with respect to wealth and living conditions.

Engaging the Challenge

Despite the pivotal importance of preserving the integrity of the state, Russian authorities have been slow to develop a consistent policy on regional and national questions. Yeltsin's decree 'On the Basic Provisions for the Russian Federation's Regional Policy' was not adopted until June 1996, and was followed up later in the same month by a decree 'On the Russian Federation's Conception of a State National Policy'. The latter document does not, however, provide clear guidelines for ethnic conflict management. Even today, after more than five years of independence, the central authorities continue to rely mostly on ad hoc decisions that inevitably create undesirable patterns and precedents.

Except for the disastrous war in Chechnya (December 1994-August 1996), the Russian government seems to have opted for a remarkably cautious approach to separatist movements in the republics. In general, it has avoided outright confrontations while trying to buy conformity with political and economic concessions. In a paradoxical way, Russia has actually seemed more inclined to rely on force outside its borders (as in Moldova and Tajikistan) than when dealing with rebellious republics within the federation. In its relations with the federal units, Moscow has relied primarily on economic dependence, assuming that the 'sovereignty euphoria' would gradually fade away by itself, as has happened in several of the newly independent states. As Belarus, Kazakhstan and others were trying to restore their cooperative ties with Russia and even to build some degree of political confederation, Moscow expected Tatarstan, Bashkortostan, Tyva and others to recon-

sider their secessionist incentives. In a situation where only about a dozen of the federal units are net-contributors to the federal budget, and the majority of the ethnically defined units rely heavily on transfers from the centre, a policy relying on the carrot rather than the stick seems to give results.

Another explanation for Moscow's self-restraint is the present state of the armed forces. The rapid reduction and disintegration of the military forces following the breakup of the Soviet Union lead to a situation where the forces became overstretched and unable to perform new open-ended interventions. This was clearly witnessed when the continued political crisis in Chechnya drove the policy-makers to a more forcible course. The military intervention against Chechnya – formally legitimized as the 'last resort' in restoring the territorial integrity of the Russian Federation – revealed that the federal forces were unable to establish control over the breakaway republic. Far from being effective in curbing centrifugal forces, the military intervention pushed the potential separatists to coordinate their activities more closely and to insist on guarantees against any possible use of military force in conflicts between the centre and the regions.

The non-violent means available to Moscow may, however, also become less efficient in the future. With the centre having trouble collecting the necessary revenue to fulfil its financial obligations towards the regions, the reliability of the traditional economic ties is rapidly diminishing. Deepening economic crisis and mounting social tensions can create fertile ground for a new round of struggle for redistribution of power.

Even if many republics would prefer, in the future, to have some type of 'soft' confederational ties with Moscow short of formal independence, this is envisaged as an arrangement very different from the rigid centralized structure according to the Federal Constitution. In addition, many republics and regions that are either rich in natural resources or involved in profitable international cooperation assume that they would be much better off without the increasing burden of taxation imposed by Moscow.

Lastly, economic rationale is often poor security against an ethnic nationalism which follows its own logic. Even if some republics in the North Caucasus or elsewhere should achieve de facto independence, this would hardly trigger a chain-reaction threatening the territorial integrity of the Russian Federation as such.

The main trend would be rather towards further loosening of central control. While Russia would seem to have reasonably good chances of withstanding the centrifugal impulses of the current crisis, it also seems ill-prepared for a possible new round of escalation of ethnic tensions and republican separatism.

Minorities in North-west Russia

Ethnic problems in North-west Russia should be considered part of the more general problem of survival of the native peoples of the Russian Far North. Limiting the geographical scope of this article to the North-west, that is, to the European part of the Far North, may seem somewhat artificial. For instance, the area populated by the Nenets people is divided by the Ural Mountains, with only some 20% of the Nenets living in the European part. Developments related to the Barents Initiative, which, after the recent inclusion of the Nenets Autonomous District, includes all of North-west Russia except the Komi Republic (i.e., the Karelian Republic and Murmansk and Arkhangelsk oblasts as well as the Nenets Autonomous District), still provide justification for particular focus on the national problems in this region.

Ethnic Patchwork and Administrative Borders

There are six main groups of native peoples in North-west Russia. The Komi live mostly in the Komi Republic and the Komi-Permyak Autonomous District, with a total population of 484,000 (the Komi-Permyaks, who number 147,000, are sometimes considered a separate ethnic group). The Nenets, totalling 34,000, are spread over the Nenets Autonomous District as well as the Siberian Yamal-Nenets and Dolgano-Nenets Autonomous Districts. The Finns, numbering 47,000, now live rather dispersed throughout the Russian Federation, while the Karelians, about half of whom live in the Karelian Republic, number 125,000. The Veps, who also live in the Karelian Republic, total 12,000. Finally, the Saami, who inhabit the Murmansk Oblast, number 1,900. (These data are based on the 1989 census.)

Three of the five federal units included in the analysis are ethnically defined and, as such, established with the goal of protecting the ethnic identity of the titular nations (the Komi and Karelian republics and the Nenets Autonomous District). In none of the units, however, does the titular

North-west Russia

nation constitute a majority of the population. The Komi hold the strongest position vis-à-vis the other groups, making up 23.5% of the population in their republic (down by 6.5 percentage points since 1959). Still, an absolute majority of the republic's 1,250,000 inhabitants are ethnic Russians (57.5% in 1989).

The ethnic composition of the Karelian Republic, with a population of 790,000, is more complex: 74% are ethnic Russians (up 10 percentage points since 1959), 10% Karelians, 7% Belarusians, 3.5% Ukrainians, 2.5% Finns and Ingrians, and 1% Veps. Thus, the four Finno-Ugric groups, taken together, do not constitute more than 13.5% of the total population.

In the Nenets Autonomous District, one finds the same tendency to ethnic dominance by the Russians. Of a total population of some 55,000 people, the Nenets make up only 12%, while the Russians constitute 66%. In addition, 9% of the population are Komi and 7% Ukrainian.

Not surprisingly, in the two remaining units, both territorially defined, the Russian dominance is even greater. Ethnic Russians make up more than 90% of the population in Arkhangelsk, and more than 80% in Murmansk. The traditional Saami minority on the Kola Peninsula make up only 0.1% of the population of Murmansk Oblast. The ethnic composition of the federal units of North-west Russia thus makes effective protection of the northern minorities complicated.

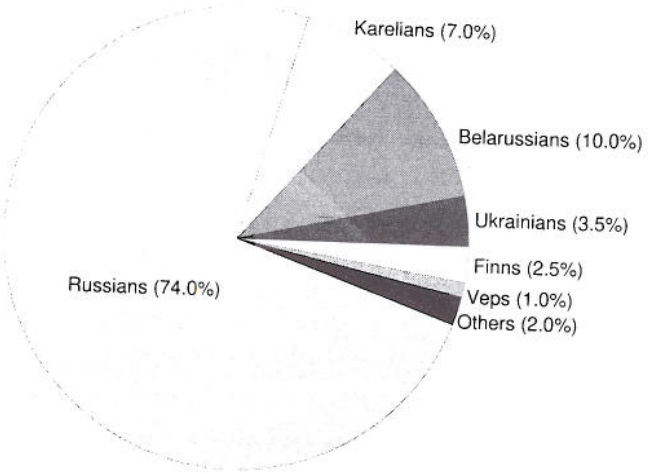
The complexity of ethnic problems in the Russian part of the Barents region is also related to the differences in the character of the indigenous peoples: the Nenets and the Saami are by their cultural background reindeer-herders, while the Komi, Karelians and Veps were traditionally hunters and farmers. The Finns again represent a separate case, as they are just an isolated part of a neighbouring nation.

Administrative borders in this area, as in the Russian Federation in general, have very little in common with ethnic boundaries, and have been determined rather by economic or, as in the case of Karelia, political considerations. Even the borders of the autonomous districts, drafted in 1929–30 by the Committee for Assisting the Peoples of the Far North 'to establish new and rational economic boundaries that would not contradict the ethnic boundaries', were made irrelevant to the actual living areas of the indigenous peoples through subsequent economic developments.

Historical Developments

Russian settlers (Pomors) arrived on the shores of the Barents and Kara seas as early as the 13th century. They occupied themselves with fishing, hunting and trading, while generally establishing peaceful relations with the native peoples, who were mostly reindeer-herders. Another wave of Russian migration took place in the mid-17th century, related to the split in the Russian Orthodox Church that forced the Old Believers to seek refuge in the North. In spite of attempts to integrate the northern fringes of the Empire, Moscow's influence in this region was limited and mainly connected to the collection of fur-tax (*yasak*). Traditional ways of life and shamanism thus survived and remained unchanged up to the 20th century.

While Russian claims to the Far North went largely undisputed, the expansion to the North-west was a result of protracted warfare. Karelian territory, which had been ruled by the Swedes, was gradually incorporated into the Russian Empire. Reforms and territorial acquisitions of Peter the Great in the early 18th century gave a new boost to economic development

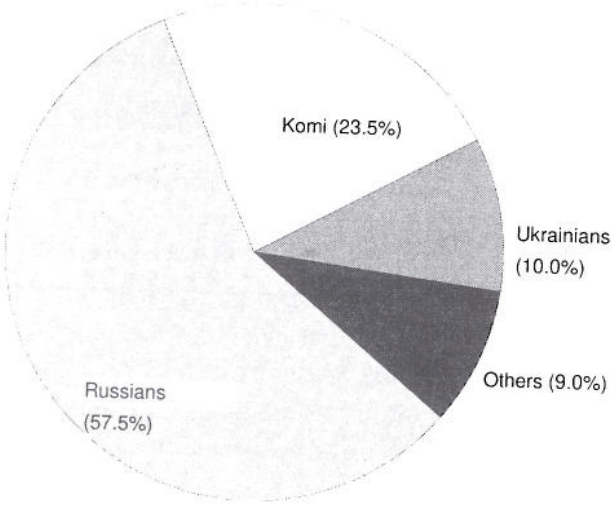


Ethnic Composition in Karelian Republic

in North-west Russia. After the final incorporation of Finland (1809), a need to protect the life of indigenous peoples in this area was recognized. In 1822, the 'Code of Indigenous Administration' was introduced, to be followed in 1892 by the 'Statute of the Indigenous Peoples'. Although both documents reserved substantial rights and privileges for the native peoples, they in fact failed to contain the waves of colonization.

The 1917 October Revolution brought new impetus to the efforts to protect the rights of the indigenous peoples of the North. The Committee for Assisting the Peoples of the Far North (Committee of the North) was established as a government body mandated 'to define and to reserve the territories necessary for the life and cultural development of each ethnic group'. Thanks to the activity of this committee, the so-called Northern Minorities, which include almost 30 different ethnic groups of the Far North, numbering from a couple of hundred to a few thousand members, were exempted from all taxation and from military service. Several educational programmes were started, and the newly created Unified Northern Alphabet was introduced. Furthermore, the sale of alcohol was prohibited.

But these initiatives proved short-lived. From the early 1930s, protective efforts were made subordinate to state programmes of industrialization and collectivization, and in 1935 the Committee of the North was disbanded.



Ethnic composition in Komi Republic

The construction of the canal linking the White Sea and Lake Onega (Belomor Canal) in 1931–34 marked the beginning of the practice of labour camps. Soon after, the gulag system started to pump manpower to the numerous camps in the North. Besides the timber production in Archangelsk Oblast, various types of mining on the Kola Peninsula and coal mining in Vorkuta, the Central Agency for the Northern Passage (Glavsevmorput) was one of the main users of prison labour.

In the 1930s and 1940s, the indigenous peoples of the North suffered mostly from the destruction of their environment, a side-effect of the influx of forced labour. The 1950s, however, saw a campaign of intensified collectivization and forced relocation that resulted in the physical destruction of many Nenets and Saami villages. The campaign followed the guidelines set out in the resolution 'On the Measures for Further Economic and Cultural Development of the Peoples of the North', issued by the CPSU Central Committee in March 1957, and proved to have grave consequences for the further development of the reindeer-herders of the northern tundra.

In the Soviet period, Karelia held a unique place as a potential springboard for westward expansion, and therefore warrants some special attention. The Soviet Union recognized the independence of Finland in 1920, and the border between two states was settled by the Tartu Treaty. The new division, which gave Finland the city of Vyborg (Viipuri) and the Karelian

Isthmus, as well as some territory on the northern shore of Lake Ladoga, more or less followed the old borderline between the Grand Duchy of Finland and the Russian provinces of the old empire. On the Soviet side, a Karelian Workers Commune was established in 1920, subsequently upgraded to an autonomous republic.

As a result of the Soviet–Finnish Winter War (1939–40), the border was shifted westwards, and the conquered territories included in the newly proclaimed Karelian–Finnish Soviet Republic. In 1941, Finland recaptured its Karelian possessions and expanded further on the Karelian Isthmus and in the region between lakes Onega and Ladoga. After the new Finnish defeat in 1944, Finland had to agree to return to the 1940 border. These shifts created up to 500,000 refugees within Finland, while thousands of Finns and Karelians living in the USSR were forced to resettle outside their traditional territories.

As long as Karelia was a Soviet republic, some superficial support was given to Finnish language and culture. In 1956, owing to a shift in political climate under Khrushchev and a normalization of the relationship with Finland, Karelia was again downgraded to an autonomous republic inside the Russian Federation, which resulted in less resources being devoted to the development of local culture.

Perestroika and Beyond

The introduction of the policy of glasnost in 1985–87 launched a wide-ranging discussion in the USSR of the catastrophic situation facing the northern minorities. Independent political and social organizations began to appear throughout the North. Among the first was the Kola Saami Association, established in 1989. According to its statutes, 'The Association is an independent nongovernmental organization which is called upon to promote the social and economic development of this ethnic minority, to preserve its traditions based on the harmony of man and nature, and to study and develop its cultural and spiritual heritage.' The same year, the organization Yasavey was set up by the Nenets in the Nenets Autonomous District. This organization came to monopolize representation of the Nenets minority to the extent that it was acknowledged by the local authorities and the district charter as the legal representative of the minority. In Karelia, the main Finno-Ugric nations united in 1991 under the umbrella of the National Congress of the Karelian, Finnish and Veps peoples. As a result of the National Congress's radical stance on national issues, combined with its lack of potential for

becoming a mass movement, this organization came to play only a marginal role in Karelian politics.

Besides these local initiatives, the northern minorities joined forces in the Congress of Northern Minorities. An important contribution to alerting public opinion was made by the First Congress of Northern Minorities, meeting in Moscow in March 1990 with the goal 'to unite all our strength in order to survive'. Responding to criticism that only 7 of the 26 Northern minorities had formal ethnic autonomous structures, the Soviet Parliament in 1990 passed a law 'On Free Ethnic Development of the Citizens of the USSR Who Live Outside Their Ethnic Territories or Have No Such Territories Within the USSR'. The law did not, however, have much impact on the situation of the minorities. The dissolution of the Soviet Union the following year and the subsequent establishment of the Russian Federation did not lead to extension of territorial autonomy to the marginalized northern minorities.

Another main target for criticism in the late 1980s was the industrial policy in the North; a new law 'On General Principles of Local Self-Administration' provided the local authorities with the possibility of cancelling many centrally planned industrial projects in the North. Further development of this positive trend was, however, challenged by the deepening economic crisis and later by the breakup of the Soviet Union. The Russian Federation assumed responsibility for protection of the indigenous peoples of the North, but had scant resources available for this task.

Actually, in the first Russian Parliament, the northern minorities were even less represented than in the Soviet Parliament. The fierce political struggle in Moscow reduced the problems of the North to a low-priority issue, a situation which was termed unacceptable at the Second Congress of Northern Minorities, held in Moscow in November 1993. Still, the message from the North drowned in the hectic election campaign leading up to the first State Duma elections.

The establishment of a State Duma Committee on Northern Affairs has contributed to heighten awareness of the problems of the North. Owing to the current economic recession, the committee has had limited possibilities to solve the major problems. The severe financial crisis has led to a cessation of practically all industrial construction in the North and a general economic retreat from this area. This has been followed by net out-migration from North-west Russia. According to estimates, Arkhangelsk Oblast lost 30,500 people between 1989 and 1995; the Komi Republic, 49,200; and the Nenets Autonomous District, 4,600. Worst in this respect is the situation in Murmansk

Oblast, which has lost as many as 97,500 people, or more than 8% of its 1989 population.

The economic retreat in principle brings a substantial reduction of the industrial pressure on the northern environment, but that in itself does not mean any relief for the indigenous peoples. Decades of centralized control have made them highly dependent on external supplies and financial support. Rebuilding of the traditional way of living is also hampered (if not precluded) by the industrial pollution and environmental destruction of vast territories; nor are the badly needed investments in their rehabilitation likely to arrive in the foreseeable future. A recent illustration of the precarious situation in the environmental sphere was the catastrophic breakdown of the pipeline in the Komi Republic (it had not had proper maintenance since 1975). The break started in August 1994, but was discovered only in September after 103,000 tons of oil had spilled out, polluting beyond repair some 90 square kilometres of land and vast riverine areas. The imminent northwards expansion of oil and gas extraction to the territories of the Nenets Autonomous District will not reduce the pressure on the vulnerable Arctic nature and the traditional life of the northern minorities.

Regional Options

Lack of attention from Moscow has forced the federal units to take greater responsibility for ethnic problems, including those related to the indigenous peoples of the North. The Karelian Republic was among the first to recognize that the question of minorities actually provides new opportunities for international cooperation. Despite the relatively low percentage of Finns and Karelians in the total population, the Finnish language has been made the second state language in the republic, and all forms of cultural contact with Finland are strongly encouraged. This policy has paid good economic dividends: a majority of joint ventures in Karelia involve Finnish companies.

Paradoxically, this new emphasis on the republic's historic and cultural ties with neighbouring Finland may in the long run constitute a new threat to the Karelian minority. The Karelian language is still not codified, and as a result there has been a high degree of linguistic assimilation among ethnic Karelians. In 1989, only 51.5% used the vernacular, while 48.3% preferred Russian. Today, the only remaining districts with a compact Karelian population are found in the countryside in the south and the North-west. With Finnish acquiring status as the second state language and being introduced as the language of instruction in these areas, there is a risk of further linguistic

and cultural assimilation and the gradual disappearance of a separate Karelian ethnic identity.

In the Komi Republic, as throughout most of the federation, the problems related to the well-being of the indigenous people are overshadowed by more pressing economic problems. Economically depressed areas such as the Vorkuta coal-mining region, where the miners have several times resorted to strikes, are predominantly Russian. The lack of strong lobby groups among the Komi has led to cuts in funding for education in the Komi language.

In the Nenets Autonomous District, the situation of the titular nation is similarly difficult. Reindeer-herding has become economically unsustainable since transport of meat is too expensive and subsidies have been slashed to zero. With the present economic situation, the Nenets people can hardly expect sufficient resources to be allocated either by local authorities or through the Barents Initiative. One crucial problem is the delivery of supplies to the capital, Naryan-Mar, and many villages throughout Glavsevmorput, which in turn is entirely dependent on subsidies from the state budget. The only source of hope for the Nenets Autonomous District is an exploitation of on- and offshore oil and gas reserves. Extraction, which is complicated by climatic conditions and lack of infrastructure, is currently the subject of intensive negotiations with several international partners, including Norsk Hydro. If these projects come anywhere close to implementation, an option for reserving certain territories for exclusive use of the native peoples (biosphere national parks), as proposed by many Russian experts, could be part of a solution of the problems facing the Nenets population today.

