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INTRODUCTION

As a result of the disintegration of the former Soviet Union, 14 independent, small states have emerged. All are trying to develop democratic societies and market economies. All are trying to find their place and role in the international political and economic systems. The transition from a totalitarian system and a centrally planned economy to a democracy and a market economy has turned out to be an extremely difficult and painful process. That is why most of these countries are experiencing social and economic crises. It is arguable that the post-Soviet states are distinct even unique political units because of the very specific conditions and factors contributing to their emergence and development.

The majority of the post-Soviet states are weak powers, with the exception of Russia. Most of these states are also small countries, not including Ukraine, Kazakhstan and Uzbekistan, Georgia is one of the three small states in the South Caucasus, which became independent in 1991 as a result of the Soviet break-up.¹ The beginning of Georgia's sovereign existence could be characterized as the most disastrous of all the post-Soviet states. Civil war, an influx of internal refugees, widespread instability and total collapse of statehood aggravated an uneasy independence in 1992. A gradual restoration of order under President Shevardnadze allowed for a slow resumption of economic activity and political development in the direction of state-building and democracy. Since 1995, Georgia has managed to achieve economic and political stabilization and has become one of the fastest growing economies among the newly independent states. Between 1996 and 1997, the annual growth of Georgia's GDP exceeded 10%. Georgia's further commitment to political and economic reforms is likely to attract significant foreign investment; and the country can probably profit from its strategic location connecting East to West and North to South. Georgia will probably also benefit significantly from Caspian oil and gas development and from increased European-Asian trade. However, sustaining current political stabilization and economic performance requires deeper institutional and structural changes.

The biggest hindrance to Georgia's prospects of developing into a modern, European-type state is its fragile statehood and internal political weakness. The political and economic problems Georgia inherited are immense. Georgia lacks a modern infrastructure, a strong financial system and a trust in its own currency. It also suffers from a widespread acceptance of informal business activities, tax evasion, and a corrupt and inefficient civil service earning low incomes with a highly skewed distribution.

The shifts in Georgia's political life are remarkable. Georgia managed to overcome chaos and start the process of state-building and democracy. In recent years, significant efforts have been undertaken to strengthen democracy in Georgia, especially in the area of human rights. The country has reached a level of political stability unimaginable in the years 1991-1994.

New types of small states emerged from the ruins of the Soviet Union. All of them are quasi-states with very fragile statehoods. Their societies lack democratic traditions and civil elements within their political cultures. Their economies are undergoing a painful transition to market economies. These newly independent states have to develop their own strategic cultures to support the formation and realisation of an independent foreign policy. The non-Russian, post-Soviet states have continued to pursue their national interests and seize new opportunities as they arise.

The diversification of the ties of the post-Soviet states involves a partial and, to some extent, a major reorientation in the pattern of their external relations towards Western states and European institutions, as well as towards other regional neighbors. The process of establishing new security relations is also gaining momentum.

GEORGIA: AN EMERGING SMALL SOVEREIGN NATION

There is no universal definition of a small state, even though several attempts have been made to classify states according to size of population and size of territory or GDP. Apart from the two main features of state typology, which are land area and size of population,

particularly important is the political, economic and military power of a country, which constitutes a state's political "weight" in the international community. Small states have a minimal role and importance in world politics. Their growing number and significance, however, is generating increasing global interest and provides them with a specific place in international community. The interest is mainly concerned with small state viability, with the processes of newly independent state formation and with the role and function of small states in the global political and economic systems. What are the main characteristics of small states? L.G.M. Jaquet argues that, "a small state is a state that is neither on a world scale nor on a regional scale able to impose its political will nor protect its national interests by exerting power politics". Robert Rothstein defines a small state as, "a state which recognises that it cannot obtain security primarily by use of its own capabilities and that it must rely fundamentally on the aid of other states, institutions, processes, or developments to do so; the Small Power's belief in its inability to rely on its own means must also be recognised by other states involved in international politics". Both authors stress the fact that a small state is unable to defend its national interests by its own political and military means. Thus, a small state is a weak power.

A country could be small and militarily weak but have a very strong and stable statehood and thus be a strong state (such as Sweden, Norway and the Netherlands for example). At the same time, a large and militarily powerful country may have a weak state; and in terms of national security, it may be confronted with the same difficulties and weaknesses as a small state. Internal weakness, lack of social and ethnic cohesion, weak economy and absence of stable institutions create serious national security problems for all states, and for small ones in particular.

Until recently, in a world of few liberal democracies and no international institutions like the UN, small states used to become victims of their imperial neighbors and often ceased to exist. The current international order is favorably disposed towards weak powers even if they have failed to create a unified civil society and their governments are unable to perform the most rudimentary tasks.

THE "GREAT POWER" NEIGHBOUR

The national interest, foreign policy and security priorities of a small state have a regional rather than global dimension. In some exceptional cases, the regional importance of a weak power extends to the global scale mostly due to its location: be it at the intersection of imperial powers' interests, on the border of civilisations or in the "magnetic field" of global political and economic problems. The political and economic capabilities and scope of action of these small countries-set their parameters, which can be proved by the example of Russia and her newly independent and small neighbors. Georgia represents a typical example of the small, quasi-state that has all the problems of a former colony located near the Great Power, her former "master."

Newly sovereign states are born as a result of different events and under different conditions. Usually, the formation of a new state takes place after the extreme politicisation of a society strongly influenced by a wave of radical populism and nationalism. This argument has once again been supported by the events that followed the collapse of the USSR. The mystification of real political and economic conditions, ardent nationalism and excessive optimism along with other objective factors significantly contributed to the collapse of the Soviet Union and to the creation of newly independent quasi-states, including Georgia.

The absence of a mature political elite, the easy access to power by unqualified people whose political vision was shaped by the cliches of provincial literary criticism and pseudo-patriotic historical literature contributed to the formation of the domestic and foreign policies of these newly independent states. The new political elite failed to grasp the essence of geopolitical reality as well as socio-economic and political difficulties. Hence, a small country without vitally important natural resources, ethnic integrity nor a strong statehood became an arena for civil war and ethnic conflicts, not to mention social and economic catastrophes. Revolutionary governments mushrooming on the grounds of ethnic nationalism and populism, proved to be incapable of assessing crucial problems as well as political and economic realities, not only of their own countries but also of the outside world. As a result, the world saw strategic mistakes and failures that Georgia experienced in the very beginning of its independent existence.

The collapse of the Soviet Union was followed by a series of interconnected political, economic, social, military, ethnic and psychological traumas. The most traumatised of all the states turned out to be Russia, which is still struggling to maintain its Great Power status, to find a new identity and to define and defend its real or perceived strategic interests.

Russia's small neighbors, most of all Georgia, have very quickly realised that the norms and principles of the international community are not fully observed in the so-called "near abroad" and they are left unprotected vis-a-vis the most powerful state in the post-Soviet space.

According to J. Aves, of the three Caucasus states, Georgia adopted the most radical stance in asserting its independence from Moscow. Because of this, Georgia was "punished" and Moscow not only masterminded ethnic conflicts in Georgia's territory, but also supported the separatist movements in Abkhazia and South Ossetia (two Georgian autonomous provinces). This led to the de facto disintegration of the fragile Georgian state.

Russia's political and military establishment traditionally identifies the Caucasus region as a specific danger to the stability of Russia itself. At the same time, Russia? "perceives Georgia as the key state for its security interests in the region. The Russian military believes that by controlling Georgia it will secure greater leverage over the transport of oil from the Caspian, as well as gain access To Armenia, which is Russia's only ally in the South Caucasus. At the same time, Russia wishes to secure its interests in the North Caucasus and resents Turkish ambitions in the post-Soviet space.

The Georgian political elite understands that small and weak Georgia has to take into consideration the national security interests of its powerful neighbor and must build its

relations with Russia and the other former Soviet republics according to the existing geopolitical and economic conditions. This will enable Georgia to ensure its future survival and development. It is important to note that up until recently, the values and principal interests of the Russian political and military authorities had substantially influenced Georgia's foreign and domestic policy. Georgia's economic problems have also turned out to be extremely complicated. The small, post-Soviet state with limited resources and a highly specialized, undiversified economy has to adjust to a market economy and an independent existence. Its economy requires fundamental restructuring and large investments in order to integrate itself into the world market.

STATE-BUILDING AND NATIONAL SECURITY

There are numerous obstacles standing in the way of building a new Georgian state and in creating a new social order- Certain factors, however, stand out as main impediments to state-building in Georgia. All these obstacles are interrelated and significantly hinder the process of forming a democratic state. These are ethnic nationalism, parochialism, amoral familism, lack of democratic traditions, corruption and preference for strong leaders. One can argue that the obstacles to state-building in Georgia are not only interrelated but also, to a large extent, caused by each other.

The national security of any state is based upon political stability within the state. Foreign policy is also closely connected to domestic policy, and they not only serve but also extend one another.