In Murmansk Oblast, ethnic problems have indeed been a low-priority issue. The Kola Saami Association is seeking support not so much from the local authorities as from partners in the Barents Region, first of all through the Committee of Indigenous Peoples, which includes representatives of the Nordic Saami parliaments. Gradually, the authorities in Murmansk are becoming more aware of the touchy Saami question, and are carefully avoiding any steps that could be interpreted as challenging the Saami way of life. The relatively small Saami population makes it easier to simply continue subsidizing reindeer-herding. In neighbouring Arkhangelsk Oblast, the ethnic question has been given similarly low priority. However, with the Nenets Autonomous District being recognized as a separate federal subject according to the new Russian Constitution, the Nenets population still within the jurisdiction of the oblast is minuscule.

In general, the ethnic problems in North-west Russia do not seem likely to become a source of serious political trouble. The marginalization of the

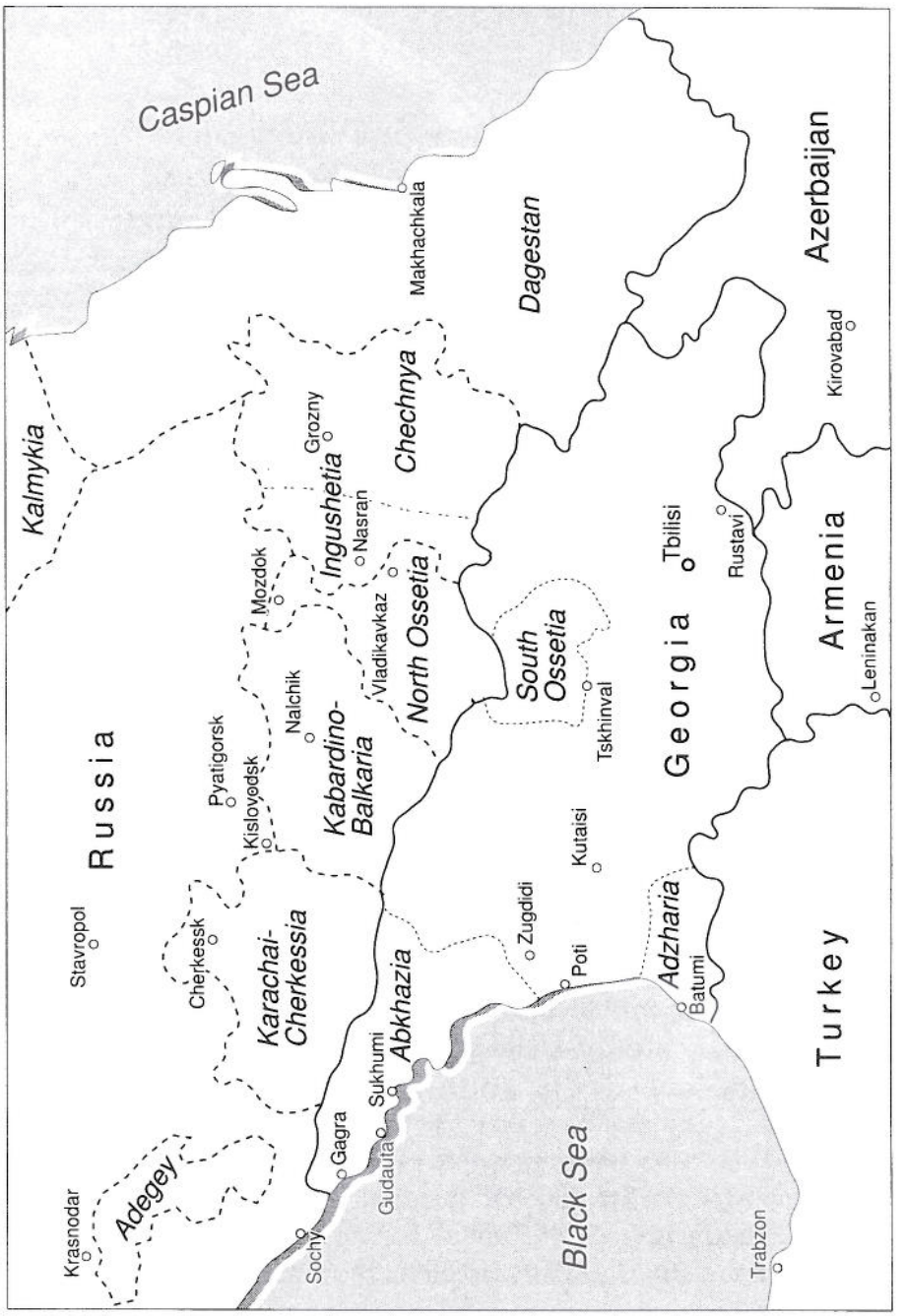
titular nations has lead to a weak base for ethnic mobilization. Furthermore, there seems to be an understanding in all five federal units in North-west Russia that while greater reliance on local resources is necessary, regional separatism could endanger not only relations with Moscow, but also the prospects for cooperation in the Barents Region.

The North Caucasus

The area in the Russian Federation commonly called the North Caucasus includes seven republics (Adygeia, or Adegey, Chechnya, Dagestan, Ingushetia, Kabardino-Balkaria, Karachai-Cherkessia and North Ossetia) and two regions (Stavropol Krai and Krasnodar Krai), though sometimes another region (Rostov Oblast) is also included. It occupies some 255,000 square kilometres (1.5% of the territory of the Russian Federation) and is populated by some 12.8 million people (8% of the total population). The North Caucasus, because of its political diversity, complex ethnic composition and geopolitical position next to the Transcaucasus, has been and remains one of the most troublesome regions in the Russian Federation. The Chechen war (the subject of a separate chapter) has had a strong impact on all political and economic processes in the area and has created the potential for long-term instability.

Background

The Russian state began advancing towards the Caucasus in mid-16th century, supporting the settlement of the Cossacks with military expeditions. By the late 18th century, nearly all ethnic communities and tribes populating the North Caucasus had taken an oath of allegiance to Russia, but the uprising of Sheikh Mansur in Dagestan and Chechnya (1785–91) showed that control was very uncertain. General Ermolov, governor of the Caucasus (1816–27), sought to consolidate control by building a chain of fortresses and conducting several expeditions inside the mountain areas, but they provoked a long rebellion headed by Imam Shamil, generally known as the Caucasian War (1834–59). After the humiliation of that war, the Russian government wanted to make sure that no other rebellion would ever occur: thousands of participants were deported to Siberia, but hundreds of thousands of Adygs, Circassians, Abkhaz, Chechens and other Caucasians were forced to flee to the Ottoman Empire (the most conservative estimate puts the number of refugees at 500,000).



North Caucasus

The collapse of the Russian Empire in 1917 caused a major uprising in the North Caucasus; in the mountain areas, a 'North Caucasian Emirate' was established, while the Cossack-populated lowlands came predominantly under the banners of the anti-Bolshevik 'White' movement. When the Bolsheviks re-established control, they attempted to organize the Autonomous Mountain Soviet Socialist Republic with the centre in Vladikavkaz, but then decided to split it. The Constitution of 1936 established the Dagestan, Chechen-Ingush, North Ossetian, and Kabardino-Balkar Autonomous Republics and Karachai-Cherkessian and Adygei Autonomous Oblasts. In 1944, the Chechen-Ingush Republic was disbanded (both peoples were blamed for collaboration with Nazi Germany in 1942 and deported en masse to Kazakhstan). Balkars and Karachai were also 'punished peoples'. Altogether, up to 600,000 people were deported from the region. Balkars and Karachai were rehabilitated and allowed to return in 1956, as were the Chechens and Ingush in 1957, their republic re-established with somewhat changed borders.

According to the latest estimates, based on the 1989 census for the Russian Federation, the population of the seven North Caucasian republics in 1994 was 5.6 million, while the populations of neighbouring Stavropol Krai and Krasnodar Krai were 2.5 and 4.7 million respectively. These republics used to have a relatively high natural population growth, but the demographic situation now is completely distorted by intensive flows of refugees and so-called forced migrants. According to conservative estimates, Chechnya alone has produced 400,000 refugees inside the region; up to 50,000 refugees have arrived from South Ossetia; the conflict in Prigorodny Rayon (North Ossetia) has brought up to 50,000 refugees to Ingushetia; and about 15,000 people have arrived from Abkhazia. There is also a considerable flow of Russian migrants from other CIS states to Krasnodar Krai and Stavropol Krai.

The North Caucasian republics are populated by more that 20 'significant' peoples (5,000 and more), while in Dagestan alone there are up to 20 smaller ethnic groups and tribes in addition to 10 'significant' peoples. Russians constitute the majority in Adygeia (68%), the largest ethnic group in Karachai-Cherkessia (42.5%), a significant minority group in Kabardino-Balkaria (32%) and North Ossetia (30%), but only 9% of the population of Dagestan. In 1989, Russians made up 23% of the population of the Chechen-Ingush Republic, but intensive migration has sharply reduced this figure. The majority of North Caucasian peoples are Sunni Muslims; Ossetians are the only significant Christian Orthodox nation.

The language composition is extremely complex, with sharp contrasts between the Indo-European family (Ossetians), Turkic family (Balkar, Karachai) and various branches of Caucasian languages.

Political Developments, 1992-1995

Until 1992, the administrative structure of this part of Russia included four autonomous republics and two autonomous oblasts. As the work on the new Federal Treaty started in early 1992, Adygeia and Karachai-Cherkessia insisted on upgrading their status to republics. Even before that, in October 1991, the Chechen Republic declared its independence, and has stayed free of any political control from Moscow. For Russian authorities, one way to deal with this problem was to recognize Ingushetia as a separate republic (since June 1992). That at least allowed isolation of the Chechen problem (the final decision on Chechnya's status has been postponed until 2002). But that certainly did not arrest the disintegrative trends in other republics. Kabardino-Balkaria has been teetering on the brink of dissolution since December 1991, when dissatisfied Balkarians (reduced through Stalin's repression to a mere 9.5% of the population, with Kabardians at 48% and Russians at 32%) voted for secession. In Karachai-Cherkessia, considerable pressure from the All-National Council of Karachai People for the creation of an independent Karachai republic forced the authorities to held a referendum in March 1992, in which 78% favoured preserving the unity of the republic within the Russian Federation. (Karachais, who make up 31% of the population, were in fact ambivalent about splitting off.) A number of ethnic clashes took place in Dagestan, and there was a strong movement for federalization of that republic. The autumn of 1992 saw a violent conflict in North Ossetia, involving tens of thousands of Ingush living in Prigorodny Rayon.

The background, and perhaps the main source, of all that instability was severe economic crisis in the North Caucasian republics. Reduction in the subsidies from the state budget and disruption of traditional cooperative links brought a 30–35% annual decline in industrial output in all the republics; by the end of 1993, their economies had shrunk to less than half of their size in 1991. Quite naturally, they were added to the list of 'depressed regions' in the Russian Federation (Karachai-Cherkessia had slightly better economic indicators and was designated as a 'stagnant region'). Krasnodar Krai and Stavropol Krai also experienced economic difficulties, but their well-developed agro-industrial sector helped to check the depression.

Despite acute political instability and social hardships, the republics of the North Caucasus generally preferred to stay clear of the sharp political crisis that was developing in Moscow during 1993. Showing their dissatisfaction, all republics (except North Ossetia; Chechnya did not participate) voted 'no confidence' in Russian President Boris Yeltsin in the April 1993 referendum. But the republican leadership kept a low profile at the culmination of that crisis in September–October 1993 and even welcomed Yeltsin's 'victory'. In early December 1993, Yeltsin visited the North Caucasus and promised more state support and better representation in the new Parliament, seeking to secure support for the new Constitution. But in the referendum, Dagestan, Karachai-Cherkessia and Adygeia rejected the Constitution (respectively, 20%, 28% and 39% voted for it), while Chechnya again boycotted the voting.

Since early 1994, the North Caucasus has indeed started to receive more financial support from the federal budget (including various 'tax holidays'), as well as more political attention. In May 1994, Yeltsin issued a special message to the peoples of the North Caucasus to mark the 130th anniversary of the end of the Caucasian War. Many representatives from the 'centre' participated in the ceremonies in all the republics commemorating that event, which, in the official rhetoric, was praised as a valiant struggle by the Caucasian peoples for survival on their own soil (Russia's responsibility for deportations was never admitted).

But by the summer of 1994, the political climate in the region was sharply deteriorating because of the escalation of the conflict in Chechnya. Dagestan and Ingushetia became directly involved in the war, as Russian troops marched through their territories into Chechnya (a number of minor incidents were registered in both). However, it was North Ossetia that became the main rear base for the invading force. One immediate consequence of the war was a massive flow of refugees, first of all to Ingushetia (up to 200,000) and Dagestan (100,000). The disapproval of the war was strong throughout the region (even in North Ossetia), but the predominant concern was the risk of spillover – exacerbated by such tragedies as the Chechen terrorist attack on Budennovsk (Stavropol Krai) in June 1995. There was also a possibility that several Cossack organizations would turn extremist. Thus, the political leaders did their best to keep as much distance as possible from the conflict, while Moscow also tried to invest some extra resources in regional stabilization, offering the leaders new agreements on division of rights and responsibilities. Therefore, despite many gloomy predictions, the war did not foster any secessionist trends or accelerate the disintegration of the Russian Federation.

The Conflict in North Ossetia (Prigorodny Rayon)

The splitting of the Chechen-Ingush Republic has left Ingushetia with highly questionable borders, since its borders with Chechnya were never properly demarcated (the issue of Shatoisy Rayon is also unresolved). But the question of crucial importance for Ingushetia is that a part of the territory of traditional Ingush settlement was incorporated into North Ossetia in 1944, when the Chechen-Ingush Republic was disbanded – but not returned in 1954, when the republic was re-established. Claims for return of the eastern part of Prigorodny Rayon led to 1957 uprisings in Grozny and Vladikavkaz, which were suppressed by Soviet leadership, despite a pledge to rehabilitate the 'punished peoples'.

For nearly four decades, the Ingush used every opportunity to settle (often semi-legally or illegally) in Prigorodny Rayon; by 1991, as many as 50,000 Ingush lived there. In the highly volatile political environment created by the collapse of the USSR, certain extremist groups in the newly born Ingushetia started to demand the return of the 'historic birthplace' of the Ingush people. The North Ossetian leadership took that very seriously; several minor incidents were used as a pretext for massive use of paramilitary forces late in October 1992. After several days of violent hostilities, some 600 people (mostly Ingush) were killed and up to 50,000 expelled across the border to Ingushetia. The violence was terminated by the imposition of a state of emergency and deployment of 3,000 Russian troops, which in fact took sides with the Ossetians and helped to complete the 'ethnic cleansing'.

The Provisional Administration based in Vladikavkaz was not particularly instrumental in finding a political solution and was blamed by the Ingush side for being partial. In August 1993, the assassination of Victor Polianichko, head of the Provisional Administration and deputy prime minister of Russia, testified to the fragility of the status quo. Yeltsin's visit to the area in December 1993 resulted in an agreement, according to which Ingushetia relinquished all territorial claims and North Ossetia allowed the return of all refugees. It was elaborated in another agreement, signed in June 1994 by the presidents of both republics, but the Ossetians – with Moscow's implicit consent – effectively sabotaged its implementation under the pretext of growing instability in Chechnya. In February 1995, the Federation Council failed to prolong the state of emergency in Prigorodny Rayon; it was formally lifted, and the Provisional Administration was replaced by the Provisional State Committee.

This did not bring about any meaningful change in the situation; several clashes between Ossetians and Ingush (who attempted to return at their own risk) were registered. In July 1995, the presidents of North Ossetia and

Ingushetia signed another joined protocol; in October, Yeltsin met with both and promised a new federal programme (700 billion roubles) for reconstruction of the infrastructure. In November, Presidents Galazov and Aushev met again to sign an agreement on implementation of Yeltsin's decree. But by the spring of 1996, that momentum was lost; it became clear that the federal funds were not coming, and the idea of a friendship treaty between North Ossetia and Ingushetia was abandoned.

Current Situation and Conflict Potential

By the autumn of 1995, political activity in the North Caucasus was focused mostly on the parliamentary and presidential elections. In December 1995, the Communist Party captured a large portion of the vote in North Ossetia (52%), Dagestan (44%), Adygeia (41%) and Karachai-Cherkessia (40%). The pro-government party Our House Russia fared well in Kabardino-Balkaria (25%), Ingushetia (34%) and Chechnya (48%) (in Chechnya, however, the elections were a farce). In Krasnodar Krai and Stavropol Krai, the vote was very split, perhaps because of deep disagreements between several Cossack organizations.

The voting remained quite close in the first round of presidential elections in June 1996, when the Communist candidate, Gennady Zyuganov, received 54% of the vote in North Ossetia, 46% in Dagestan, 45% in both Adygeia and Karachai-Cherkessia, and 31% in Ingushetia; only Kabardino-Balkaria preferred Yeltsin, with 42%. Krasnodar Krai and Stavropol Krai also went for Zyuganov (56% and 45%, respectively). What extraordinary measures Yeltsin's team adopted to win over the regional leaders will never become clear, but in the decisive second round of elections in July 1996, the pattern was quite different: Yeltsin got 63.5% of the vote in Kabardino-Balkaria, 62% in Ingushetia, 54% in Dagestan and 51% in Karachai-Cherkessia. Zyuganov won in Adygeia (61%) and North Ossetia (52.5%), and he sustained his lead in Krasnodar Krai (51.5%) and Stavropol Krai (54%).

All these electoral manoeuvres produced certain additional instability in the North Caucasus. There were several explosions in Nalchik, Kabardino-Balkaria, in June 1996, blamed on a Chechen terrorist group. Even before that, in January 1996, a Chechen unit attacked Kizlyar, Dagestan, and took hostages; on the way back, the Chechens were blocked in the village of Pervomayskoe, Dagestan, which after painstaking negotiations was assaulted with problematic success. That produced much extra tension in Dagestan, particularly between Avars and Chechens, but there were other sources of instability. In the deep economic crisis, several 'shadow' businesses had been flourishing, and that inevitably resulted in

increased criminal fighting. Several gang clashes were viewed rather matter-of-factly, but the assassination of Dagestani Finance Minister Gamidov on 20 August 1996 resonated. It is also quite possible that the November 17 explosion in an apartment building in Kaspiisk, Dagestan, owned by the Russian Border Guard, was related to the criminal warfare (more than 60 people were killed).

The termination of hostilities in Chechnya in September 1996 has not led to greater stability in the North Caucasus. On the contrary, the establishment of a new government in Grozny – one quite hostile to Moscow and involved in all sorts of illegal businesses – could bring new problems to the neighbouring republics. One ominous indicator has been the rise of the Balkar separatist movement in Kabardino-Balkaria. In mid-November 1996, the Congress of Balkar People proclaimed the Balkar Republic a new member of the Russian Federation; this act was strongly condemned by the leadership of Kabardino-Balkaria, but enthusiastically supported in Grozny. In general, a lot more attention and resources from Moscow are needed to ensure stability in the North Caucasus; otherwise, the risk of new violent conflicts will remain quite high.

Chechnya

When the parties to the Chechen War struck a peace deal in late August 1996, the most conservative estimates held that more than 30,000 lives, nine-tenths of them civilian, had been lost since the war began in December 1994. More than half of Chechnya's population had become refugees. As of late 1996, the so-called Khasavyurt peace was still holding, but it was clear that the parties had highly contradictory views about what should be the future status of the mountain republic.

Background

Chechnya is located in North Caucasus and borders on the Russian federal constituents Dagestan and Ingushetia, Russia proper and the state of Georgia. The southern part of the country is dominated by mountains, and the republic's population is mainly concentrated in villages and small towns forming a narrow belt north of these. Part of that belt are the population centres of Gudermes, Grozny (the capital) and Samashki.