For Georgia's national security, it is extremely important to develop a stable statehood and dynamic economy because Georgia is a multiethnic society troubled by ethnic conflicts. Hence, the creation of a stable statehood based on a civil society would be a blessing for small Georgia which, in terms of internal stability, has a lot of potential for developing a modern, dynamic economy.

Despite the fact that there are certain external security threats to Georgia, the main security problems stem from the country's inner weaknesses, as mentioned above. The new state faces an acute problem of political and ideological integrity. Even now, the jurisdiction of the central government has not yet been fully restored over the whole country, therefore, the strategic goal is to promote national unification and awareness of nationhood as a value important to the country's citizens. Otherwise, Georgia will fail to develop and conduct an effective national security policy.

Currently in Georgia, there is very little experience in strategic thinking, making the formation and development of a strategic culture a top priority.

Georgia's security policy has been influenced not only by President Shevardnadze's vision but also by security visions and priorities promoted by Parliament, the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, the so-called power ministries, influential non-governmental political groups and, to a lesser extent, local mass media.

The security debates were especially intense in the years 1992-94, when the former parliament was particularly active in discussing foreign policy and security issues instead of performing its primary function: legislation. The debates on security issues then revealed the lack of strategic culture in the political elite and an absence of realism, together with a radicalism in the political culture of a significant part of Georgian society. At the same time, these debates greatly contributed to the "education" not only of the new political elite but also of the general public.

Only after 1995, when President Shevardnadze managed to restore order and stabilize the political situation in the country, did Parliament, political parties, NGOs and mass media start

serious debates about Georgia's foreign policy goals and security priorities.

The necessity of planning a security policy became not only obvious but also quite urgent. The political elite understood that Georgia — a small quasi-state — was too weak to significantly influence even regional politics and was mainly only capable to react to the changing security environment.

After 1995, when Georgia managed to significantly restore its reputation and image, and as a result of President Shevardnadze's efforts to attract more of the international community's attention to Georgia, the small, newly independent country started to think seriously about its long-term foreign policy and security priorities. In 1996, the National Security Council was established under the president's chairmanship and the decision was made to develop a national security concept for Georgia.

This decision signified a new approach towards strategic thinking in the political elite which, being involved in the development of the country's strategy planning, came to the conclusion that Georgia needed a security concept that meant not only listing threats to the country but systematically assessing them as well.

It became clear that it was impossible to divide internal and foreign policies and assess internal and external threats in isolation from one another. The new political elite discovered a whole new set of threats to the young state's existence. At the same time, their realization of the fact that the internal threats to Georgia's national security could be even more serious than the external ones became the leading theme in the resumed debates on the country's national security.

From 1996 to 1998, a series of international seminars and conferences on national security issues held in Georgia contributed tremendously to the modern understanding of the country's security problems and environment as well as to the dynamics of the Caucasus region.

This active approach to national security issues has been partly the result of Georgia's steadily growing activity in the region and partly the result of positive changes in its internal and foreign policies.

After 1995, Georgia had gradually become an important actor in regional politics. The prospects of Caspian oil and gas development and Georgia's possible role as the East-West transport corridor not only attracted serious attention to this country but also enabled Georgia to pursue a more active foreign policy.

The prospects of Caspian oil development and international involvement only added to Georgia's security concerns though, forcing it to consider very serious and rapidly changing regional and international security patterns and balances. The dynamism brought change as well as new dangers. Growing importance deepened contradictions all around and made allies and enemies more articulated and more determined. The security environment became no less ambiguous but definitely more complicated and challenging.

The experiences of this short period after Georgia's independence caused the political elite to determine that internal security threats had forced the country's leadership to think more about short-term political and economic benefits at the expense of long-term strategic and security policy planning.

The security situation in the Caucasus still remains extremely complicated, although the internal threats to security are more on the agenda than the external ones. Among the latter, the following could be named:

- Direct intervention and aggression;
- External economic and transport blockade;
- Attempts of certain political forces in the neighbouring countries to use Georgia's internal weaknesses and problems to influence or alter its existing political course;
- Attempts by certain political forces in the neighbouring countries to instigate separatism and irredentism in some of the historical provinces of Georgia populated by ethnic

minorities as well as ethnic Georgians;

- Attempts by international terrorist groups, and especially an international narco-mafia, to use Georgian territory as their transit route; and
- Attempts to adversely affect the international image of Georgia by
- Information and propaganda warfare.
- Consequently, the priorities for the national foreign policy concerning national security are the following:
 - To preserve state sovereignty and territorial integrity;
 - To prevent the emergence of new and the escalation of existing ethno-political conflicts and to search for their political solutions;
 - To identify the sources of separatism and irredentism and to neutralize them;
 - To avoid one-sided dependence on any of the Great Powers;
 - To support the creation and development of regional security structures and institutions in order to implement security norms and guarantees; and
 - To expand membership and to activate participation in international organizations and structures in order to advance the national foreign policy and security goals.

During its short period of independence, Georgia has managed, to a certain extent, to develop its strategic planning capacity. The Georgian leadership has learned how to identify and define different sources of threats and how to react to a changing security environment. It is still generally held, however, that there remains a significant gap between a small part of the political elite (the country's leadership) and the majority in the understanding of real security *problematique*. In this respect, an even bigger gap remains between the political elite and general public. This is due to the low political and economic culture of the country's population — a legacy of the Soviet era.

Georgia still lacks professional politicians as well as professionals in foreign policy planning and practice. It lacks the necessary capacity of strategic thinking and, in general, a tradition of strategic culture.

SECURITY PROBLEMS IN THE CIS

The Commonwealth of Independent States (CIS), created in 1991, was an attempt by Russia to reintegrate the post-Soviet space and to maintain a common security and economic space. Georgia joined the CIS in 1992 under heavy pressure from Russia. Nevertheless, many people in Georgia believed that the Commonwealth would provide Georgia with security and bring economic benefits. Such expectations quickly proved unrealistic because of the inefficient and centrifugal processes within the Commonwealth itself.

Georgia's national interests are caught between developing the CIS and its own development aimed at reintegration into Europe. Membership in the CIS did not prevent outside interference in Georgia's internal affairs nor did it prevent the violation of Georgia's territorial integrity, which constitutes one of the major threats to Georgia's national security. So far, membership in the CIS has brought neither a feeling of security nor economic benefit to Georgia.

The CIS is facing a crisis; there is widespread disillusionment with the Commonwealth, which is seen mainly as a tool to reconstruct a unified post-Soviet entity on the territory of the former Soviet Union under Russian domination.

This integration is influenced by an interesting realignment of pre-Soviet cultural identities together with new alliance patterns, restored and potential economic linkages, and external political and economic forces playing an ever greater role in shaping the political and economic environment of the CIS member states and their security dynamics.

Each world security region has its own distinct security environment. The CIS space is a specific security environment for many reasons, one of which is that it has its own security *problematique*. Security problems within this space (some evident and some latent) are not only numerous but also represent a unique combination with no resemblance to previous problems. Moreover, the CIS security environment is in the process of formation, which significantly complicates security relationships.

The uniqueness of the CIS environment results from a combination of many features not seen elsewhere.

- The disintegration of a huge, totalitarian, multiethnic empire;
- Drastic security asymmetries between the weaker neighbors of a still enormously powerful former "master";
- The weakness of all the new states;
- The dominance of ethnic nationalism and a high nation-to-state ratio in an environment characterised by a plethora of often arbitrarily drawn state boundaries;
- The simultaneous processes of reintegration and disintegration;
- The absence of democratic traditions and the weakness of emerging civil elements in local political and economic cultures;
- The inertia of the "soviet mentality" and its culture of governance;
- The West's ignorance of the internal security problems of the CIS and, as a result, a Western recognition of Russia's "special rights" in determining outcomes in regional security; and
- The social and economic crises in all CIS states, emanating from the transition from a "planned" to a market economy.

SECURITY AMBIGUITY

National security is affected by factors of five major categories: military, political, economic, societal, and environmental. These five categories do not operate in isolation from one another. Each defines a focal point within the security *problematique*; all are woven together in a strong web of linkages. The military component of security traditionally played an exclusive and dominant role but currently other components are acquiring increasing importance as well.

National security objectives and priorities define the national security concepts of sovereign nations. The CIS states have not yet clearly and fully defined their national security agendas. Even Russia, with its long-standing experience of sovereign statehood and its former role as the core of the USSR, is still indecisive regarding its security interests. As for the other CIS members, national security problems have become a serious challenge to their new ruling elites, who lack the necessary experience, strategic culture, and capacity to engineer foreign policies.

It would be a difficult task to define the security interests of all the CIS members. This is because of the continuing uncertainty and ambiguity of their political and economic situations, the evolving and unpredictable character of the CIS' development, and the insufficiently clear enmity-patterns, security "codes" and relations within the CIS. This is not even taking into consideration the relationship between the CIS and the rest of the world.