The number of Chechens in the entire CIS area is today probably around 1 million (957,000 in 1989). When the war broke out in the republic, its population was an estimated 1,150,000, including some 800,000 Chechens, 250,000 Russians (living mainly in Grozny), 50,000 Ingush and small groups of other peoples. Since December 1994, however, major changes have taken place. By June 1995, 380,000 people were said to have left Chechnya as refugees, and more than 200,000 had been internally displaced.

The Chechens are closely related, linguistically and culturally, to the Ingush, with whom they shared the Checheno-Ingush Republic until 1992. The Chechen language belongs to a north-east Caucasian linguistic phylum which has no known relatives. In the 1989 Soviet census, 98% of Chechens indicated that they considered Chechen their first language. At the same time, knowledge of Russian is generally good.

A majority of Chechens today consider themselves to be Muslims and generally belong to the Hanafi school of Sunnite Islam. As many as half of the Chechen believers belong to a Sufi brotherhood (*tariqa*), subdivided into

Chechnya

local brotherhoods (*wirds*). Two Sufi *tariqa*s exist in North Caucasus: the Naqshbandiya and the Qadiriya. In Chechnya, the former dominates in the east, whereas the latter dominates in the remaining parts of Chechnya (as well as in Ingushetia). The Chechen Sufism remains closely linked with the clan system. This link is widely considered to have enabled Islam to survive the repression of the Soviet years. Chechnya has around 170 clans of varying sizes, and the clan remains a highly important unit of societal organization. The idea of a Chechen nation was introduced only with the nationality policies of Josef Stalin. Even today, clan affiliation is an important factor in Chechen politics, determining adherence to individual politicians.

History

The Nakh clans, the ancestors of the Chechens and Ingush, lived in the mountains of the region until the 16th century, when they began settling in the lowlands. This was also the time when the Islamization of these peoples began, under the influence of neighbouring peoples.

The first Russian advances towards North Caucasus were also made in the 16th century, but these efforts did not gain momentum until the fall of the Crimean Khanate in 1783. In the last quarter of the 18th century, Russia co-opted several peoples neighbouring the Chechens. In the western and eastern mountains of the region, however, they met more resistance. It was not until the first quarter of the 19th century that Russia advanced significantly towards the southern parts of Chechen-inhabited territories. Resistance was fierce, taking on the characteristics of a holy war. Only in 1864 did the last holdout fall. Several major uprisings took place both before and after that; all of them were quelled by means of deportations and massive, indiscriminate violence. The last uprising took place as late as in 1877–78.

The 1917 revolution in Petrograd brought local initiatives to establish control over North Caucasus. These came to an end as alliances split, and later as the region became a major scene of battle between Reds and Whites. Following the Bolshevik victory in the civil war, Chechnya became part of the Mountain Autonomous Republic, which was initially was governed in accordance with *Shariya* laws. This entity was soon dismantled, however, and several different structures were formed before, in 1936, Checheno-Ingushetia was given the status of an autonomous republic.

Under Stalin, Chechens and Ingush responded to collectivization and centralization with large-scale uprisings. From the start of the implementation of these policies until the 1944 deportation, peace was never totally restored in the area.

During World War II, the German forces were halted before entering into the republic. Nevertheless, the Chechens and Ingush were accused of collaboration with the Germans, and in February 1944 they were deported en masse to Central Asia. As many as one-quarter of the Chechen people may have died in the process. The republic was abolished, and cultural institutions and monuments destroyed.

In 1956, as part of Khrushchev's de-Stalinization, the Chechen and Ingush were allowed to return, and the republic was restored. For several years, there was friction between those who returned and the Russians who remained.

During the Soviet years, some investments were made in industry in Checheno-Ingushetia, notably in the booming oil industry which mainly processed oil from other parts of Russia. However, ethnic Russians dominated this sector; the countryside, where the natives were concentrated, suffered under increasing hardships during the 1980s. By 1990, up to 30% of the rural workforce was unemployed.

Developments, 1990–1994

In November 1990, Dzhokhar Dudayev, the first-ever general of Chechen origin and the former commander of the Soviet air force base in Tartu, Estonia, was elected chair of the Executive Committee of the All-National Congress of the Chechen People (ANCCP). At this first gathering, the ANCCP, including several radical nationalist groups, called for the restoration of Chechen sovereignty, in line with the status the Russian Soviet Republic (RSFSR) enjoyed in the USSR.

The ANCCP soon rose to become the most powerful political organization in Checheno-Ingushetia, supported by criminals, radical Muslims and clan elders alike. By the time of its first congress, in fact, the ANCCP already enjoyed such support that the republican Supreme Soviet adopted a declaration of sovereignty. It did not, however, sanction the idea of secession from the RSFSR. Consequently, Dudayev declared that the ANCCP and its Executive Committee had become the only legitimate power in the republic.

The event which was to tip the balance of power in favour of Dudayev and his followers was the August 1991 attempted coup against Soviet President Mikhail Gorbachev. The parliament and its chairman, Doku Zavgaev, hesitated in protesting the coup, whereas Dudayev did so from the start. This gave Dudayev the opportunity to rally the people of Chechnya, as well as the Russian leadership, against the parliament. In the process, Dudayev's supporters seized control of Chechen broadcasting and, effectively, the city of Grozny. The parliament, however, refused to succumb. On 1 September 1991, the ANCCP declared the parliament disbanded and set up its own temporary legislative body. On 6 September, the ANCCP National Guard stormed and seized the parliament building, and forced Zavgaev to sign a letter of resignation and flee Grozny.

Although Russian authorities had initially supported Dudayev, these actions made them shift away from him. A new Provisional Supreme Soviet was set up with Moscow's backing, and elections were scheduled. The ANCCP, however, opposed the new parliament. After having tried to take

over the new institution, the ANCCP declared its dissolution. In the unrest that followed, Russia's parliament demanded that all armed formations in Chechnya disband and hand in their weapons, and that the Provisional Supreme Soviet be reinstated. Dudayev described these actions as a declaration of war, and he went on to mobilize all adults of Chechnya.

On 27 October 1991, Dudayev and the ANCCP held presidential elections in Chechnya. They later claimed that 77% of the electorate had participated, and that Dudayev had captured 85% of the vote. Following the election, Dudayev declared a law that implied Chechnya's secession from Russia. In November, Russian President Boris Yeltsin responded by declaring a state of emergency in Checheno-Ingushetia and ordered Interior Ministry (MVD) troops to the region. In the showdown that followed, the Russians were forced to retreat as local forces that joined Dudayev blocked the MVD building in Grozny, holding 600 Russian troops. In the end, the Russian troops were forced to leave the Republic, abandoning large amounts of weaponry. Russia nevertheless continued to subsidize Chechnya's state budget.

Humiliating the Russian forces greatly enhanced Dudayev's popularity in Chechnya. Nevertheless, opposition to his rule was developing within the republic. A struggle soon developed between the president, who had acquired great authority, and the parliament. Within a year's time, Dudayev, who had no experience in politicking or in running a national economy, was engaged in various struggles. These reached a peak on 17 April 1993, when Dudayev abolished the parliament, the Constitutional Court and the Grozny Municipal Assembly, then instituted presidential rule.

The parliament, which had continued to meet, scheduled a referendum on the presidency for 5 June 1993. However, armed clashes began the day before, and the result of the referendum was never to be known, although a vast majority of the votes that were counted were against Dudayev's rule.

From this point, Chechnya began to fall apart. A division developed between the mountain regions, generally supportive of Dudayev, and the lowlands. Divisions were strengthened by the poor leadership by Dudayev, which caused production to fall dramatically and political rifts to grow wider. Crime and petty trade remained as practically the only ways to make money in the Chechen economy, solidifying the republic's reputation as a haven for the organized crime groups plaguing Russia.

Within Chechnya, military challenges to Dudayev emerged in the course of 1993, as important commanders such as Ruslan Labazanov and Bislan Gantemirov abandoned the president, each taking several hundred troops. At

the same time, the general population armed itself; even AK-47 guns were freely on sale in the markets, and the regime permitted all adults to carry weapons.

It took until the summer of 1994 before the clashes between government and opposition forces took a hold on the republic. In June, the forces of Labazanov and Gantemirov jointly attacked Grozny. They were fought back; some 100 people died in the battle. By this time, the federal authorities had begun to support the opposition with arms and money. Yet another actor supported by Moscow emerged at this time – the 'Interim Council of the Chechen Republic', led by Umar Avturkhanov.

After several attacks and counter-attacks between the government and the opposition in the summer and autumn of 1994, a joint force of opposition troops numbering some 1,500 men attacked Grozny. This time they were supported by Russian-manned tanks, jet fighters and helicopters. Again, however, the attack failed.

War in Chechnya

On 11 December 1994, 40,000 Russian army and MVD troops, supported by some 500 tanks and other armoured vehicles, entered Chechnya from North Ossetia, Dagestan and Stavropol. The official mission was to disarm Chechen criminal gangs and protect civilians.

The real considerations behind the war were probably more complex: certainly, Chechnya was in disarray after three years of poor government, and Chechens were playing a major role in crime in Russia. But economic issues also must have been considered, in particular regarding Russian oil pipelines passing through the republic. Further, there was the issue of state coherence – the idea of a domino effect dismantling Russia if Chechnya were permitted to break loose.

The Russian minister of defence, Pavel Grachev, had allegedly tipped the UN Security Council in favour of an intervention by claiming that Grozny could be taken in a couple of hours. However, when the Russian forces reached Grozny on 14 December, the Dudayev forces, which counted perhaps 3,000 men by the summer of 1994, had been joined by thousands of volunteers, many of whom had earlier opposed his regime. Many of the fighters had been trained in the Russian army; some had experience from the Abkhazian War. Together, they provided resistance of a completely different magnitude than the Russians expected.

The Russians were very poorly prepared for battle. Of the 10,000 MVD troops, half had not even been trained for combat duties. Only 2,000 of the 40,000 troops involved were elite paratroopers. The commander of the Russian ground forces, General Vladimir Semenov, later revealed that a majority of Russia's troops in Chechnya had less than one year's military experience. Morale was low, orders were vague, and equipment and coordination were poor.

On New Year's Day 1995, Russian forces launched a large-scale, but tactically catastrophic, attack on the centre of Grozny. Several thousand Russian troops may have died in the assault. Following this setback, the Russian command changed tactics; now, a massive bombardment of the capital was initiated, killing perhaps as many as 25,000 civilians and laying the city in ruins. Within weeks, more than three-quarters of the population had fled Grozny. In late January, the rebels finally abandoned the presidential palace. A few days later, President Yeltsin stated that 'the military stage of the operation is over'. It took, however, until the beginning of March before Grozny was completely in the hands of the Russians.

The Russian troops proceeded to take control over lowland Chechnya; in the second half of March, they took the towns of Argun, Gudermes and Shali after weeks of bombardment by air and heavy artillery. At this point, an estimated one-third of the population had become refugees.

With regard to discussions of the legitimacy of the military intervention, Yeltsin did not fare too badly in the international community. Soon, however, the manner in which the war had been fought caused concern. Reports from journalists and nongovernmental organizations who had observed the war were, indeed, alarming. From the outbreak of the war, numerous reliable accounts told of torture in custody, deliberate killings of civilians (including women and children), widespread looting, blackmailing, establishment of 'filtration camps' for Chechen men, and summary executions of individuals suspected of working for the enemy. Further, it was revealed that the Russian troops had developed a new, brutal tactic in fighting the rebels: each village they encountered was faced with an ultimatum to surrender; if it did not succumb, they pounded it with shells and bombs until the fighters retreated to the next village.

It was also reported that the Russian forces would demand that villages hand over a certain number of weapons within a deadline. If the requirement was not met, the entire population of the village would be punished severely. For example, this tactic was employed in the early April attack on the village of Samashki. When the village could not hand over the weapons – the

fighters had already left – Russian contract soldiers moved in. The next day, at least 250 civilians were massacred. Reports claimed that the village was littered with discarded syringes used by Russian troops to inject themselves with drugs during the assault.

By March–April, the Russian focus shifted to the southern, mountainous parts of Chechnya – the traditional Dudayev strongholds. However, the troops were wary of entering this region; topographical conditions promised to make the war more costly to them there than it had been in the lowlands. Thus, the war entered a stalemate.

The Russian forces were continually challenged. In May, rebels infiltrated Grozny, and heavy fighting took place before they pulled out. Fighting also continued in the south.

A development in the conflict with particularly great consequences for the Kremlin took place in mid-June, as some 100 Chechen fighters entered the town of Budennovsk. Their leader was Shamil Basayev, a prominent Chechen commander whom Dudayev said did not act on his orders. The fighters attacked several buildings and took hundreds of hostages to the local hospital, where staff and patients also were seized. As many as 1,500 people were held hostage by the Chechens. The crisis took a tragic turn when Russian troops, fatally misjudging the situation, started to fire on the hospital. Some 150 hostages were killed. Talks led by Russian Prime Minister Viktor Chernomyrdin a few days later ended with a safe passage home for the fighters and a Russian promise of withdrawal from Chechnya – which was never observed.

In late July, Moscow and the rebels signed a peace agreement calling for a halt to all hostilities, an exchange of prisoners and the gradual withdrawal of Russian troops from Chechnya in return for the disarming of Chechen rebels. There was, however, no mention of the crucial issue of Chechen independence. Moreover, it would soon become evident that there would be no withdrawal and hardly any weapons would be handed in.

In October, fighting again intensified. Early that month, the commander of the Russian forces, General Anatoli Romanov, was critically wounded in a bomb attack in Grozny. The Russian authorities responded by announcing a temporary suspension of peace talks. The Chechen side, in turn, suspended the July accord as a whole.

Late that month, Doku Zavgaev, the former chairman of the Chechen-Ingush Supreme Soviet, was declared prime minister of Chechnya by the Committee of National Reconciliation and the Chechen Supreme Soviet. In mid-December, the federal authorities encouraged Chechens to take part in

the elections to the Russian State Duma and simultaneous presidential elections. Under highly questionable circumstances, with a turnout certainly lower than the 74.8% reported by the Russians, almost half the vote in the Duma elections went to the loyalist Our Home is Russia, and 93% voted for Zavgaev for president.

In mid-January 1996, a new hostage crisis took place: some 200 Chechen fighters, led by Salman Raduyev, Dudayev's son-in-law, took up to 3,000 civilians hostage in the village of Kizlyar in Dagestan. After one day, most hostages were released, and the fighters moved on towards Chechnya. In the village of Pervomayskoe, on the border of Chechnya, a stand-off developed, with the Russian forces blocking their passage. Encouraged by Yeltsin to strike hard, Russian forces bombed and shot at the village for three days, laying every building in ruins. The actual number of hostages killed was never revealed. Despite a tight blockade, numerous rebels escaped the attack.

During these events, another hostage crisis took place in Turkey, as a small group of pro-Chechen Abkhazian gunmen seized a passenger ferry on the way to Sochi. The hostage-takers, who demanded the withdrawal of Russian troops from Pervomayskoe, surrendered within 48 hours.

March brought both new fighting and new hopes. In the second half of the month, Russian forces initiated a violent offensive, aimed at driving the rebels once and for all into the southern mountains. The Chechens responded in Grozny, fighting the Russians for five days before retreating, having done significant damage to the capital's infrastructure.

Then, on the last day of the month, Yeltsin announced his plan for a peace settlement. The plan implied an immediate, unilateral ceasefire, elections to the Chechen parliament, and indirect talks with Dudayev and his people. Their demands for complete independence and a full Russian pullout were not met.

As it turned out, Russian forces did not abide by the orders of the president. Rather, their war efforts intensified, and Russian military actions continued in several places in the breakaway republic. In one of their retaliatory strikes, the Chechens, never having agreed on a ceasefire, killed more than 90 Russian soldiers in an ambush on an armoured column. One target of the Russian reprisal assaults must have been the life of Dzhokhar Dudayev – on 21 April, he was killed in a Russian rocket attack near the village of Gekhi Chu.

The charismatic Chechen leader had grown increasingly extreme in his rhetoric during the conflict, and negotiating with him had become difficult.

Personal enmity between him and Yeltsin further complicated matters. Thus, Dudayev's death offered new openings for the Russian president.

The Chechen side did not, however, fall into disarray as a result of Dudayev's death. On 25 April, prominent Chechen leader Zelimkhan Yandarbiyev announced that he had been elected Dudayev's successor by 'the state committee of defence and cabinet of ministers'. Yandarbiyev, who was known as a hardliner, promised to continue the fight against the Russians.

Repercussions in Moscow

Shortly after the outbreak of war, it became a truism in Russia and the West that Yeltsin had turned into a mere figurehead with no real grip on power. It was concluded that a 'party of war' had taken over, nourishing a wish to re-establish Russia as a Eurasian great power. Yeltsin himself spurred such speculations by making very few public appearances in this period.

From its first day, the war served to drive a wedge between Yeltsin and his liberal supporters, notably his former prime minister, Yegor Gaydar. At the other end of the political spectrum, extremists such as Vladimir Zhirinovsky and Aleksandr Nevzorov rushed to embrace the president. Among the few liberal supporters was the former minister of finance, Boris Fedorov.

Protests against the warfare were also heard from military quarters; Generals Aleksandr Lebed and Boris Gromov, the two most popular military leaders in the country, were extremely critical, drawing parallels to the Soviet war in Afghanistan. Yeltsin's popularity among the public reached a new low in the early months of the war. Polls indicated that the public tended to hold the president personally responsible for the war. In polls showing voter preferences regarding the upcoming presidential elections, his score was close to nil.

The catastrophically failed attempt to free the hostages in Budennovsk in June 1995 served to further undermine Yeltsin. In a showdown with the Duma, the president was forced to dismiss three actors widely considered to be hawks in the Russian leadership: Sergei Stepashin, head of the Federal Security Service (FSB); Minister of the Interior Viktor Yerin; and Vice-Premier Nikolai Yegorov. Prime Minister Chernomyrdin was seen as the beneficiary of the outcome of that conflict, and he was considered to be gaining influence in Moscow at the expense of the president. This tendency seemed to be further strengthened by Yeltsin's hospitalization for a heart condition in July, and later again in November.

Opinion polls left no doubt that Yeltsin would have to come to grips with the Chechnya issue in order to have a chance at re-election in June 1996. As it turned out, it seems that Yeltsin did manage to convince Russians that he had a genuine will to get Russia out of the quagmire. In particular, an agreement struck with the new Chechen leader, Yandarbiyev, must have served to that purpose.

Dudayev Out and Yeltsin Re-elected

By the end of May 1996, Yeltsin and Yandarbiyev agreed on a truce and an exchange of prisoners, following talks between the two in Moscow. The agreement was to be followed by further negotiations, with the aim of concluding a peace deal giving Chechnya broad autonomy as a 'sovereign state' within the Russian Federation. The agreement was a major victory for Yeltsin, who seemed to have gained leverage from the Chechens' loss of Dudayev. On 29 May, the president paid a visit to Grozny, congratulating his troops on winning the war. The agreement, however, was unpopular with Russian military leaders, who feared it would allow the Chechens to strengthen their capabilities.

Between the first and second rounds of the presidential elections, the Russian forces in Chechnya refrained from any operation. However, less than three days after Yeltsin's victory in the second round, the Russian war machine went back to work. At least 20 civilians were reportedly killed on 9 July as the village of Gekhi was attacked. The next day, Russian forces shelled and bombed the village of Mahkety.

General Aleksandr Lebed, who had finished third in the presidential race and had been a leading critic of the warfare in Chechnya, by that time appeared co-opted by Yeltsin's regime, having been appointed secretary of the Russian Security Council: Lebed's press office stated that he laid all responsibility for the resumption of hostilities on Yandarbiyev 'and other leaders of armed gangs'. Russian military leaders similarly declared that the Chechens would have to either surrender or be wiped out.