Russia's efforts to dominate, to the greatest extent possible, the CIS in political, economic, and military terms, and Russia's insufficient regard for the security interests of the other CIS members further aggravate the situation. In order to emerge as a Great Power, Russia concentrates on building close relations with these states. Despite a certain degree of

democratization in Russian society and the weakening of extreme imperial claims, there is a growing consensus within Russia that, as a Great Power, it must strengthen its domination in the "near abroad" and continue a hegemonic foreign policy." As Cuthbertson notes, Russia demands political vassalage as the price for economic assistance. There is a clear security asymmetry within the CIS. Powerful Russia overwhelmingly dominates and treats Ukraine with respect while regarding the other member states as second-class countries, which puts the smaller CIS countries under constant pressure from their powerful neighbor.

The newly independent states find themselves in an international system in which sovereign states behave according to their perceived national interests. The CIS states are now seeking their identity, role, and function in a regional as well as within a global context and are at pains to define their national security objectives and priorities. The bitter experience of the former Yugoslavia and, to some extent, of the former Soviet Union itself teach the CIS states not to rely solely on the new international norms and rules of behaviour and to think about their national security problems in terms of alliances and collective security.

The achievement of sovereignty by the CIS states in 1991 opened new international relations to them. However, these relations have had special features stemming from the legacy of the USSR. The abrupt dissolution of the USSR presented dramatic challenges to the construction of new institutional arrangements for regional security. The highly centralised Soviet political, economic, and military structures could not be quickly replaced by new ones. The emergence of a dozen independent states in the post-Soviet space meant an emergence of new security relations and amity-enmity patterns. These, in turn, considerably affect the regional and international patterns of security interdependence.

WEAK POWERS/WEAK STATES

The disintegration of the Soviet empire was especially painful for its constituent members because it was territorially contiguous (and, hence, substantially different from Western maritime empires) and was tightly interwoven politically and economically with a stronger centre-periphery structure than that of a classic empire. Thus, the collapse of the USSR resulted in the emergence of only one powerful nation and 14 small, weak ones.

Apart from Russia, all of the CIS states, including Ukraine, are weak both politically and economically and incapable of defending their national interests or providing for their national security. The security concerns and foreign policy behaviour of the CIS states stem largely from the disbelief in their ability to rely upon their own means and the view that the solution to any "security dilemma" must come from outside.

Weak powers are often also weak states. The state is central to the concept of security. In the post-Soviet space where independent nations are emerging, the problems of statehood and state-building are of primary importance. All of the CIS states (even Russia, to some extent) are quasi-states, to use Robert Jackson's term. An underdeveloped concept of the state, insufficient socio-political cohesion of the population, unstable institutions and an extremely weak national economy have opened the post-Soviet states up to domestic disruption and even foreign intervention.

Fortunately for these quasi-states, the modern international system, widely seen as a community of states, does not allow such states to disappear juridically. States cannot be deprived of sovereignty as a result of war, conquest, partition or colonialism, as frequently occurred in the past. The result of this, as Jackson argues, is a rather different sovereignty regime with an insurance policy for marginal states; because of new international norms, such states enjoy a right to exist despite their weakness and domestic disorganization. As James

Mayall argues, the modern international regime caters to small and weak states, despite their political weakness and economic underdevelopment.

Within the CIS countries, state-building and the construction of a democracy inevitably mean dealing with the resurgence of ethno-nationalism. None of these countries is a nation-state in the classical Western sense; in the CIS, the boundaries of nation and state rarely coincide. The process of state-building has revealed the extreme weakness of the civic elements of nationhood and the corresponding emphasis on ethnicity. Most of the CIS countries are multiethnic entities. In the absence of a coercive regime intent on preserving the integrity of the state, and in the presence of long-suppressed ethnic tensions and historical rivalries and hatreds, the arbitrariness of state boundaries has surfaced. For the governments of the CIS states, one of the most difficult tasks is to forge their peoples into self-regarding democratic nations. The attempts of these governments to create nations that coincide with inherited state boundaries have not been particularly successful as of yet. Thus, national security in the CIS context implies complex relationships between emerging nations and emerging democratic states. In addition, the problem of internal ethnic tensions and their actual and potential spillover into conflicts among CIS and non-CIS states aggravates security relationships and amity-enmity patterns within the CIS and with neighboring non-CIS countries (Afghanistan, Estonia, China, Iran, Latvia, Romania and Turkey).

The CIS quasi-states face very serious problems related to their internal security. Most of them have inherited weaknesses stemming from their multiethnicity, parochialism and the insufficient socio-economic cohesion of their population. In addition, none of the CIS countries (excluding Russia) is economically self-reliant and all of them are undergoing deep economic and social crises. This makes them extremely vulnerable to domestic unrest and external economic threats. Many of them are trying to break away from old Soviet economic ties but some (Armenia, Belarus, Kazakhstan and Kyrgyzstan) are busy restoring these ties within the CIS.