With the intensification of the war in early August, the picture grew increasingly unclear with regard to the aims of, and indeed the control over, the federal forces. The Russian forces' blatant breach of the truce in effect from 1 June may be interpreted as, at best, an effort to improve their leverage before the beginning of serious peace talks. Whatever the motivation may have been, however, the massive Chechen retaliation in early August, led by

hardliner Shamil Basayev, ensured that negotiating cards were lost rather than won – the rebels effectively took control over Grozny.

By the second half of August, hundreds more had been added to the death toll of the war. Civilians were fleeing the capital once again, now under the threat from General Konstantin Pulikovsky, acting federal forces commander, of an all-out artillery and aerial bombardment of the city. His superior, General Vyacheslav Tikhomirov, supported the ultimatum, but Lebed, whom the president on 10 August had named his special envoy to Chechnya, did not. Thus, confrontation was intensifying among the top brass.

As the deadline neared, Lebed returned to Grozny and annulled the ultimatum, which he described as 'a bad joke'. Lebed, who on 15 August had agreed on a ceasefire with the Chechen chief of staff, Aslan Maskhadov, then continued the negotiations with the rebels.

On 22 August, Lebed and Maskhadov agreed on a new ceasefire, and on 31 August, in the Dagestani town of Khasavyurt, they signed a wide-ranging agreement on peace. 'The war is over!' the Security Council leader triumphed. His popularity with the public rose even further.

The 1996 agreement implied a withdrawal of the Russian forces and a rebuilding of the republic. The parties promised to solve the conflict by peaceful means and to respect international rules on human rights. However, the decision regarding Chechnya's future status – independent or not – was postponed for five years. In other words, peace was secured by means of neglecting the issue that had caused the federal intervention in the first place.

What Yeltsin's opinion is and has been of Lebed's work in Chechnya is uncertain. It is worth noting that Moscow, as General Pulikovsky was withdrawing his threat to bomb Grozny, ordered Lebed to take the city by force. Lebed, however, chose to ignore parts of that order, and at the same time publicly questioned whether the order had been given by Yeltsin himself. It was not until 5 September, in the interview in which he admitted he needed a heart operation, that Yeltsin gave Lebed credit for the agreement. But even then, he was sceptical about a quick withdrawal of the troops.

In political circles in Moscow, only independent democratic forces welcomed the agreement without reservations. Prime Minister Chernomyrdin gave an approval of sorts, but maintains that the agreement is not legally binding. Nevertheless, important elements of the agreement were being implemented in the autumn of 1996. The rebel forces were assuming control of the republic's important cities, including Grozny. Some Russian troops, albeit not all, were pulling out.

At this point, the bone of contention was the implications of the Khasavyurt agreement, in particular concerning sovereignty and money. Russia basically wanted to keep Chechnya within the federation without having to pay for its reconstruction. Chechnya held the opposite position. For the conflict between the central government and the breakaway republic to end successfully, these issues must be resolved.

In mid-October 1996, Yeltsin, tired of in-fighting in the Kremlin, fired Lebed. Replacing him in the Security Council was former Duma speaker Ivan Rybkin, a former communist and lately a self-proclaimed social democrat. Rybkin had earlier been a staunch defender of Yeltsin's policies in Chechnya. Upon assuming the new responsibilities, however, he declared that he was 'a convinced supporter of the peace process'. What influence the firing of Lebed would have on the peace process was still uncertain.

On the local level, the main issue concerned reconciliation. As we have seen, the intervention by the federal forces came after a protracted period of conflict between different Chechen actors. As of late 1996, parts of Chechnya were still beyond the control of the forces led by Yandarbiyev and his prime minister, Maskhadov. With the leaders in Grozny striving to consolidate their position, further conflicts with local opponents seemed bound to occur.

Georgia

Of all the states that emerged from the collapse of the USSR, Georgia went through the greatest number of violent conflicts and experienced the deepest economic decline. During the autumn of 1993, it was on the verge of disintegration. But since early 1994, a relative stabilization of security in this state allowed for a consolidation of the political regime and for an economic recovery, however uncertain. Still, none of the conflicts is really resolved, and the risk of new escalation remains high.

Background

The first Georgian state was established as early as the 4th century BC but enjoyed only brief periods of unity and independence, most notably in the 12th century AD under King David II. Under constant pressure from such powerful neighbours as Persia and the Ottoman Empire, Georgia became divided into principalities, which preserved only nominal independence. In the late 18th century, King Irakli II, who ruled the principalities of Kartli and Kakheti, appealed to Russia for protection, referring particularly to the common religion (Christianity was adopted in Georgia in the 4th century). After the Giorgievski Treaty (1783), Russia annexed all Georgian principalities, one after another, and secured control over Georgia through military victories over Persia and the Ottoman Empire by 1828.

After the collapse of the Russian Empire in 1917, Georgia proclaimed its independence, and even gained recognition from Moscow in 1920. However, only one year later, the Bolshevik troops established a Soviet regime in Georgia, which was included in the Transcaucasian Soviet Federate Socialist Republic and in December 1922 became a founding member of the USSR. After several administrative changes, Georgia achieved the status of Soviet Republic in the Soviet Constitution of 1936.

The pro-independence movement started to build in the late 1980s, and one event that greatly increased its strength was the brutal dispersal by Soviet troops of a rally in Tbilisi's central square on the night of 8–9 April 1989 (20 people were reported killed). The Communist Party was badly discredited,

Georgia

and in the parliamentary elections in October–November 1990, the Round Table–Free Georgia bloc of pro-independent parties won 64% of the vote. On 31 March 1991, a referendum was held on independence, with 95% of eligible voters participating and 93% of them voting yes. On 9 April 1991, the Georgian parliament approved the decree on formal restoration of independence. Zviad Gamsakhurdia, the leader of the Round Table–Free Georgia, was elected president on 26 May 1991 (winning 86.5% of the vote). But his controversial reforms, tough line against national minorities and authoritarian style alienated other opposition leaders, who resorted to arms. After a series of violent demonstrations, a coup was staged in Tbilisi in December 1991, and on 2 January 1992, a Military Council took power while Gamsakhurdia fled to Grozny, Chechnya.

In many ways, the violent conflicts, which started before independence was achieved and continued after, were related to the ethnic composition of the state. According to the latest estimates, the population of Georgia numbers 5.5 million. It is unclear how the conflicts affected the ethnic composition, but in 1990, of the total population of Georgia, 68.8% were Georgians, 9.0% Armenians, 7.4% Russians, 5.1% Azerbaijanis, 3.2% Ossetians, 1.9%

Greeks and 1.7% Abkhazians. Georgians themselves are a mixed nation, with such ethnic groups as Svans (mountain tribes), Mingrelians (inhabitants of Western Georgia) and Adzharians (ethnic Georgians converted by Turks to Islam). The administrative structure before 1990 had included two Autonomous Republics – Abkhazia (where 45.5% of the people were Georgians and 18% Abkhazians) and Adzharia (where more than 80% were Georgians/Adzharians) – as well as the South Ossetian Autonomous Oblast (with Ossetians making up 65% of the population).

The Conflict in South Ossetia

As Georgia moved towards independence, in South Ossetia there was a strong opposition to secession from the USSR, which led to violent clashes in December 1989. Soviet Interior Ministry troops were deployed in January 1990 to prevent further violence. Counting on more backing from the 'centre', the South Ossetian Parliament decided in September 1990 to upgrade its status to that of Autonomous Republic; but in December 1990, the Georgian Supreme Soviet abolished the region's autonomous status altogether. The following month, Soviet President Mikhail Gorbachev annulled both decisions, but he failed to produce a compromise solution. The clashes resumed in early 1991, when the Georgian Parliament authorized the use of militia formations to enforce its decision to abolish Ossetia's autonomy. Ossetians turned to armed resistance, and for more than a year they defended their besieged capital, Tskhinval. The death toll from this conflict is estimated at 500; some 110,000 Ossetians fled to Russia (mostly to North Ossetia), while some 10,000 Georgians sought refuge in neighbouring districts.

In a referendum held in January 1992, South Ossetians voted 99% in favour of joining the Russian Federation and reuniting with North Ossetia. Russia preferred a more moderate response. After several short-lived arrangements, in July 1992 a ceasefire agreement was signed by Russian President Boris Yeltsin, head of the Georgian State Council Eduard Shevardnadze and the South Ossetian Supreme Soviet (which Georgia refused to recognize as a legitimate body). The agreement provided for deployment of a trilateral peace-keeping force, with one battalion of Russian troops (up to 700 paratroopers), one battalion of Georgian forces and one battalion of South Ossetian militia. The deployment went quite smoothly; both parties to the conflict cooperated, and there were no violations of the ceasefire. Gradually, the Russian battalion was reduced to 500 men, while two other battalions were reduced to symbolic units. The OSCE started to monitor the

operation in 1993 and did not register any misconduct; still, the success in peace-keeping did not provide for any achievements in the peace process.

The Conflict in Abkhazia

The conflict in Abkhazia (the violent phase lasted from autumn 1992 to autumn 1993) was the focal point of instability in Georgia. This Autonomous Republic has a long record of attempts to split off from Georgia, and in July 1992 its parliament decided (by a vote of 35 to 30) to return to the Constitution of 1925, which granted it the status of Soviet Republic. This coincided with unrest in Western Georgia, and the whole situation was used by Defence Minister Kitovani as a pretext for intervention by his National Guard. Shevardnadze, being presented with a fait accompli, used it to boost his own election campaign for the chairmanship of the Parliament. Georgian troops occupied the capital, Sukhumi, and also landed in Gagra, blocking the border with Russia. The crucial factor for this military success was the transfer to Georgia of some 100 tanks and 200 armoured combat vehicles in accordance with the May 1992 Tashkent Agreement, which settled the distribution of the CFE (Conventional Armed Forces in Europe) limits among post-Soviet states. The condition requiring non-use of these arms in domestic conflicts was ignored.

The Abkhazian parliament was forced to flee to Gudauta, from where it issued an appeal to Russia 'to intervene actively', and to the Confederation of Mountain Peoples of the Caucasus. Several thousand armed volunteers arrived in Abkhazia (Chechnya was the main contributor) and achieved an important victory, defeating the Georgians in Gagra in late 1992. The continued deployment of Russian troops in the conflict zone inevitably made them participants in the battles, in which they sided with Abkhazians. Russia insisted on providing exclusive mediation in the conflict, but its role remained quite ambiguous. While conducting humanitarian operations (evacuation of ethnic Russians from Sukhumi, delivering aid to besieged Tkvarcheli), it simultaneously carried out airstrikes on Sukhumi in retaliation for attacks on Russian troops.

Increased political pressure from Russia and the threat of Abkhazian assault on Sukhumi forced the Georgian leaders to agree to a ceasefire from 28 July 1993 and to withdrawal of heavy weapons. Russia agreed to involving the UN in conflict management. Resolutions 849 and 858 of the UN Security Council established the UN Observer Mission to Georgia (UNOMIG), involving 88 military observers. In mid-September 1993,

Abkhazians launched a surprise offensive. Russia failed to deliver on its security guarantees, allowing Abkhazians to capture Sukhumi and dislodge demoralized Georgian troops outside the territory of Abkhazia. After lengthy negotiations, the parties agreed in July 1994 on the deployment of some 1,500 Russian peace-keepers under a CIS mandate that was acknowledged by the UN. This did not bring a political settlement any closer, and the return of some 200,000 Georgian refugees remains problematic. In January 1995, Kitovani tried to organize a 'liberation march' on Abkhazia with a few dozens supporters, but was blocked by Georgian security forces and arrested.

The Political Situation in Georgia, 1992–1995

The legitimacy of the political regime in Georgia was badly shaken by the coup of December 1991. Seeking to consolidate their grasp on power, the leaders of two largest paramilitary groupings, Dzhaba Ioseliani and Tengiz Kitovani, invited Shevardnadze to return to Georgia and to chair the newly created State Council. Shevardnadze made special efforts to legitimize his position, and in August 1992 he was elected chairman of the Parliament. But the ousted President Gamsakhurdia, operating from his refuge in Chechnya, tried to re-establish a support base in his native Mingrelia. Armed clashes with government forces resumed in autumn 1992 and gradually escalated to civil war, which was more ethnic/regional than ideological in character.

The culmination of that war came in October 1993, when Gamsakhurdia – taking advantage of the defeat of government forces in Abkhazia – launched an offensive in Western Georgia, capturing Poti and threatening Kutaisi. Finding himself in a desperate situation, Shevardnadze appealed to Russia for help, promising to bring Georgia into the CIS and to re-establish military cooperation with Russia. Moscow was quick to launch a small-scale peace-making operation, landing a Marine battalion in Poti and sending another battalion to march along the coastal highway. That was enough to disperse the pro-Gamsakhurdia forces. Devastated by this defeat, Gamsakhurdia committed suicide on New Year's Eve, 1993.

In early 1994, Georgia entered a period of relative internal stability. Shevardnadze worked hard and moved carefully, seeking to outmanoeuvre and marginalize his political opponents. A campaign against organized crime was instrumental in disarming various paramilitary formations; in a similar way, modest economic reforms and privatization were aimed at eliminating all sorts of semi-legal businesses, which had created a financial base for opposition forces. Shevardnadze established his own party, Citizens' Union

of Georgia (CUG), avoiding any extremist ideas and advancing the goal of national reconciliation and revival. Military cooperation with Russia was steadily advanced; in fact, Shevardnadze was the only leader in the CIS who openly supported Russia's invasion in Chechnya in December 1994.

All this skilful manoeuvring brought results by the end of 1995. During most of that year, political struggle in Georgia remained quite volatile; Shevardnadze himself narrowly escaped an assassination attempt on 29 August 1995. This allowed him to move decisively against his political opponents – and then to sack the compromised minister of state security, Igor Giorgadze. This cleared the way for the approval of the new Constitution by the Parliament on 17 October 1995 – and consequently for holding the parliamentary and presidential elections on 5 November 1995. Shevardnadze was duly elected president (receiving some 73% of the vote), and the CUG became the largest party in the new Parliament (110 seats in the 225-seat legislature). International observers pointed to certain violations in the voting, but generally recognized the elections as free and fair.

Current Situation and Conflict Potential

During 1996, the political situation in Georgia was more stable than at any time since it gained independence – and this allowed for the beginning of an economic recovery. The new national currency (the *lari*, introduced in November 1995) remained stable, and the programme of market reforms was successfully implemented. Humanitarian aid from the West helped to ease some inevitable consequences of such reforms. (The EU delivered 800,000 tons of grain and 200,000 tons of flour during the winter of 1995.) According to economic forecasts for 1997, the GDP will increase by 10–11% – the highest growth among the CIS states. Georgia expects significant new Western investment linked to the construction of a pipeline through its territory for delivering Caspian Sea oil to Western markets.

Shevardnadze continues to enjoy broad political support, but is increasingly embarrassed by his inability to deliver on promises to restore Georgia's territorial integrity. The UN-sponsored negotiations with Abkhazia, where the most sensitive issue is the return of some 150,000 Georgian refugees, are going nowhere. A new Russian-sponsored agreement with South Ossetia (North Ossetia was also a party) was signed in May 1996, but it fell far short of a political breakthrough. In the first half of 1996, the Georgian leadership remained rather cautions in pressing its agenda, acknowledging that Moscow was deeply preoccupied with presidential elections. But since the autumn of

1996, Georgian leaders are more and more openly voicing dissatisfaction with the results of Russia's mediation and peace-keeping. The status and the very existence of Russia's three military bases on Georgian territory continue to generate tension.

The majority of Georgians do not want to jeopardize the political stabilization and economic recovery. Still, the possibility of a new conflict escalation cannot be excluded. Shevardnadze could make another attempt to restore by force control over Abkhazia, where he was so humiliatingly defeated in 1993. Making such a scenario more probable is the nearly complete isolation of the present Abkhazian regime: the Chechen War deprived it of a support base in the North Caucasus, and Russia is so irritated by Abkhazian inflexibility and uncontrollability that it might not offer any meaningful support. Shevardnadze now has at his disposal a relatively reliable military force, rebuilt with Russian support; he could also initiate political bargaining, offering not to press the Ossetian issue in exchange for a low-key reaction by Russia to his 'reconquest' of Abkhazia. The present level of involvement of the UN, the OSCE and other international organizations is not sufficient to influence such developments, but a more committed Western policy still could prevent a new escalation of hostilities.

Armenia and Azerbaijan

The conflict in Nagorno-Karabakh – an Armenian-populated enclave in Azerbaijan – is the longest-running armed conflict in the former Soviet Union. Although a ceasefire has been in effect since May 1994, the conflict remains unresolved. The international community has invested substantial efforts to find a solution to the conflict.

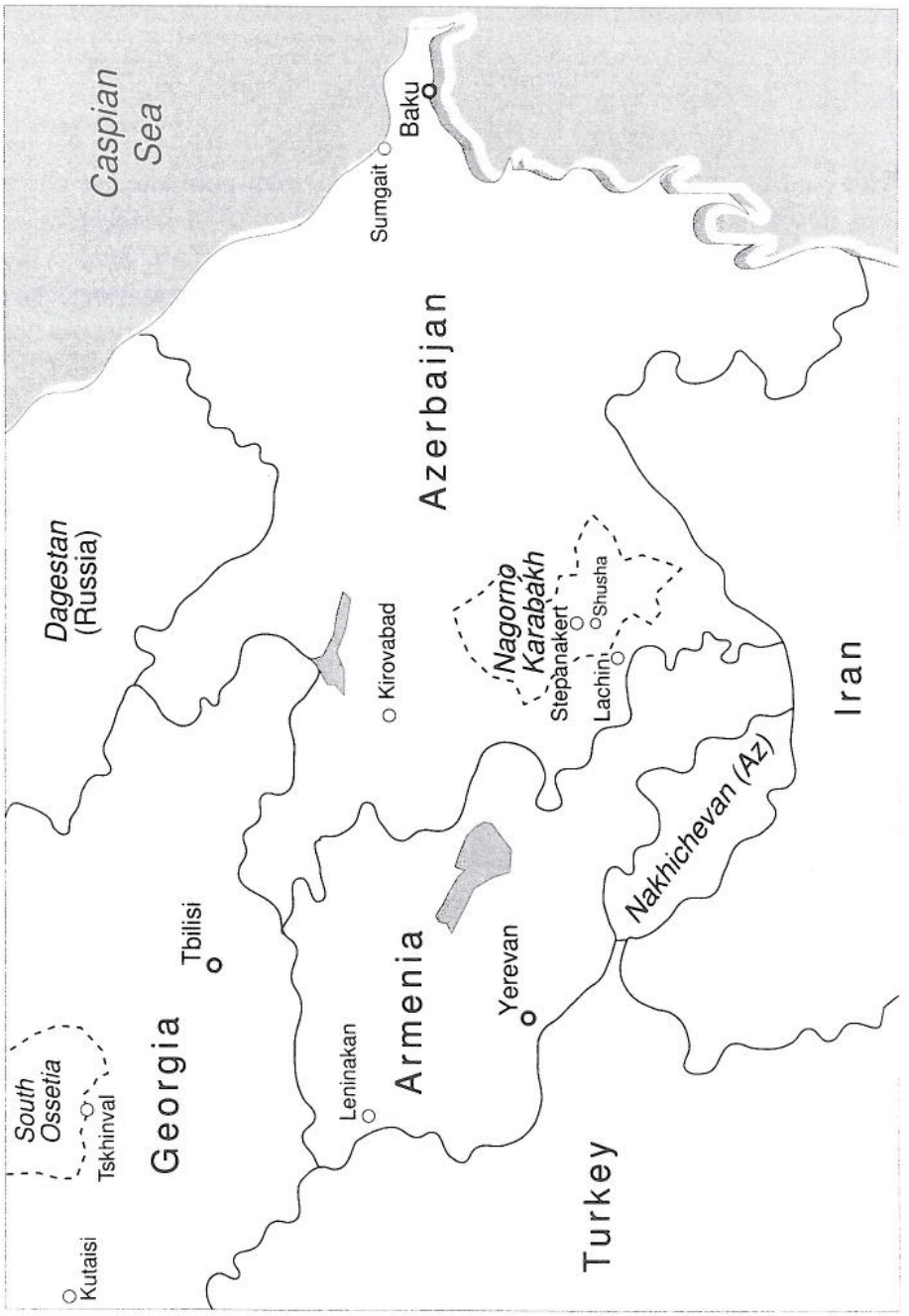
Armenia

The Republic of Armenia, which has 3.4 million inhabitants, is located in the south-western Caucasus. The country covers 29,800 square kilometres, and its capital is Yerevan. The official language is Armenian, which is a separate branch in the Indo-European family of languages. There are about 56,000 Kurds in Armenia; therefore, Kurdish also is used in the media and in publishing. The majority of the population are Christians of the Armenian Apostolic Church, one of the oldest Christian communities in the world. There are also communities that adhere to Russian-Orthodox, Protestant and Muslim beliefs.