The serious problems of state-building and political and economic transformation facing these countries make them extremely vulnerable in terms of internal security and drives some of them to think seriously about CIS collective security arrangements and structures. The weaker a state is, the more ambiguous the concept of national security becomes. Due to the large number of weak states within it, the CIS is experiencing a high level of insecurity. Moreover, the security of governments (and, in some cases, ruling elites) has come to be confused with that of the state, adding to the overall insecurity. The inertia of the Soviet mentality, its culture of governance and "communist revanchism" still play an important role in political and economic decision making. All that, combined with ethnic nationalism and the prevalence of a high nation-to-state ratio, explains why domestic insecurities dominate the national security agenda of most of the CIS members.

AMITY-ENMITY

As elsewhere in the world, there are in the CIS "satisfied" and "unsatisfied" or revisionist states, in the CIS context, the dichotomy becomes even more dramatic because of the great number of unsatisfied ethnic groups and state-claiming nationalities. This results in ethnic tensions, claims to self-determination, separatist aspirations, intrastate and interstate tensions and conflicts. Here, as elsewhere, there is a conflict of principle between the right of self-determination and the right of state sovereignty. In some cases, external forces support such revisionist ethnic groups and states, adding to the common insecurities within the CIS. If Transcaucasia were a possible prototype of the future of CIS security dynamics, whereas there was only one revisionist state (Armenia) in 1991, all three of the region's states can now be so

identified.

POLITICAL CULTURE - SOURCES OF INSECURITY

The CIS states inherited a political culture that lacks democratic traditions, elements of civil society, mutual trust and a culture of dialogue. Essentially, these countries have revolutionary or pseudo-revolutionary governments who came to power on a wave of nationalism and/or populism. Revolutionary regimes usually have a quite distorted and peculiar view of internal and external situations and events. New political forces have not had enough time to be forged into "enlightened" and responsible political elites. From the beginning of the 1990s, the world has witnessed populism, authoritarianism, ethnic and religious tensions and conflicts, chauvinism and disregard for human and minority rights. Despite the fact that in some CIS countries steps have already been taken towards a democratic transformation of society, the very nature of the newly independent post-Soviet states and their arbitrarily drawn boundaries add to the security concerns of the CIS.

DISINTEGRATION AND/OR REINTEGRATION

Within the fragile Commonwealth, centrifugal and centripetal forces and processes of disintegration and reintegration are competing with one another. Disintegrative forces are also seen within some CIS countries (Azerbaijan, Georgia, Kazakhstan, Moldova, Russia, and Ukraine). These phenomena contribute to greater insecurity within the CIS space. In many countries of the CIS, more and more individuals wish to restore a variant of the USSR to feel more politically and economically secure. The sentiments of approximately 25 million ethnic Russians in the "near abroad" and millions of divided families contribute to that feeling. In an environment where governments still lack the ability to deliver public goods and services, provide law and order and, in some instances, to sustain popular legitimacy, there is a growing feeling of vulnerability and insecurity.

Realistically assessing the CIS security environment, one may admit that Russia, being the political and economic hegemon within the Commonwealth, has to create a security regime in which the interests and expectations of all participants converge. Until now, however, Russia has not been able to assure all members of the CIS that such a regime is in their best interests. Many of the CIS members have very different views about the costs and benefits of such a security regime managed by Russia. Some suspect that the security arrangements proposed by Russia (e.g., the Tashkent Agreement) are designed by Russia to restore its imperial dominance, create a sphere of influence and to provide for its own security at the expense of its weaker neighbors. Russia's meddling in its neighbors' internal affairs in the years 1992-1995 provides evidence that their suspicions are not baseless. Some see the CIS as an attempt by Russia to restore an empire, while others see it as an effort to create a structure of collective security. After initial failures to create the CIS, Russia succeeded in creating a collective security treaty and in building networks of bilateral agreements on a country-to-country basis. Some analysts believe that military arrangements within the CIS will take on a shape similar to the Warsaw Pact; but the contradictions between the national security of each CIS member and the collective CIS are many. At the same time, despite Russia's particular and decisive place and role within the CIS security environment and emergent security order, Russia itself is still uncertain about its own security priorities.

SECURITY COMPLEX OR COLLECTIVE SECURITY STRUCTURE?

The character of the security dynamics in the CIS also suggests the possibility of an emerging "regional security complex." Barry Buzan defines a security complex as, "a group of states whose primary security concerns link together sufficiently close so that their national securities cannot realistically be considered apart from one another." Is the CIS a regional collective security structure or a regional security complex? As Buzan argues, "a security complex exists where a set of security relationships stand out from the general background by virtue of its relatively strong, inward-looking character, and the relative weakness of its outward security interactions with its neighbors." Evidently, the CIS can currently be considered to be such a complex, despite its external mask of a regional collective security arrangement. It can also be argued that there are at least three smaller regional security complexes in the process of formation in the post-Soviet space: Western (East European), Caucasian and Central Asian.

Is Russia potent enough to transform the process of regional security complex formation into a collective security structure? As long as the CIS members remain sovereign, the CIS space cannot be entirely dominated by either co-operation or conflict. It seems, however, that the CIS countries would prefer as much co-operation as possible rather than anarchy and the unrestricted operation of the "security dilemma."

Threat perceptions are by no means uniform across the CIS, but uncertainty and insecurity are pervasive. The CIS itself is, to a certain degree, a call for some kind of order and security in the post-Soviet space. Despite contradictions between the national security of each CIS member and the emerging collective security structure, there is an urgent need for a sort of collective security arrangement.

In summary, the CIS security environment is characterized by:

- Ambiguity;
- A prevalence of internal security concerns;
- Attempts by most CIS states to attain economic self-reliance and to break away from old Soviet economic ties and one-sided dependence on Russia;
- Attempts by a dominant power to create a sphere of influence and sustain the political and economic dependency of weaker members;
- The evident vulnerability of weak CIS states to manipulation by Russia (whose security is intimately tied to political development in the CIS);
- The insufficient influence of external forces in shaping an intra-CIS security dynamic; and
- The gradual formation of a regional security complex despite efforts to produce a collective security structure.

The uniqueness of the security environment in the CIS stems not only from emerging conditions of anarchy and the operation of a "security dilemma" in the post-Soviet space, but also from a very specific combination of conditions influencing the CIS security environment and its dynamics.

THE CAUCASUS: A REEMERGING REGION

The Caucasian states, soon after gaining independence, became not only the object of intense interest to their more powerful neighbors and, at the same time, 10 the region's main powers (Iran, Russia and Turkey), but they are also becoming more valuable to the world's leading powers because of the region's significant oil reserves and its potential role as a transit corridor between Europe and Asia. Hence, the region is starting to attract international investors which, in consequence, results in an increase in its strategic importance and its significance to the security interests of leading powers. This contributes to the transformation of the Caucasus into one of the new regional security complexes emerging in the post-Soviet space (along with Central Asia).

The distinctiveness of the emerging Caucasian security complex stems, first of all, from existing in the aftermath of the Soviet Empire. For example, all three states in the region are members of the CIS and are influenced by an interesting realignment of pre-Soviet cultural identities coupled with a new pattern of alliances, a new set of economic interests and new possibilities for economic links as well as the altered or changing political and economic circumstances surrounding the CIS states and the changed dynamics in security.

The Caucasus forms its own specific security context with its own distinct and extremely difficult problems. There are several main and important factors influencing the situation in the region, which can provoke instability and/or add to potential threats, that the individual states have to face when dealing with issues of security. The Caucasus is a region that has little or no tradition of modern statehood. It is inhabited by a mosaic of various religious and ethnic groups who share a history or legacy of friendship, understanding and tolerance most of the time, mistrust, animosity, dispute, conflict and violence the rest of the time. The region is a territory where some state boundaries are not yet precisely defined and demarcated and, thus, they may be objects of dispute.

The issue of demarcation of state boundaries is not as acute in the Caucasus states as it is in some other CIS states, but problems of boundary demarcation and delimitation create and will create serious problems to the region's security and stability.

The Chechen conflict revealed the weaknesses of the Russian military and the limitations of an imperial power. The Caucasian states managed to reduce their economic dependence on Russia. The UN, OSCE, as well as various other Western NGOs, despite the fact that so far they have not been very successful mediators, nevertheless internationalize conflicts in the region, publicly defend the rights of small nations and consequently make potential hegemonic aspirations of regional powers less legitimate, less feasible. The discovery of vast oil deposits in the Caucasus and the domestic weakness of the surrounding regional powers and the rivalry between them, as well as their need for Western aid, give the Caucasian states considerable leverage.