Armenia was recognized as a sovereign state by Turkey and the Allied Powers through the Treaty of Sèvres, signed on 10 August 1920. The treaty was a result of the cooperation between Kurds and Armenians in their struggle for an independent Kurdistan and Armenia respectively (see separate article on the Kurds). When Turkey's leader, Mustafa Kemal Atatürk, later rejected the treaty, Armenia became vulnerable to new Turkish threats. The Turks attacked Armenia in September 1920, but Bolshevik forces that entered the country from the east prevented the Turks from taking control of Armenia. The Armenian Soviet Republic was established on 29 November 1920.

Soviet leader Mikhail Gorbachev's perestroika and glasnost initially played only a minor role in Armenia. The first protests against Soviet rule were mainly due to environmental destruction and corruption within the party organization. The first ecologically motivated demonstrations took place in September 1987.

On 23 August 1990, the Supreme Soviet of Armenia passed a declaration of independence. This declaration also contained demands for the establish-



Armenia and Azerbaijan

ment of armed forces and a wish for international admission of the Turkish genocide of Armenians in 1915. The Armenians call the massive deportation of Armenians from Turkey during the period 1915–23 their 'Holocaust'. Almost 1.5 million people perished as a result. This has been decisive for Armenia's strained relations with Turkey.

The unsuccessful coup against Gorbachev in August 1991 gave fresh impetus to the supporters of a sovereign Armenian state. A subsequent referendum on independence was held on 21 September the same year. According to official figures, the turnout was 94.4%, with 99.3% of the vote in favour of independence. At the beginning of the same month, a Communist Party Congress decided to dissolve the party, and in December 1991 Armenia joined the Commonwealth of Independent States (CIS).

Levon Ter-Petrossian, leader of the Pan-Armenian National Movement (HHSh), was elected president in 1991. In July 1995, the Republican Bloc, dominated by HHSh, won more than half of the seats in parliamentary elections.

New presidential elections were held in October 1996. International observers, including representatives of the OSCE, were highly critical of the elections procedures. According to the election law, a second round of elections would not be held if one of the candidates received more than 50% of the vote. As it happened, Ter-Petrossian reportedly received 52%, compared with coalition opposition candidate Vazgen Manukian's 42%. There was widespread agreement that, had the elections been free and fair, support for the incumbent might have been under the 50% mark.

Azerbaijan

The Republic of Azerbaijan is located in the eastern Caucasus and has 7.1 million inhabitants. Azerbaijan covers 86,600 square kilometres, and its capital is Baku. The official language is Azeri, which belongs to the southern Turkish group of languages. Almost all ethnic Azeris are Muslims. Oil was found in Azerbaijan at the end of the 19th century, and the country was one of the world's largest oil-producers at the turn of the century.

The Russian Revolution of 1917 was followed by a short period of pro-Bolshevik rule in Baku, before a government oriented towards nationalism came to power and established an independent state. During World War I, Azerbaijan was occupied by both the Allies and the Central Powers (Germany and Austria-Hungary). After they had withdrawn, Azerbaijan was invaded by the Red Army in April 1920, and a Soviet Republic was established on 28 April the same year. In the wake of the Communist seizure of power in Azerbaijan, many

nationalistic and religious leaders were pursued and killed. Religious persecution was particularly rampant in the 1930s.

The general discontent with economic misrule and privileges enjoyed by central party members was unleashed through demonstrations in November 1988. For ten days, demonstrators occupied the market-square in Baku until they were scattered by military forces. The demonstration was triggered by the unresolved status of Nagorno-Karabakh (see below) and Nakhichevan. The latter is an Azerbaijani region within Armenia.

The Azerbaijani Popular Front

The Azerbaijani Popular Front (APF) was established in 1989. After a series of strikes and demonstrations during August 1989, the APF organized a nationwide strike and demanded an open debate about the independence and future status of Nagorno-Karabakh. The APF also insisted on the release of political prisoners and on recognition of the APF. After a one-week general strike, the Supreme Soviet of Azerbaijan made concessions to the APF, including recognizing the organization. On 23 September the Supreme Soviet of Azerbaijan passed a declaration of independence, which was followed by an economic blockade of Armenia because of Nagorno-Karabakh.

In 1990 there was again widespread unrest, threatening the Communist Party's position of power in Azerbaijan. Radical members of the APF were in charge of the revolt against party and government buildings in Baku and other cities. Some 200 Armenians were killed in Baku during these riots. A state of emergency was declared on 19 January 1990, and Soviet forces were sent to Baku, where the APF had seized control. According to official reports, 124 people were killed during the Soviet intervention.

The Communist Party emerged as the outright winner in the election for the Supreme Soviet of Azerbaijan in 1990. This victory led to a more uncompromising attitude, also by the nationalists, concerning the demand for independence of Nagorno-Karabakh, as well as a willingness to compromise with Moscow in order to avoid further bloodshed.

Independence

In contrast to other republics in the Caucasus, Azerbaijan was willing to enter into a new Union Agreement with Moscow. The country also participated in the referendum on the preservation of the USSR that took place in March 1991. Official results showed that a qualified majority were in favour of

maintaining the union. Election turnout was 75.1%, although in Nakhichevan a mere 20% supported Gorbachev's proposal.

The failed coup against Gorbachev in August 1991 gave strength to the demands for the republic's sovereignty. Demonstrators also insisted on First Secretary Ajas Nijas Mutalibov's resignation because he had supported the people behind the coup attempt. Gaidar Aliyev, who was a former party secretary of Azerbaijan, member of the Supreme Soviet and general of the KGB, supported the opposition. Mutalibov resigned as first secretary of the Communist Party, and on 30 August 1991 the Supreme Soviet of Azerbaijan voted in favour of restoring Azerbaijan as an autonomous state. Independence was formally put into effect on 18 October 1991, and Mutalibov was re-elected as president in the subsequent presidential elections. The APF boycotted the election, leaving Mutalibov as the only candidate. Like Armenia, Azerbaijan is part of the CIS. The country withdrew from CIS in the summer of 1992, but rejoined in the autumn of 1993 as a result of Armenia's advances in the war

Aliyev as President

President Mutalibov was held responsible for Armenia's progress in the war over Nagorno-Karabakh, and the APF assumed power in May 1992. The leader of the APF, Abulfaz Elchibey, was elected president in a direct election against four other candidates. In June 1993 Elchibey met the same fate as Mutalibov, and had to flee to his hometown in Nakhichevan, before insurrection forces led by Surat Huseinov seized power. In less than three weeks, his forces conquered a large portion of the country without meeting much resistance, and Azerbaijan's former Communist leader, Gaidar Aliyev, reappeared as acting president. In early October 1993, Aliyev was elected president with 98.8% of the vote in an election that could hardly be called democratic, according to the human rights group Helsinki Watch. The APF boycotted the elections, citing the fact that Elchibey was still the legitimate leader of Azerbaijan.

New parliamentary elections were held in November 1995. New Azerbaijan, the party aligned with Aliyev, won a majority of seats. Simultaneously, a new constitution was approved, reportedly by 91.9% of the voters.

Azerbaijan has vast untapped oilfields, and with help from the Western world the country's economy could be in much better shape than it is today. The war against Armenia for control over Nagorno-Karabakh has strongly influenced Azerbaijan's political strategies. This has happened to such an extent that economic reforms by and large have been neglected. All the same, it has been pointed out that even though Azerbaijan has lost this war, the

country may still emerge as the economic winner because of the oil resources. Armenia, on the other hand, is under considerable economic pressure because of Azerbaijan's trade boycott, not to mention Azerbaijan's and Turkey's oil and energy embargo.

The War over Nagorno-Karabakh

The enclave Nagorno-Karabakh was mainly populated by Armenians, but was placed under Azerbaijani government control in 1923 as a result of Stalin's divide and rule policy. Nagorno-Karabakh was a controversial region as early as the 1918–20 period of Armenian and Azerbaijani independence. During the Stalin era, several petitions to be united with Armenia were sent from Nagorno-Karabakh. Forty-five thousand signatures were collected for the same purpose in 1960 and sent to the central authorities of the Soviet Union.

When the upheavals and changes in the Soviet Union took place, Nagorno-Karabakh in 1988 once again demanded to be incorporated into Armenia. This demand led to huge demonstrations and massive warfare between Karabakh-Armenians and Azeris. From 27 to 29 February there were forceful anti-Armenian demonstrations in the Azerbaijani town of Sumgait. Thirty-two people were killed, 26 of them Armenians. The demonstrations caused 14,000 Armenians to flee Azerbaijan and nearly 80,000 Azeris to flee Armenia.

Because of the powerful demonstrations, Soviet authorities removed Nagorno-Karabakh's leadership in January 1989 and established a special administration committee to rule the region. This committee was dominated by Azeris, and the enclave remained under the legislation of Azerbaijan. Five thousand soldiers from the Ministry of the Interior were posted in the area, but these initiatives did nothing to diminish the pressure between the factions. Azerbaijan protested against interference from the outside world, and the Armenians in Nagorno-Karabakh went on strike from May to September. Armenia also reacted strongly against the measures and passed a declaration in December 1989 which stated that Nagorno-Karabakh was part of the United Armenian Republic. This declaration was later ruled illegal by the Supreme Soviet of the USSR.

Escalation

At the end of April 1991, the conflict escalated again. Armenian authorities still claimed they were not militarily involved, but that Nagorno-Karabakh's forces were out of control. Azerbaijani authorities, for their part, maintained that the Armenians were the aggressors in the conflict, and that Armenian military

forces played a vital role in the war. Russian forces have been accused of supporting both Azerbaijan *and* Armenian military units in the fight over the enclave. It is not inconceivable that Russia is involved in the war on both sides – in an area that is still within Russia's sphere of interest.

Nagorno-Karabakh declared itself an independent republic in September 1991. After a period as active mediators in the conflict, President Boris Yeltsin of Russia and President Nursultan Nazarbayev of Kazakhstan managed to persuade both sides to sign a ceasefire agreement. The treaty was never supervised, and in December the same year tensions between the contending parties mounted again.

In January 1992 Azerbaijan's President Mutalibov placed Nagorno-Karabakh under direct Azerbaijani presidential rule, and replaced Armenian civil servants in the enclave with Azeris. The same month, Nagorno-Karabakh's capital, Stepanakert, was surrounded by Azerbaijani forces, while the Armenians besieged the town of Shusha, which was populated mainly by Azeris. In March 1992 Armenian President Levon Ter-Petrossian stated that Armenia had no territorial demands in Azerbaijan nor in Nagorno-Karabakh. Moreover, he maintained, the question of Nagorno-Karabakh's future was an internal affair of Azerbaijan, although he believed that a solution to the problem still had to be sanctioned by the leadership of the Turkish enclave.

Turning-point

In April the same year, the chairman of Nagorno-Karabakh's legislature was murdered. The enclave's 'self-defence forces' retaliated with a vengeance and captured Shusha, which meant that they gained total control over the enclave and that the bombing of Stepanakert came to an end.

The war over Nagorno-Karabakh reached a turning-point in the summer of 1992. The Armenians advanced more and more forcefully and seized control over the strategically important Lachin Corridor, which connects Nagorno-Karabakh to Armenia. Since then the Karabakh-Armenians have taken control over the entire enclave as well as an equally large area outside, all the way down to the border with Iran. In November 1993 Armenians were in control of approximately one-fifth of Azerbaijan's territory.

The authorities of Armenia still deny that they are involved in the war. The essential future question for the Karabakh-Armenians is whether Nagorno-Karabakh will become an autonomous state or be part of Armenia, which has not recognized the independence of the enclave.

After five years of war between Armenia and Azerbaijan, 20,000 people have been killed in the conflict over Nagorno-Karabakh. The 30,000 Azeris

who lived in the enclave have been forced to flee. All in all, the war against Armenia and internal political unrest in Azerbaijan have given the country 600,000 refugees.

Peace talks were held between the two parties during 1995 and 1996. The talks were inconclusive, although some progress was made; in December 1995, the first bilateral talks without mediators were held.

The Minsk Process of the OSCE

In February 1992, after both Armenia and Azerbaijan had become members of the Conference on Security and Cooperation in Europe (CSCE), representatives of Armenia, Russia and Nagorno-Karabakh appealed for international help to settle the conflict. Azerbaijan's Mutalibov rejected this because he held the conflict to be an internal political matter of Azerbaijan.

So far the efforts of the CSCE/OSCE, also known as the Minsk Process, have been of negligible importance, despite a long series of attempts to create peace. During the CSCE meeting in December 1993, the conflict over Nagorno-Karabakh created serious problems when a joint final communiqué was to be adopted. At the CSCE summit in December 1994, the member countries agreed to develop plans to send a peace-keeping force of some 3,000 soldiers to Nagorno-Karabakh, under the auspices of the CSCE. A plan for deployment of such a force was ready in August 1995. However, the operation will not be implemented before the parties to the conflict have signed a peace accord.

The human rights groups Helsinki Watch and Amnesty International have reported systematic violations of international human rights on both sides of the war over Nagorno-Karabakh. The UN Security Council has demanded the immediate, total and unconditional withdrawal of Armenian forces from Azerbaijan.

Relations with Neighbouring Countries

Nagorno-Karabakh, Armenia and Azerbaijan are surrounded by the powerful triangle of Russia, Turkey and Iran.

Russia is Armenia's main ally in the war over Nagorno-Karabakh. The fact that Azerbaijan, Turkey and Iran share this perception makes Russia's role as a mediator in the war somewhat complicated. Nonetheless, Russia's support of Armenia may be regarded as a way of balancing Turkish and Iranian influence in the Caucasus.

The sympathies of Turkey rest with Azerbaijan, with which the country has ethnic, linguistic and cultural bonds. The authorities in Ankara have

nevertheless made it clear that they do not intend to intervene with armed forces to support Baku in the fight against the Armenians. In autumn 1993, however, Turkish authorities reported that repeated Armenian attacks on Azerbaijani territory threatened Turkey's security. Turkey has demanded unconditional withdrawal of Armenian forces. With regard to the Armenian attack on the Azerbaijani enclave of Nakhichevan, Turkey has intimated that military intervention might become necessary. The main Turkish argument for this is that, according to the so-called Treaty of Kars, Turkey guarantees the security of this region.

Azerbaijan has so far avoided a development towards Muslim fundamentalism and has preferred to collaborate with Turkey, which is regarded as a bridge to the West. All the same, Iran has gained an opportunity to enter the country in economic terms. Iran has a sizeable Azerbaijani community and a somewhat smaller Armenian minority, and has frequently appealed to Armenia and Azerbaijan to stop the war and settle the conflict through negotiations.

In Azerbaijan the strongest ties to Turkey are among the educated population in urban areas, while the desire to strengthen the bonds with Iran is more widespread among the rural population.

After the APF gained control over Azerbaijan, it was expected that the country would keep a rather cool and distant relationship to Russia. Things have turned out differently, however, and in October 1992 Russia and Azerbaijan signed an agreement regarding friendship, cooperation and mutual security.

Russia, Turkey and Iran probably all have some interest in keeping alive some degree of tension between Armenia and Azerbaijan, primarily because this guarantees their continued influence in the Caucasus region. There might therefore be reason to fear that the huge refugee catastrophe resulting from the war is not yet over. The centre of gravity may still shift geographically, according to where military and economic support is channelled.

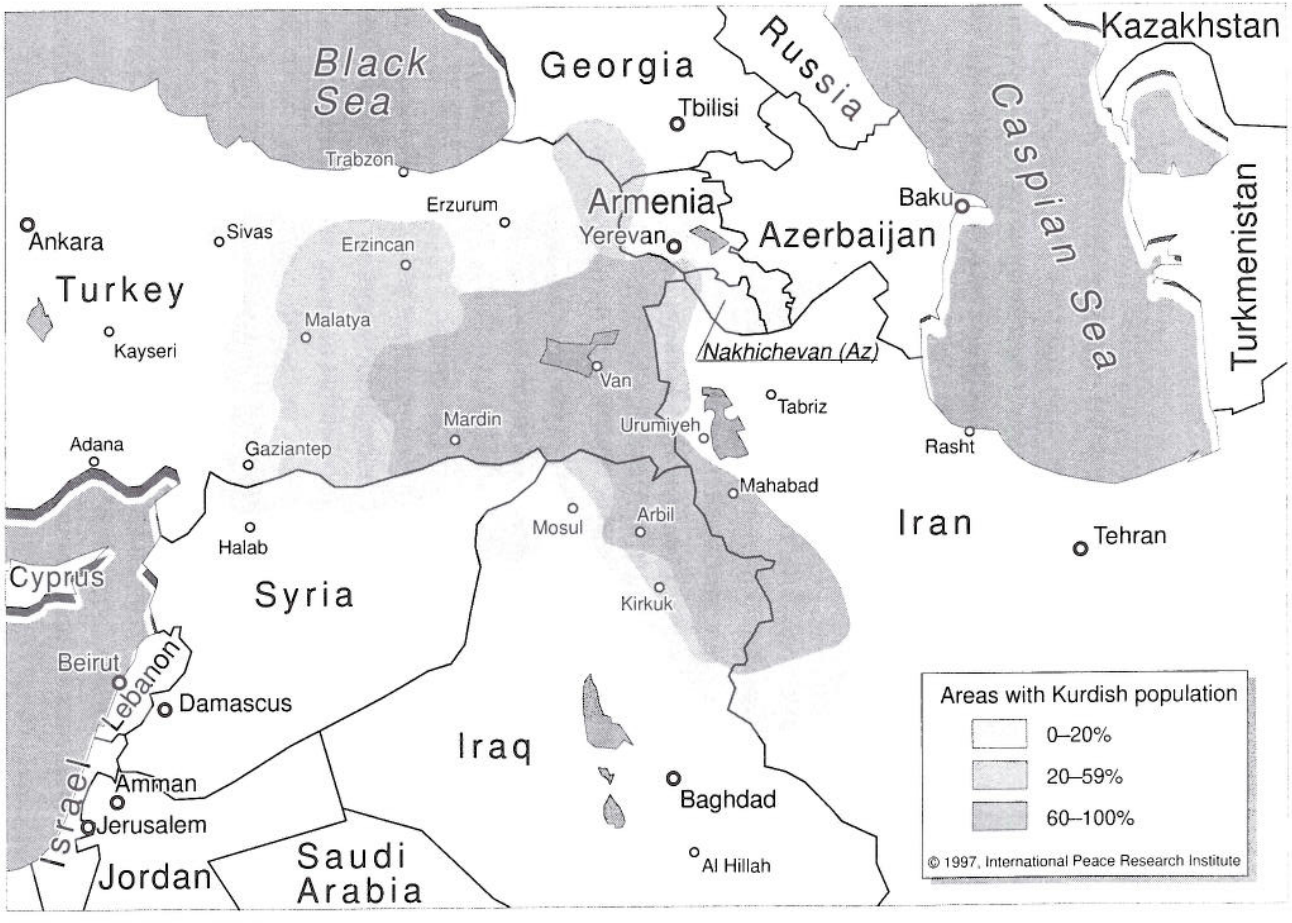
The Kurds

In the 1920s, the Kurds were close to getting their own state. Today most Kurdish nationalists have abandoned this goal and instead want autonomous Kurdish regions within Turkey, Iraq and Iran. The Kurdish Labour Party (PKK) is an exception to this because it is still fighting for a separate Kurdish state. Resistance from the outside world and internal rivalry have led to a long and difficult struggle for the Kurds.

Background

The Kurds have developed a common identity over the past 2,000 years. Most of them probably descend from Indo-European tribes which settled, as far back as 4,000 years ago, among the original inhabitants in the mountains on the frontier of what is now Iraq, Iran and Turkey. They were presumably mountain people who had come into conflict with the Mesopotamian empires of Sumer, Babylon and Assyria. The Kurds themselves maintain that they are descendants of the Medes, but this claim lacks linguistic support. At the beginning of the Arab period in the 7th century, the ethnic term 'Kurd' was used to designate a mixture of Iranian or Iranified tribes as well as some Semitic and possibly some Armenian communities.

Although there are minor Kurdish communities in Syria, Lebanon and Armenia, most Kurds still live in the mountainous regions in the border area between Iraq, Iran and Turkey. The heart of this area consists of inaccessible mountains rising from the north-west to the south-east. To the west, the mountains give way to a hilly landscape sloping down towards the Mesopotamian plain. To the north, the mountains gradually change their character to a steppe-like plateau and highland in what used to be called Armenian Anatolia. The population in this region does not consist exclusively of Kurds, but the dominant culture is Kurdish. The greater part of this area has been called Kurdistan since the beginning of the 13th century, even though 'Kurdistan' was not to become a common term until the 16th century. By then, the Kurds had migrated north and west to the Anatolian plateau. Since



The distribution of Kurds

then, the term 'Kurdistan' has meant more than just geography. It also refers to Kurdish culture and is therefore a social and political concept as well.

About 85% of the Kurds are Sunni Muslims. In fact, religion plays only a minor role in creating the feeling of Kurdish distinctiveness, although religious adherence may reflect loyalty to different villages and tribes.

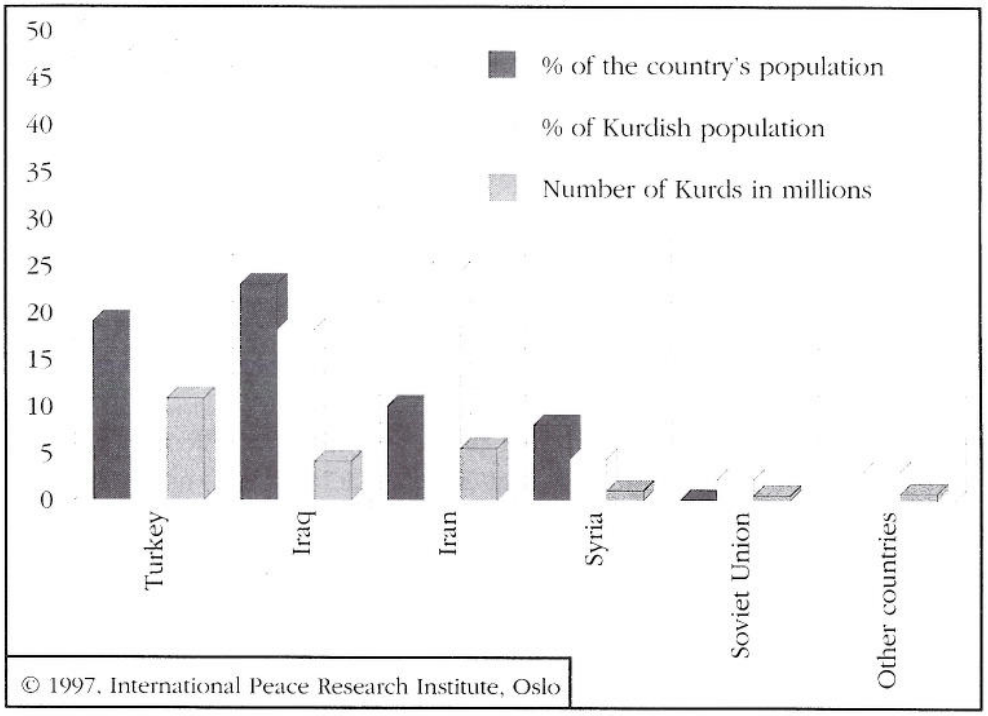
The Kurds lack a common language, and they cannot always communicate with other Kurds in their mother tongue. The majority speak a language originating in north-west Iran. This language has two main dialects: Kurmanji and Sorani (Kurdi), both with major local variations. There are also several sub-dialects, such as Kirmanshahi, Leki, Gurani and Zaza.

Kurdistan can boast vast oil deposits as well as minerals like chromium, copper, iron and coal. Oil is found in commercially viable quantities in Kirkuk and Khanaqini (Iraq), Batman and Silvan (Turkey) and Rumeglan (Syria). This is an important factor in the attitudes of the various national governments regarding the question of Kurdish self-determination, and has strengthened the Kurds' own feeling of being treated unfairly.

Inner Struggle

The society of the Kurds consists mainly of tribes that arose from a nomadic and semi-nomadic way of life in previous centuries. Kurdish society is strongly individualized and often split by internal disagreements. So far in history, the Kurds have never really managed to unite in their common cause. Their primary loyalty is to the immediate family, and then to the tribe. Tribe allegiance is, however, based on a mixture of consanguinity and territorial loyalty. Many Kurds of the lower regions are not organized in tribes, but even among these there is often strife between different clans and communities.

The split of the Kurdish Democratic Party (KDP) in 1974 under leader Mulla Mustafa Barzani's struggle for autonomy in Kirkuk is a good example of internal Kurdish rivalry. Several thousand Kurds joined forces with the Baath Party of Iraq in the war *against* Kurdish self-government, mainly because they doubted Barzani's personal motives and the way he was leading the KDP. This war caused great losses to Kurds and Iraqis alike. The fights between Turkish and Iraqi Kurds in the autumn and winter of 1992 are another example of this internal dissension. The inter-Kurdish conflicts have also been consciously used by the authorities of Iran, Iraq and Turkey in their own national strategies.



The distribution of Kurds

Despite the internal strife, the Kurds still claim they constitute a distinct community through their language, lifestyle, ethnic identity and – not least – geographical spread.

The Treaty of Sèvres

The Kurds were promised their own country through the Treaty of Sèvres. Signed on 10 August 1920, this agreement divided what was left of the Ottoman Empire. The Treaty of Sèvres was a result of joint Kurdish and Armenian efforts to fight for Kurdish and Armenian independence respectively. The Kurds and the Armenians both knew how to take advantage of the Allies' unsuccessful attempts at protecting them, and they presented a joint memorandum at the Versailles peace negotiations in 1919. The Treaty of Sèvres was signed the following year, but Turkey's Mustafa Kamal Atatürk disregarded the agreement in his struggle in the early 1920s for a modern Turkish state with new borders. From that time onwards, the Kurds lost hope of further international support. They found themselves split between four states, no longer just three.

In 1991, Turkey had 10,800,000 Kurds, which amounted to 19% of its total population. In Iraq, the number of Kurds was 4,100,000 (23%); in Iran, 5,500,000 (10%); and in Syria, 1,000,000 (8%).

Turkey

Of the four countries where the Kurds form sizeable minorities, Turkey has by far been the most democratic – except regarding the Kurdish question. Until very recently, the authorities denied that the Kurds existed as a distinct nationality in Turkey. However, during 1991–92 the late President Turgut Özal, himself of Kurdish descent, opened the door for discussion about not only the existence of the Kurds but also how to deal with their demands. More recently, Ankara's fight against the Kurds, and especially against the PKK, has hardened under Prime Minister Tansu Ciller and her successor, Necmettin Erbakan. To eliminate the PKK, the government relies exclusively on military means, rather than economic and political measures. Ciller has declared that Kurdish separatists have 'brainwashed' the governments of Europe and the USA, and she repudiates international criticism on violations of human rights. The Helsinki Committee claims that Turkish authorities use terror actions by the PKK (see below) as an excuse for attacks against the civilian population.

In the spring of 1994, eight Kurdish MPs were deprived of their parliamentary immunity and accused of treason. The Kurdish Democratic Party (DEP) was banned in July 1994, and all 13 of its representatives lost their seats in the national assembly. Moreover, Ciller admitted that there were political, rather than juridical, motives for the trial against them. Following significant pressure from the international community, the charges against the eight were changed. The eight were in the end convicted for having created or had links with armed groups, in particular the PKK. Five of the eight were sentenced to 15 years' imprisonment. The trial led the EU to halt work on establishing a customs agreement between the EU and Turkey. This agreement, however, came into force in December 1995. Criticism from the West in January 1995 led Ciller to suggest a change of those elements of the constitution that deprived the Kurds of the right to free speech. There has also been liberalization regarding teaching and television programmes in Kurdish.

The massive flight of Kurdish refugees from Iraq to camps in Turkey at the end of the Gulf War and the safe havens established by the UN in northern Iraq put Turkey in a difficult position. On the one hand, the country

wants to develop its cooperation with the West, but the authorities also want to play a central role in the part of Iraqi Kurdistan where oil deposits are located. Turkey had claimed this region until forced to cede it to British Mandate Iraq in 1926. The fate of about 1 million Turks in northern Iraq is also a matter of great concern to Turkey.

The PKK

The Revolutionary Kurdish Labour Party (Partiya Karkaren Kurdistan) in Turkey is unique among Kurdish movements because it openly advocates complete independence. Other Kurdish organizations in Iraq and Iran see self-government as the only realistic solution. The PKK is also the sole major organization that attempts to realize a pan-Kurdish vision through a united Kurdistan. Anecdotal evidence suggests that the PKK is strong in the Kurdish heartlands.

The PKK is heavily influenced by Marxist and socialist ideas. The party has had the opportunity to develop an independent agenda, and many Kurdish intellectuals therefore regard the PKK as the only modern Kurdish movement. However, the PKK also works through violent guerrilla warfare in south-eastern Turkey, and carries out actions against economic targets throughout Turkey.

From time to time, the government has treated the civilian population in Kurdish areas very harshly. During the past decade, 1,300 villages are said to have been burnt down or destroyed by Turkish security forces. Two million Kurds have become refugees in their own country.

The PKK has responded with hostage actions, for instance by taking foreigners travelling in south-eastern Turkey as hostages. Civilian terror targets have increasingly become part of the strategy, and sympathy for the PKK abroad has diminished considerably over the last few years. According to estimates, the war costs Turkey around USD 7 billion a year. On top of that comes the loss of international goodwill.

Germany and France banned the PKK and its various front organizations in the autumn of 1993, after several terrorist actions against Turkish embassies and business enterprises abroad. As many people see it, PKK has now become highly reminiscent of the Khmer Rouge and their policy in Cambodia in the 1970s and of Sendero Luminoso in Peru. According to British police, the political wing has financed its operations through drug dealing.

The PKK came into existence after the military coup in Turkey in 1980 and started its armed fight against the Turkish government in 1984. The party

has its strongest footholds in south-eastern Turkey and in exile circles. It is led by the doctrinaire exile leader Abdullah Öcalan, and the movement has had important support abroad in the Syrian President Hafiz al Assad.

So far the struggle has cost more than 15,000 lives. As the activities of the movement became increasingly bloody, the initial support from Iran, Syria and non-Kurds dwindled. The party's goal concerning a social revolution throughout the Middle East has also contributed to this.

It is a paradox that the formation of a de facto autonomous zone in northern Iraq provided Turkey with its best opportunity to fight back against the PKK. In October 1992, the Kurdish leaders Barzani and Jalal Talabani supported a major military campaign within the Kurdish zone. This operation was a devastating blow to the infrastructure and members of the PKK; Turkey claimed to have killed 200 PKK soldiers. Since that time, Ankara's military strategy has consisted of attacks on the Iraqi side of the border as soon as signs of PKK activities or movements in the area are detected. In July and August 1994, the Turkish Air Force once again attacked Kurdish rebels in northern Iraq. A collaboration between Iraqi Kurds and Turkish authorities to stop the activities of the PKK was presumably the prelude to the unilateral, though short-lived, ceasefire proclaimed by the PKK in March 1993. Turkey has also closed its borders to Iraq to prevent Turkish Kurds from fleeing to Iraqi Kurdistan. Tansu Ciller vowed to crush the Kurdish insurgents in south-eastern Turkey in the course of 1994.

In late March 1995, Turkish authorities launched a major offensive against the PKK in northern Iraq. Some 35,000 troops participated in the operation, which, according to Ciller was intended to 'rip out the roots' of the PKK. The offensive served to alienate many of Turkey's Western European allies. Turkey, for its part, reacted very negatively to the Netherlands' hosting a PKK-aligned Kurdish exile government. The Turkish troops were finally pulled out of northern Iraq in May. According to Turkish authorities, 555 PKK rebels had been killed. After the withdrawal, heavy fighting resumed in south-eastern Turkey. The offensive was renewed for a week in early July, and an additional 167 rebels were reported killed.

In December 1995, the PKK announced a unilateral ceasefire. The Turkish government responded by demanding the extradition of Öcalan from Syria, where the organization has its headquarters.

Iraq

The existence of the Kurds, as well as the distinctiveness of their language and culture, has been widely accepted in Iraq. All the same, the Kurds have perished by the hundred thousands because the ruling Baath Party has suppressed even the slightest expression of separatism and resistance against government policy. This has been going on for several decades: Kurdish revolts were also countered in 1919, 1923 and 1932.

In 1970, Iraq came to an agreement with the Kurds concerning linguistic rights, autonomy in the Kurdish region and participation in the Baghdad government, but this agreement fell through later. After having given their support to Iran in the war against Iraq, the Kurds were made to feel Saddam Hussein's terrible revenge. Among other incidents, 5,000 inhabitants were killed by chemical warfare when Saddam's forces attacked the Kurdish town of Halabja in March 1988.

The Gulf War in many ways gave the Kurds new possibilities. One of these was the establishment of the internationally guaranteed enclave in northern Iraq.

Two-thirds of Iraqi Kurdistan is currently under Kurdish control. This is an area of 50,000 square kilometres populated by 3.5 million people, 500,000 of whom are refugees. The Iraqi Kurds strive for self-government within the framework of a democratic Iraq without Saddam Hussein. In October 1992, they proclaimed the establishment of a federal Kurdish state, which caused a great deal of concern in Turkey, Syria and Iran. In the spring of 1994, a serious conflict erupted between the two leading Kurdish guerrilla groups, the Patriotic Union of Kurdistan (PUK), led by Jalal Talabani, and the Kurdish Democratic Party (KDP) of Iraq, led by Barzani Massoud. The two had previously shared power in a regional government for the Kurds.

During 1995 and 1996, several clashes took place between the PUK and the KDP, after their joint control over the Kurdish enclave in northern Iraq broke down in 1994. After that, most of the north-west was controlled by Massoud Barzani's KDP, while the south-east has been the area of Jalal Talibani's PUK. In December 1994, fighting resumed, and in January 1995 it intensified, following the capture by PUK forces of the regional capital, Arbil, and the town of Sulaimaniya. Foreign mediation in the months that followed, in particular by the USA and Iran, failed to solve the intra-Kurdish conflict.

In late August and early September 1996, the KDP, with the support of Saddam's regime – and some 40,000 Iraqi troops – seized Arbil and several

other towns from the PUK. Among the towns captured was Sulaimaniya, the main base of the PUK. The initiative amounted to Iraq's first major challenge to the order established in the region by the US-led coalition following the 1991 Gulf War. The UN Security Council condemned the Iraqi action. The USA retaliated single-handedly by launching air attacks on military bases in Iraq.

Following their losses to the KDP, the PUK forces pulled back into Iran. In mid-October, they returned – with new strength and, according to the KDP, Iranian military assistance. They recaptured Sulaimaniya and other towns. Battles for positions appeared set to continue.

The increasing international concern about the Iraqi Kurds will make it difficult to disregard their plight once Saddam is removed from power. The Iraqi Kurds have already come a long way towards de facto autonomy, something that would have been impossible under previous political systems in Iraq.

Iran

In Iran the Kurds have been allowed a measure of cultural independence, but they have basically been isolated from political processes, and all attempts at self-government have been suppressed by military means. Supported by the Soviet Union, the Kurds managed to establish the so-called Mahabad Republic in 1946, but Iranian leader Shah Reza crushed the rebellion the following year.

In 1974, war between Iran and Iraq forced 130,000 Kurds to flee to Iran. Iran also lent military assistance to the Kurds, but their revolt collapsed when Iran and Iraq settled their dispute. After the Gulf War of 1991, refugees to Iran were given a choice between returning to Iraq or being moved from the border area to permanent camps deeper in the country. During 1993, there were several outbreaks of armed struggle in Iranian Kurdistan.

As mentioned, the KDP has claimed that the PUK offensive was supported militarily by Iran. Whether or not this is true, it is the case that the PUK enjoys a free haven in Iran. It remains to be seen whether the struggle between Kurdish groups, which is convenient for many states, will turn into a war by proxy between Iran and Iraq.

The Future

International conferences have united the Kurds and given them increased attention as a people. Although the engagement of the UN in northern Iraq has necessarily also given continuity to the work of the Kurds, the question of Kurdish autonomy remains unresolved. One possible solution to this problem is to achieve genuine agreement about some kind of self-government.

Turkey has thus far not succeeded in its policy towards the PKK. The government in Ankara still faces significant opposition from the Kurdish guerrillas. For Turkey to achieve peace, suppression and use of force cannot be the only responses to the Kurds and their struggle. Sooner or later the Kurds will have to be met with political means in a democratic and pluralist framework like that already existing in other parts of Turkey. The other countries in the region are paying close attention to Turkey, though, in fear of pan-Turkish thrusts. Should Turkey try to gain influence over northern Iraq and the future of the Kurds in general, the Kurdish area in Iraq will be endangered. In such a case, Iraq is likely to develop a definite anti-Turkish policy to protect its own position in this region. The political ambitions of the Kurds are actually a threat against pan-Arab ideas. As many people see it, the Turks intend to use the Kurdish controversy to expand their power at the expense of the Arab countries in a new and dangerous phase of 'neo-Ottomanism'. Turkey may at least be forced to introduce some kind of federal system which would allow the Kurds broad cultural autonomy.

The fight for self-government has been less violent in Iran, at least lately. Increased struggle for autonomy in Iraq and Turkey may, however, spill over to the Kurds in Iran. This may then unleash renewed suppression of the Kurds at the hands of the Iranian authorities.

Central Asia

In this chapter, 'Central Asia' applies to the former Soviet republics of Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Tajikistan, Turkmenistan and Uzbekistan (since a separate chapter is devoted to Tajikistan, it will not be dealt with here). The region borders on China to the east, Afghanistan and Iran to the south, the Caspian Sea to the west and Russia to the north. Today's state borders reflect Soviet administrative partitions. In many places, the borders cut across ethnic and linguistic divisions and are seen as 'artificial'. This has led to demands for independence from minorities.

The Central Asian states declared themselves sovereign republics in 1990 and independent states after the unsuccessful coup in Moscow in August 1991. Because of immigration and Soviet deportations, they contain many other nationalities in addition to the original Asian populations.

The fall of the Soviet regime has led to competition between Muslim, national and pan-Turkish groups. Although Islam functions more as a system of norms rather than a unified religion, it is important in the emancipation from Communist ideology and the cultural influence of Russia. The autochthonous people of Central Asia are Sunni Muslims. The only major exception are the Pamir people in the Badakhshan mountain regions in Tajikistan, who are Ismaelites.

Only among the sedentary peoples around the oases in the southern part of Central Asia has Islam established deep roots. Here also, a mystic Muslim brotherhood of various Sufi orders operates. Among the traditionally nomadic peoples in the north and east, the Kazakhs and the Kyrgyz, the cultural impact of Islam has been more limited.

Even though Central Asia regards itself as belonging to the Muslim world, a secular society is the goal for all the republics. National identity linked to a specific ethnic group is a new phenomenon in the region. People in Central Asia feel loyalty primarily to family, clan and tribe, then to religion and ethnic grouping – as Turks or as Persian-speakers, as the case may be.

Language is an essential agent in nation-building, but it also has a discriminatory effect. National languages are now replacing Russian in all these countries, and the traditionally privileged position of the Russians is being

Central Asia

reduced. The different identities, however, are regarded more as tools for gaining popular support in building the nation than as a foundation for political agendas. The Communists – nowadays known as Socialists, Democrats or Social Democrats – still occupy central political and administrative positions. Subjugation of minorities and political opposition shows that democracy has, at best, secondary practical importance. Since 1992, the Central Asian states have introduced new constitutions which have strengthened their presidencies. The constitutions have frequently been changed.

The security policy and military interests of Central Asia are at present expressed by a Treaty on Collective Security, signed on 15 May 1992 by Russia, Armenia and all the Central Asian states except Turkmenistan. This is a collective security agreement that commits the signatories to assist in case a country in the Commonwealth of Independent States (CIS) is attacked. Furthermore, the Central Asian states are members of the North Atlantic Cooperation Council (NACC) and the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE). Turkmenistan, Kazakhstan and Kyrgyzstan are also members of the Partnership for Peace (PFP), while Turkmenistan, Kyrgyzstan and Tajikistan are members of the Organization of the Islamic Conference (IOC). Uzbekistan is the only Central Asian state that is a member of the Non-aligned Movement (NAM).

Common Features

The Central Asian states generally have backward and underdeveloped economies based on export of raw materials in exchange for assistance from Moscow. The breakdown of the Soviet, and later the Russian, economy has made it very difficult for the Central Asian states to sell their products. At the same time, importing of essential goods from Russia has ceased, simply because these products are needed in Russia. The extraction of minerals and oil and the concentration on cotton production have led to water shortage, serious air pollution and ecological catastrophes like the drying up of the Aral Sea on the border between Kazakhstan and Uzbekistan.

Nationalism, high unemployment and rapid population growth have all created a situation in which ethnic conflicts and racism can thrive. Shortages of food and housing have led to aggression towards aliens. Generally, the hostility has not been directed towards Russians or other Slavs but smaller, underdog groups, in particular Meskhet Turks, Armenians and other Caucasians.

The vast majority of the Slavs live in cities, particularly in the capitals, and have high-status jobs in the modern economic sector. The indigenization

of politics and social life in these cities since independence has led to increased Russian emigration since 1990. This affects the people of Central Asia, because they need Slav expertise and trained personnel in areas like the oil industry.

All Central Asian states have adopted inclusive citizenship laws which grant all non-titulars automatic citizenship and, on paper, untrammelled political and social rights. In practice, however, the titular national groups are increasingly monopolizing politics and prestigious jobs. Power and influence flows through traditional networks of clan and tribe filiations from which the European settlers are excluded. The nationalization of the Central Asian states also affects indigenous ethnic minorities such as the Tajiks of Uzbekistan and the Uzbeks of Kazakhstan and Tajikistan.

The countries of Central Asia want a gradual transition to a market economy through economic reforms and privatization. To attract financial assistance and investment, they seek contact with the West, but also with the Far East and the Middle East. All the Central Asian countries depend on economic cooperation with other former Soviet republics. They have all entered into economic agreements with Iran, Pakistan and Turkey (through the Economic Cooperation Organization). They have received financial support from the EU since 1990, as well as from the European Bank for Reconstruction and Development (EBRD). Furthermore, they are all members of the economic union in the CIS, which was set up in September 1993. At the same time, the Central Asian states have decided to work for a common market to coordinate economic, financial and price policies and their struggle against terrorism and drug trafficking. In January 1994, Kazakhstan and Uzbekistan established an alternative economic union. Kyrgyzstan formally entered this union three months later. In July 1994, the three agreed to strengthen the union by increasing the social and military cooperation, among other things by standardizing legislation on defence and foreign policy. In February 1995, the leaders of the three states agreed to the immediate establishment of an Interstate Council to govern their trilateral economic union. In May 1996, the leaders of these states took a further step towards integration by signing a number of economic cooperation agreements.

However, many of these agreements are being poorly implemented. Among some of the states, there are strong latent tensions and mutual suspicions. In Uzbekistan, Tashkent is regarded as the unofficial capital of the entire region. In the other Central Asian capitals, such notions are perceived as threatening to Uzbek hegemonistic aspirations. President Islam Karimov is a leading proponent

of Central Asian integration. In May 1995, he called for the creation of a common republic of 'Turkestan', made up of the five Central Asia republics. Also, water is scarce in Central Asia, and the control of water and land resources may bring about future conflicts between the new states.

All Central Asian states have now introduced their own currencies, resulting in increased independence and attractiveness to Western donors. Some of these currencies are propped up by Western credit but nevertheless remain relatively unstable.

Uzbekistan

The Turkic-speaking population in what is now the territory of Uzbekistan was converted to Islam by the Arabs in the early 8th century. The original Uzbeks were nomads and, relatively speaking, latecomers to the region. The Shaibanid Uzbeks arrived from the east in the early 16th century and were subjugated by, and later merged with, the older sedentary population. Their state was later broken up into the three independent emirates of Bukhara, Khiva and Kokand. These emirates enjoyed a measure of self-rule, even after the Russian conquest in the 19th century and for a few years under the Bolsheviks. Resistance to Communism was strong in the 1920s in the so-called Basmachi movement.

Uzbekistan declared itself an independent state on 31 August 1991 and confirmed the declaration through a referendum on 29 December the same year. It should be borne in mind, however, that referenda in most of Central Asia are not so much expressions of popular will but a way of legitimizing the political decisions of the elites.

With irrigation, Uzbekistan has become a fertile farming country with a large cotton industry, as well as its substantial deposits of oil and natural gas. Compared with those in the other Central Asian states, the economic situation in Uzbekistan since independence has been quite good, albeit with high inflation.

Presidential elections in late December 1991 were won by the chairman of the Supreme Soviet, Islam Karimov, against one opponent. Karimov captured 85.9% of the vote. In a referendum on 26 March 1995, voters almost unanimously backed an extension of Karimov's term until the year 2000. Elections to the Oli Majlis (Supreme Assembly) were held for the first time in December 1994 and January 1995. They resulted in a Majlis dominated by the ruling, formerly communist, People's Democratic Party, led by Karimov. The parliamentary opposition is hand-picked by Karimov and completely

pliant. The Islamic Renaissance Party was outlawed in 1989, and the secular opposition movements Erk and Birlik were similarly banned in 1993. Their leaders were physically assaulted and fled the country. However, in 1996, they were allowed to return home as a result of strong pressure from the United States.

Ethnic and Political Conditions

Uzbekistan has the largest population of the Central Asian states, about 21 million inhabitants (1991 figures). Approximately 70% are Uzbeks. The biggest minorities are Russians and Tajiks, numbering 1.6 and 1 million (1989 figures), respectively. Around 2.3 million ethnic Uzbeks live outside Uzbekistan; half of these live in Tajikistan, where they make up about 23% of the population. There are approximately 300,000 Uzbeks in Turkmenistan and some in northern Afghanistan. Samarkand and Bukhara are traditional Tajik cities, but many of the Tajiks living there have been forced to register as Uzbeks. The Meskhets are a group who were deported from Georgia in the Stalin era; although they are Sunni Muslims like the Uzbeks themselves, there is no love lost between them. In 1989, around 34,000 Meskhets were evacuated from Uzbekistan after violent conflicts between Uzbeks and Meskhets over land and water resources in the Fergana Valley.

Uzbekistan has evolved further towards stability than the other Central Asian states. This has happened without major conflicts. Relations between the government and the Muslims are tense, but the authoritarian neo-communist regime has so far avoided open conflict. Crime rates are lower than in most of the neighbouring countries. Such achievements have secured a measure of popular support for the regime.

Kazakhstan

The Kazakhs were originally nomads that gathered in groups known as 'the Great Horde', 'the Middle Horde' and 'the Little Horde' in the 15th century. They ruled in various regions, but in the 18th and mid-19th centuries these regions were gradually made into Russian protectorates ruled by Khans controlled by the Russian tsar. In 1916, attempts to enrol the Kazakhs and other Central Asians into the Russian auxiliary forces in World War I provoked a major uprising which was harshly crushed. Kazakhstan was established as an autonomous republic in 1920 under the confusing name 'the Kirgiz Autonomous Republic' (the Kazakhs were at the time called 'Kirgizs' to distinguish them from

the Cossacks, while the present-day Kyrgyz were named 'Kara-Kirgizs'). In 1936, Kazakhstan became a Union Republic.

Kazakhstan is one of the world's largest countries, five times bigger than France. It consists of desert, steppe and mountain areas, and is rich in minerals (uranium), oil and fertile soil in the north. The most barren parts are located in the centre of the country. This means that the north and the south exist in virtually separate worlds. In an attempt to close this gap, President Nursultan Nazarbayev has decided to move the capital from Almaty (formerly Alma-Ata) in the south-east to Akmola (formerly Tselinograd) in the steppe zone.

In 1990, the eastern part of Kazakhstan was declared an ecological catastrophe area because of Soviet nuclear tests conducted there since 1949. To further economic cooperation and attract investment, Nazarbayev has established contacts with Western and Eastern Europe, the Far East, Egypt, Iran, Pakistan and Russia. Kazakhstan collaborates with Russia on oil transport between Siberia, Kazakhstan and Russia, and with US and European oil companies on the extraction of oil and natural gas.

Ethnic and Political Conditions

Kazakhstan had a population of more than 16.8 million in 1991. According to the census of 1989, there were 6.5 million Kazakhs, 6.2 million Russians and almost 1 million Germans. For the first time, the Kazakhs outnumber the Russians. There are also sizeable groups of Dungans and deported Koreans, Poles and Chechens. Two million Kazakhs live in Russia, Turkmenistan, Uzbekistan, Kyrgyzstan and China.

Ethnic violence erupted in Alma Ata in December 1986 when the Kazakhstan party leader was replaced by a Russian. Three years later, skilled workers from Caucasia were beaten up in Novy Uzen near the Caspian Sea.

Future instability in Kazakhstan may arise in connection with the large Russian population concentrated in areas bordering Russia. After the dissolution of the Soviet Union, appeals for border revisions have been made in Russia as well as in some northern Kazakhstani cities, but most Russians in Kazakhstan do not appear to favour this solution.

Kazakhstan declared itself an independent state on 16 December 1991. The economic crisis and political instability in Russia make emigration undesirable, both for the Russian minority and for the Russian authorities. Mass migration would, moreover, create serious problems for the economy

of Kazakhstan, because the Russians have vital oil expertise and industrial skills in general.

The Kazakhstani state concept envisions the establishment of a supra-ethnic, civic nation-state in which all ethnic groups have equal rights. A persistent Kazakhification of culture, politics and administration is nevertheless taking place.

Western ideas of democracy and pluralism are better implemented in Kazakhstan than in most of the neighbouring countries, but there are also strong authoritarian tendencies in Kazakhstani politics. Nazarbayev has been the leading figure since independence, first as party boss, then as president since 1991. In the presidential elections in December 1991, he was the sole candidate, but is genuinely popular among large segments of the population.

In late 1993, Nazarbayev pressured the Kazakhstani Supreme Soviet to dissolve itself. The president ruled by decree until new elections were held in March 1994. International observers pointed out a number of irregularities in these elections, and Nazarbayev decided in March 1995 to dissolve this elected body as well. In April, he organized a referendum extending his presidency until 2000. In August, voters overwhelmingly supported a new constitution giving the president great powers. The constitution had been characterized as undemocratic by the constitutional court and the political opposition. As a sop to the Russophone population, the new constitution defines Russian as an 'official' language.

President Nazarbayev is pursuing a policy of close ties with Russia, not least because of the very strong presence of ethnic Russians in the country. In January 1995, he entered into an agreement with Russian President Boris Yeltsin establishing joint armed forces by the end of the year. In March 1996, Kazakhstan signed a quadripartite agreement on closer cooperation with Russia, Belarus and Kyrgyzstan.

Kyrgyzstan

The Kyrgyz are traditionally a nomadic people that descend from Turkish tribes, Mongols and people from the Tian Shan mountains. This mountain range has been the homeland of the Kyrgyz since the 15th century and was the territorial basis for the development of a common ethnic consciousness. This emerged gradually as a response to Russian colonization and the Soviet influence of more recent years. The tsar's command to mobilize for war in 1916 caused bloody conflicts between local Kyrgyz and tsar-brigades. Kara-Kirgizia was established as an autonomous republic under the Turkestan Soviet Republic in 1924. The Kirgiz Soviet Socialist Republic was not established until 1936.

The Republic of Kyrgyzstan declared independence from the Soviet Union on 31 August 1991 and became a member of the CIS when it came into existence. A new constitution was adopted in May 1993 and another, currently in force, in October 1994. The latter document provides for a professional, two-chamber parliament, the Zhogorku Kenesh. It comprises a 35-seat Legislative Assembly (lower house) and a 70-seat People's Assembly (upper house). The presidency was instituted in October 1991; the directly elected president is limited to a maximum of two consecutive five-year terms. Legislative elections were most recently held in February 1995.

In December 1995, Askar Akayev was elected president for a second five-year term, winning 71.6% of the vote. In February 1996, the voters in a referendum endorsed amendments to the constitution which gave the president sweeping new powers. All senior officials, with the exception of the prime minister, will now be appointed by the president. After a period of political turbulence, Apas Jumagulov was confirmed as prime minister by the parliament.

Ethnic and Political Conditions

The Kyrgyz constitute about half of the nearly 4.5 million inhabitants (1992) of the country. Russians and Uzbeks make up the largest minority groups. The Kyrgyz live mainly in the rural districts, accounting for only 23% of the population in the capital city of Bishkek. Urban areas are dominated by Russians and Ukrainians, and by Uzbeks in the city of Osh. At the same time, Kazakhstan and Kyrgyzstan are the only countries in Central Asia where a substantial part of the European population is engaged in farming (30–33%). Kyrgyzstan has rich mineral deposits and arable land, but falling agricultural output (down 20% in 1992) and industrial output.

Economic stagnation and demographic frustration have led, in particular, young, unskilled Kyrgyz to look for work in the cities, where housing problems are staggering. The regional authorities of Osh tried to give Uzbek-dominated farming areas to Kyrgyz in the summer of 1990, but this unleashed pogroms and clashes between armed Kyrgyz and Uzbek bands. The latter were supported by Uzbeks who crossed the border from Uzbekistan. The insurrection led to demands for Uzbek autonomy and for parts of Kyrgyzstan to become incorporated into Uzbekistan, but Soviet soldiers stopped the riots. In 1989 and 1990, there were armed clashes between Tajiks and Kyrgyz in the border regions.

Kyrgyzstan has received significant economic support from the West. The country has also established economic ties with Libya, Iran and the Far East.

Kyrgyzstan has experienced greater development towards democracy than the other Central Asian states. President Akayev, elected in October 1991, is the only leader in Central Asia who does not hail from the Soviet political elite. He is very positive towards reform and calls himself a social democrat. The Communist Party was prohibited in August 1991, but was reborn in June 1992. Akayev is carrying out a liberalization with the promise of a supra-ethnic state. Kyrgyzstani politics are nevertheless increasingly monopolized by ethnic Kyrgyz. Clan allegiances are strong. The main intra-ethnic divisions run between the northern and southern clans. Akayev represents the northerners while the main opposition leader, former Communist boss Absamat Masaliyev, finds his strongest support in the south.

Turkmenistan

The Turkmens were ruled by the Uzbek Khanates of Khiva and Khokand and a Turkmen confederation of tribes until the Russian conquest in 1881. The Turkmens put up the strongest resistance to Russian rule in Central Asia, and their lands were the last to be incorporated into the Russian Empire. Turkmenia became a Soviet Republic in 1924 and was proclaimed the Turkmenistan Union Republic in 1925.

The present borders with Iran and Afghanistan are the result of an Anglo-Russian treaty of 1895, which created Turkmen minorities in these countries. Today, there are between 1 and 2 million Turkmens in Iran and approximately 1 million in Afghanistan. Turkmenistan is the most sparsely populated state in Central Asia, with fewer than 3.8 million inhabitants, of which two-thirds are Turkmens. Russians account for about half of the minority population, which otherwise consists of Uzbeks, Kazakhs and other groups.

The Kara Kum Desert covers some nine-tenths of Turkmenistan. Principal industries are cotton production and extraction of sulphur, oil and natural gas. Turkmenistan has a well-developed processing industry. In October 1995, the country entered into an agreement worth USD 3 billion for the construction of a pipeline to transport gas to Pakistan via Afghanistan. The country is totally dependent on import of foodstuffs. Turkmenistan has kept up the economic cooperation with other former Soviet republics while also expanding its contacts with the West and Iran. A new railroad connecting the capital city of Ashgabad with Iran was completed in 1996. The country does not want to participate in the political and institutional structures of the CIS, partly due to fears that any kind of multilateral cooperation in the region will inevitably be Uzbek-dominated. Instead, the country is trying to build strong bilateral links with Russia.

Turkmenistan declared itself a sovereign state on 22 August 1990 and an independent state through a referendum on 27 October 1991. Besides identification with tribe, clan, family, language and Islam, the concept of 'Turkmenism' has emerged in the process of developing the nation. Islamic fundamentalism has negligible political importance. The Communist regime, headed by President Saparmurad Niyazov, has been in power since June 1992, and is probably the most authoritarian government in Central Asia. Niyazov has established a personality cult of vast proportions around himself. On 19 February 1995, the State Flag Day – a national holiday coinciding with the president's birthday – was celebrated for the first time. That same month, Niyazov also ordered commercial banks in the country to write off government debts, hand over three-quarters of 1994 profits to the state, and lend money to the state at an interest rate far below the inflation rate.

A new constitution was adopted on 18 May 1992, making the elected president both head of state and head of the government. A 50-member Majlis is to be elected as the new legislature to replace the 175-seat Supreme Soviet. The People's Council (Khalk Maslakhaty), Turkmenistan's supreme representative body, is subordinate to the president; it comprises 50 elected members, who are to be joined by all 50 Majlis deputies upon their election. In the interim, the presidency and the Supreme Soviet will carry out the duties of the Majlis.

Conflict Potential

Political instability, Islamic fundamentalism and national fanaticism lead to conflicts in the Central Asian republics, as has happened in Tajikistan. A strong, prosperous, secular state with freedom to manoeuvre on the international scene is the ideal for the leaderships of all these countries. The prospects for development towards this model depend on, among other things, economic development, ethnic relations and the populations' long-term tolerance for highly centralized government.

Developments in Central Asia will also depend on what happens in neighbouring countries. Several Muslim states in this region are trying to fill the economic and political void left by the Soviet Union. The majority of the Central Asian states want to reduce their economic dependence on Russia, while they also desire close cooperation with it in other areas. Statements from the Russian government on Russia's duty to secure peace in 'the near abroad' have also given rise to concern in Central Asia.

Tajikistan

In 1991, independence was forced upon Tajikistan by events. Today, it is questionable whether the republic will continue to exist as one state: in the place of an all-encompassing national identity are strong local allegiances; economically the state is completely dependent on contributions from other states; and the national military forces are unable to keep the country together without outside support.

Background

The Republic of Tajikistan has a population of 6.15 million (1995 estimate). It is the poorest of the former Soviet republics, with a per capita GNP of a mere USD 1,415 (1994 estimate) and falling. In 1994, the national product fell by an estimated 12%; industrial production, by 31%. Official unemployment is very low, but real underemployment and unemployment run high.

The population of Tajikistan is increasing rapidly – in 1995 by an estimated 2.6% – because of a very high birth-rate. As many as 43% of the country's workers are employed in agriculture and forestry.

Tajikistan is landlocked, bordering China, Afghanistan, Kyrgyzstan and Uzbekistan. The country is administratively divided into two regions (*oblasts/viloyatho*) – Badakhshoni (administrative centre Khorugh, formerly Khorog) and Khatlon (administrative centre Qurghonteppa, formerly Kurgan-Tyube) – and one autonomous region – Leninobad (Khujand, formerly Leninabad). Furthermore, there are a large number of smaller administrative entities.[1]

The country is dominated by the Pamir and Altay Mountains; only a mere 6% of the land is arable. In terms of natural resources, the country has one of the world's largest reserves of uranium, small reserves of petroleum, some mercury, brown coal, lead, zinc, antimony and tungsten. There is rich soil in the fields of the valleys in the south-west and in the Chudyan oasis in the north, where – as a result of Soviet farming policy – above all cotton is produced. In the hilly areas, animal husbandry and vegetable and fruit farming dominate. Industry is very scarce, and what exists is generally obsolete.

Tajikistan

Ethnic Groups, Regions and Clans

Although the civil war that erupted in Tajikistan within less than a year of its gaining independence was from the outset a struggle between pro-Communist forces on the one side and democratic and Islamic forces on the other, it soon took on a strong ethnic, regional and clan dimension. Today, the conflict lines in Tajikistan are highly complex.

First is the ethnic dimension. The population of the country is dominated by Tajiks, accounting for 65%. There is, furthermore, a significant Tajik minority in Afghanistan; more than 4 million Tajiks live in the north of this

country. Uzbeks make up 25% of Tajikistan's population, and are mainly concentrated in the northern region of Khodjent. Russians make up 3.5%, and other groups 6.5%. (The figures are 1994 estimates; in particular, the number of Russians has since fallen significantly, owing to emigration.) The Russians have been concentrated particularly in the capital of Dushanbe. In terms of religion, 80% of the people are Sunni Muslims, while 5% are Shia Muslims. The Tajik language, which is the official language of the republic, is based on a number of Persian dialects. In practice, Russian is still widely used in the state administration and in business.

For centuries, culturally close Tajikistan and Uzbekistan were part of the same formation, the emirate of Bukhara. It was only with the work of Stalin's mapmakers that the two were divided. When this happened, both republics were allocated areas with significant minorities of the other's titular population. Notably, Uzbekistan received Samarkand and Bukhara, the major historical centres of Tajik culture. Dushanbe was declared an administrative centre in 1921, at a time when the population numbered less than 6,000. Tensions partly caused by these demarcations have long made Tajiks suspicious of the Uzbek minority.

Simultaneously, there are regional rivalries, revealing the diversity of the group referred to as 'Tajik' according to Soviet ethnic categories. By the time of the Soviet takeover, the basic unit of Tajik society, the *mahalla*, was based on the patriarchal clan. Following the social engineering of the Soviets – including the mingling of families in newly established collective farms – loyalties shifted to the region. Regional identities today do not necessarily coincide with regional borders. Of the principal identity regions in Tajikistan, three are heavily Uzbek, with partly Turkicized Tajik populations who often inter-marry with Uzbeks and have a greater degree of bilingualism than elsewhere. These regions include Khodjent, consisting of the area north of the Turkestan mountains; Hissar, the area west of Dushanbe; and Kurgan-Tyube, south-west of Dushanbe. All of these areas are contiguous to Uzbekistan. The other main areas are Kulyab, south-east of Dushanbe, Garm, east of Dushanbe; and Gorno-Badakhshan. These regions have larger Tajik populations and are much less subject to Uzbek influence.

After 1917, sympathy for the Bolsheviks was widespread in Khodjent, and was rewarded with generous investments. Khodjent became the obvious place for the Soviet Communist Party to pick the leaders of the republican party. Today, this region remains, on the whole, supportive of the former communist forces and highly anti-fundamentalist. The Khodjent elite has enjoyed a close relationship with the clans of Kulyab. The latter, in turn, have

disliked the clans of neighbouring Kurgan-Tyube, among whom Islam has a stronger position. In the regional rivalries, Kurgan-Tyube has sided with Garm. These, together with Pamir, have been the traditional strongholds of Islam in Tajikistan. During Soviet times, these regions were largely excluded from representation in the government. In 1993, Kurgan-Tyube and Kulyab were merged into the region of Khatlon. There has since been a feeling in Kurgan-Tyube that Kulyab has obtained a relatively stronger position in this relationship. Gorno-Badakhshan (Pamir) is on the surface the most ethnically homogenous region of Tajikistan, with Tajiks making up about 90% of the population. These Tajiks are, however, divided into seven different Pamiri groups. Among these are the Ismailis, who are Shia Muslims and followers of the Aga Khan. Since the practice of confession makes the Ismailis a minority in relation to 'mainstream' Shia, they have tended to favour secular policies in Tajikistan. There are strong ties between Ismailis in Tajikistan, Afghanistan and Pakistan.

History

The area which constitutes Tajikistan today was colonized and Islamized by Arabs from the second half of the 7th century. This process sparked anti-Arab riots. Ultimately, the area was united, together with present-day Uzbekistan and Khorasan in Iran, under the Samanides. The Samanide dynasty lasted until around the year 1000, and is today seen by most Tajiks as their historical cradle. In the centuries that followed, Tajikistan was subordinated to different Turkish rulers, including the Timurides and Uzbek khans. The latter, who were to exert particularly great influence in the area, arrived in the 1400s. By the late 1800s, most of today's Tajikistan was part of the Bukhara emirate. In 1868, the area was conquered by Russia, but the emirate formally remained a state until 1920. That year, Bukhara was occupied by the Red Army, and the emir, Mir Alim, was ousted. In 1924, the eastern parts of today's Tajikistan were merged and turned into an autonomous republic within Uzbekistan, before it became an independent union republic in 1929.

While being strictly subordinated to Moscow during the Soviet years, Tajikistan underwent a great transformation. A written Tajik language – first in Latin, later in Cyrillic letters – was developed for the first time, and expressions of Tajik culture were encouraged, as long as they did not challenge Soviet rule. Illiteracy was practically eradicated, and the republic's infrastructure was greatly improved. Until the 1970s, the Tajik economy was

growing rapidly; the annual growth rate reached as high as 8–11%. Later, however, the growth slowed, while the population continued to rise rapidly. As a consequence, Tajikistan had already been in a state of economic decline for several years when perestroika was implemented in the USSR.

Post-Soviet Tajikistan

The Tajik SSR declared its independence on 9 September 1991, following the aborted August coup in Moscow. In Tajikistan, too, democratic forces demonstrated during the coup. When the coup had failed, the ban on opposition parties was lifted in Tajikistan. As in Russia, the Communist Party was banned, but soon returned to be the key actor in the political arena.

After gaining independence, Tajikistan remained governed by Soviet laws, which implied a parliamentarian republican system. Thus, the president was elected by the Supreme Soviet. In September 1991, the Supreme Soviet replaced Kadriddin Aslanov, who had enforced the temporary ban on the Communist Party, with Rakhmon Nabiev, who had been first secretary of the Communist Party of Tajikistan from 1982 to 1985 (he was removed by Mikhail Gorbachev for alleged corruption). Two months later, the country's first popular presidential elections were held, and the election of Nabiev was confirmed; the acting president won some 60% of the vote, while his main rival, Duvlat Khudanazarov, won 30%. Shortly afterwards, Nabiev formally re-established the republican Communist Party and began to roll back the changes that had occurred during perestroika.

The opposition to the Nabiev regime was a diverse coalition of four parties, coalesced by the heavy-handedness of the government. All parties protested the regime's reluctance to implement reforms: the Democratic Party of Tajikistan – a secular party which spoke in favour of a parliamentary democracy with a market economy, and was at the same time coloured by Tajik nationalism and Islamic revivalism; the Renaissance Popular Movement (Rastokhez), which was more sympathetic to an Islamic revival, but also agitated for a parliamentary system and democracy; the Ruby of Badakhshan, which sought independence for that region; and the Islamic Renaissance Party, an Islamic revivalist group with branches throughout Central Asia and the Russian Federation. In late April 1992, these groups jointly presented their goals of promoting democracy and market reforms and creating a 'rule of law'.

From early on that year, they organized demonstrations in Dushanbe against the regime. By April, these had taken on the character of armed

clashes between pro- and anti-government forces. In May, Nabiev responded to the unrest by allowing into the government several members of the opposition. However, the so-called Government of National Reconciliation (PNP) soon ceased to function, as clashes continued in the southern provinces of Kulyab and Kurgan-Tyube.

From May and until the late autumn of 1992, pro-government and opposition forces engaged in open warfare. Destruction of property was massive, and the performance of the economy fell dramatically as industry and agriculture were affected by the conflict. There were numerous accounts of the warring factions' ruthlessness to each other and to civilians as the battles continued between forces from Kulyab and Kurgan-Tyube. The capital, Dushanbe, was flooded with refugees.

Nabiev ultimately resigned in September and was replaced by the chairman of the Supreme Soviet, Akbarsho Iskandarov. The new acting president came from the region of Gorno-Badakhshan; by his appointment, the position of leader of the state finally moved from Khodjent. Iskandarov, too, was unable to control the fighting in the country. In October, the armed conflict reached Dushanbe. Trying to end the conflict, Iskandarov and his government resigned the following month. In turn, the pro-Communist Supreme Soviet elected hardline ex-Communist Imamoli Rakhmanov, a Kulyabi and former collective farm boss, as the country's leader. A government was formed, consisting mainly of officials from Khodjent and Kulyab. The parliament at the same time voted to abolish the country's presidential system in favour of a parliamentary one, and announced a ceasefire. However, fighting continued, and by the end of the month, Khodjent forces supporting Rakhmanov had deposed the PNP and taken control of Dushanbe.

The threat of a breakup of Tajikistan and the spread of unrest across its borders caused great concern to neighbouring states, and provided opportunities for them to exert influence in the region. In particular, fear of Islamic fundamentalism and the flow of weapons from Afghanistan instigated a reaction. In November, Russian President Boris Yeltsin, supported by Central Asian leaders, ordered CIS forces in Tajikistan to take control of the country's border with Afghanistan. The Russian-led forces openly supported the regime of First Secretary Rakhmanov. The opposition forces were forced to flee the country; many went to Afghanistan, where they set up combat training camps.

In the first two months of 1993, forces supporting the government carried out bloody reprisals around Dushanbe, reportedly killing thousands of peo-

ple. Mass executions were carried out on the basis of region of birth, as recorded in one's passport.

In the course of that year, however, fighting in the country was reduced greatly. When the war and the reprisals had abated, 20,000–50,000 had been killed, and homes and villages had been systematically destroyed, in particular in Khatlon. Some 500,000 people fled the conflict. More than 300,000 people of non-titular nationalities migrated to other states of the CIS. The government generally consolidated its position, although bloody skirmishes between the regime and rebels continued, especially in Gorno-Badakhshan. In February, the government banned all four primary opposition groups.

After the Civil War

Unrest has threatened Tajikistan several times since the civil war ended. Parts of the country have remained outside the control of the government forces. The border with Afghanistan has been constantly violated – the rebels have launched attacks into Tajikistan from Afghan territory, and Russian forces have launched air raids into Afghanistan. A series of peace negotiations have been conducted, with no conclusive results.

Meanwhile, the Rakhmanov regime has attempted to tighten its grip on the country. In early 1994, the president decreed a government takeover of control over broadcast media and the press. In November, the majority taking part in a referendum voted in favour of re-establishing the presidency. Simultaneously, amid allegations of vote-rigging, Rakhmanov was elected president, with 58% of the vote, in comparison with 40% for his single opponent, former Premier Abdumalik Abdullajanov of the Party of Economic Freedom. The Islamic and democratic opposition boycotted the elections, despite international efforts to have them take part. Similarly, in February 1995, the first parliamentary elections held under the new Constitution were boycotted by the opposition.

A permanent Russian-led peace-keeping force arrived in Tajikistan in March 1993. Russia is represented with its 201st Division, which fought actively against the opposition in 1992 and 1993. Even at that point, it became clear that Tajik forces had such low morale and poor training that they were close to useless for defending the regime.

During 1992, Iran and Saudi Arabia seemed intent to play a role in Tajikistan. Iran's influence, however, quickly diminished after November of that year, following the intervention of Russian-led forces. Since, it has been Russia and neighbouring Uzbekistan that have dominated the country. Al-

ways dependent on financial transfers during the Soviet years, Tajikistan since 1992 has been receiving somewhere between 50% and 100% of its monetary expenditure from Russia. In late 1993, it was the only Central Asian country to submit to Russia's conditions for it to remain within the ruble zone.

In July 1993, in one of a large number of clashes that year, rebel forces based in Afghanistan killed 25 Russian border guards. Consequently, the CIS force was reinforced, and rebel positions across the border were bombarded. A border agreement later reduced tensions between the two countries.

Throughout 1994, the opposition and its Afghan supporters attacked border troops almost on a daily basis. The first major peace talks between the Tajik government and the opposition were conducted from early 1994, and the first ceasefire agreements were reached that year – to no great avail.

Low-intensity warfare continued in 1995 and 1996, with occasional outbursts of heavier fighting, followed by new efforts at mediation. In April 1995, ten days of serious clashes in Gorno-Badakhshan led to agreement to extend the existing ceasefire. However, clashes continued; in September of that year, a UN observer was killed by unknown attackers while investigating clashes between rival army units in which at least 350 people were killed. During that year, too, Russian aircraft carried out attack missions along the Tajik–Afghan border.

Tajikistan Today

The country's opposition remains united, despite rifts. In mid-1995, members of the Democratic Party (DP) meeting in Kazakhstan voted to replace its leader, Shodmon Yusuf, with Jumaboy Niyazov. The move appeared to be associated with the former's efforts to distance the party from its partner, the Islamic Renaissance Party, with the purpose of having the DP re-legalized. The United Tajik Opposition is today based in the northern Afghan city of Taloqan.

The Rakhmanov regime has since 1992 been blamed by its military supporters for showing too little interest in real negotiations with the opposition. Rumours in Moscow now suggest that the Russian regime's patience has been stretched to the point that there is a temptation to abandon Rakhmanov altogether. At present, 25,000 mainly Russian troops are stationed in the country; their mission is characterized by their mother country as peace-keeping, although their siding with the current regime makes this highly questionable.

While considered a representative of the old nomenklatura and the regions which have traditionally dominated Tajikistan, President Rakhmanov has recently made moves aimed at overcoming the religious and regional differences in the country. The regime's current approach is to promote a national identity encompassing all citizens of the state, taking allegiance to the state as its point of departure. There is, however, reason to doubt his abilities to bring about such an identity. First, his democratic record is very poor – which brings into question his call for a democratic state ruled by law. Second, Rakhmanov is hardly convincing as an actor balancing neatly between Islamic and secular groups. To gain outside support, he has been playing the 'anti-fundamentalist' card for what it is worth. At the same time, he has been flirting openly with Islamism. While hunting down representatives of the Islamic opposition, the government speaks of brotherhood between Islamic peoples when it meets representatives of Islamic countries.

The victory of the old communist elite from Khodjent and Kulyab has not brought stability to Tajikistan. Rather, the disintegration of society has continued. Skirmishes take place regularly, in particular in the eastern and southern regions. On occasion, the conflict escalates, as it did in early 1996, when pro-Islamic forces attacked government forces and captured the towns of Tursunzoda and Kurgan-Tyube in the south-west. The forces taking Tursunzoda in late January were led by Ibod Boymatov, the town's former mayor and ex-leader of a Defence Ministry brigade which had belonged to the now disbanded People's Front. Those taking Kurgan-Tyube were led by Mahmud Khudoberdiyev, also a former brigade commander of the Ministry of Defence affiliated with the ex-communist forces. Both groups demanded the immediate resignation of the government, although Boymatov said that his actions had 'nothing to do' with those of Khudoberdiyev.

By the autumn of 1996, fighting took place largely in remote areas near the Afghan border, in the Garm Valley and in Tavil-Dara, with occasional attacks in Dushanbe. It seemed clear that Gorno-Badakhshan and Garm, bastions of Islam, were beyond government control. The border with Afghanistan was, of course, a major site of conflict. Whereas Afghanistan had long ceased to exist as a coherent state, Tajikistan was becoming more and more a puppet state in the hands of Russia and Uzbekistan.

In late July, the fifth round of talks between the United Opposition and the government took place in Ashgabat in Turkmenistan. An exchange of prisoners and a cessation of hostilities in the Tavil-Dara area were agreed. However, these agreements, as before, did not hold. The government had earlier claimed to be in control of Tavil-Dara, but planes continued to bomb the area

in July. That did not prevent the opposition forces from gaining control over the town of Tavil-Dara in mid-August.

In early November, as the Rakhmonov regime celebrated the republic's fifth year of independence, it was dealt a humiliating blow as opposition forces took control of the town of Djirgatal, 280 kilometres north-east of Dushanbe. That was only the most notable of a number of successful opposition challenges to the regime following the breakdown of a series of agreements between it and opposition field leaders reached in September. As the violence continued, uncertainty was growing over the consequences for Tajikistan of the Taliban guerrillas' late September takeover of Kabul.

The civilian population in all regions of Tajikistan is suffering greatly under the rapidly deteriorating living conditions brought about by the drawn-out conflict. Crime is rampant in the country; bandits are organized and occasionally clash with government forces. The parts of the economy that are still functioning are increasingly infiltrated by organized crime, fed by money from drugs and arms trafficking. A telling indicator of deprivation is the fact that a typhoid epidemic started spreading in May of 1996; by July, 3,500 people had been affected.

Disintegration in Tajikistan has reached the point where it is hard to see how things can be easily improved. The regime is facing an opposition radicalized by years of conflict. The opposition itself is highly diverse – that also goes for the Islamic part of it – and does not have a widely legitimate, internally coherent alternative regime to offer.

1 'A number of different transcriptions have been used for Tajik names. In this text, I will use the following versions of some of the most frequently mentioned names (alternatives in parentheses): Kulyab (Kulob); Khodjent (Khojand, Khojent, Leninabad); Hissar (Hisor, Gissar); Garm (Gharm); Gorno-Badakhshan (Gorno-Badakshon); and Kurgan-Tyube (Qurghanteppa).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