The ineffectiveness and impotence of the CIS structures, which are supposed to be integrating, as well as the inability of Russia to deal with the other CIS member states on equal terms and its desire to become the dominating motor within the Commonwealth, provoke in the other CIS members the feeling that the CIS is incapable of guaranteeing their economic interests and more importantly their security.

Currently, the Caucasian states possess little economic resources, political or strategic tools and are thus unable to defend their national interests or even their territorial integrity within the post-Soviet space. All need financial support to remedy their weak economies and backward industries.

The threats, with which the Caucasian states find themselves confronted, originate within the region or the individual states themselves; although one can never exclude the possibility of threats from outside the region as well. Russia's involvement in local conflicts illustrates how

serious regional powers can influence local security dynamics. In at least two states — namely, Azerbaijan and Georgia — their multiethnic, multi-religious character further aggravates the situation; this combined with an extreme weakness of civic elements makes the state-building process difficult. The process of democratization, so far, has revealed the deficiencies of the multiethnic post-Soviet states. Conflicts (Nagorno-Karabakh, Abkhazia and South Ossetia) became a very serious problem not only for the Caucasian states themselves, but also for the neighboring regions and the international community.

The coinciding of the democratization process and the occurrence of violence in this region raises the question of whether the democratization of multiethnic societies inevitably creates favourable conditions for ethnic conflicts or conflicts which are the consequence or product of external manipulation.

One has to agree with Neil MacFarlane, who argues that in the South Caucasus, democratization has allowed or set conditions for the emergence of pre-existing nationalist sentiments that have been strengthened by the Soviet experience. The ethno-demographic make-up of the region contributed to the resurgence of nationalism in regional and ethnic conflicts, but outside forces, and at the same time leading regional powers (namely Russia), played an important role in the conflicts of the South Caucasus with the goal to weaken countries such as Georgia and Azerbaijan.

For the governments of the Caucasian states to forge their people into self-respecting democratic nations and to create modern nation-states is indeed a difficult task. Therefore, in the Caucasian context, "national security" involves the complex relationships between emerging nations and the creation of democratic states.

GEOPOLITICS OR GEO-ECONOMICS?

The Caucasus is traditionally described in geopolitical terms. Only recently, when Caspian oil reserves became important to the international community, has the Caucasus gained more geo-economic importance. Historically, however, the Caucasian states lost rather than gained from their important geopolitical position. They sought Western aid to secure their independence, but despite promises, the aid was not dependable. Is this to be the pattern at the end of this century?

This partly depends on state-building and economic skills within the new states, which is a function of political culture, leadership and luck. But just as important as economic fortune or effective political leadership are the policies of the neighboring states (Russia, Turkey and Iran) and reactions to those policies by Western powers.

While presenting the Caucasus, it is impossible to avoid addressing its geopolitical problems. The history speaks for itself and includes numerous examples of geopolitical drama involving regional powers and sometimes even world powers,

Strictly from the geopolitical point of view, there are certain elements of the Caucasian regional security complex in formation—the operation of the "security dilemma" mechanism, the revival of the "great game" between Russia and Turkey and Russian and Western powers, and the involvement and even meddling of regional powers. There are also struggles for preserving or creating spheres of influence; attempts of some newly independent Caucasian states to escape from one-sided dependence on their former master and even to become buffer states instead of remaining impotent satellites; and there are even some signs of ethnic, religious and cultural contradictions and clashes in perspective.

Looking "geopolitically" at the Caucasus and taking into consideration the current situation in the region and within the newly independent Caucasian states themselves, one can't

avoid arriving at a quite pessimistic assessment of the region's future. There are many negative moments in the Caucasus that can hinder its development and make it a "barren land" politically and economically.

First of all, the newly independent Caucasus states are not simply weak, small powers. More to the point, they are weak states, essentially quasi-states, with no tradition or experience in modern statehood. Ethnic nationalism, an absence of democratic traditions and a weakness of emerging civil elements dominate their political culture. Moreover, all three states are experiencing social and economic crises emanating from their transitions from "planned" to market economies.

The region is also characterized by ethnic tensions, claims to self-determination, intrastate and interstate tensions and conflicts. In some cases, external forces support revisionist ethnic groups and states. This increases common insecurity and hinders the state-building process. The Caucasus states have become sovereign in a moment of history when the nation-state is being challenged: external challenges to the economic sovereignty of a state and internal challenges to the so-called "ruling" ethnic group within a nation. Nevertheless, the conditions for independent statehood in Armenia, Azerbaijan and Georgia have never been so good. The chaos over the last few years demonstrated the importance of self-organization and the necessity for having a fairly strong and effective state. These new nations have to handle the trends of rapid globalization, which directly challenge the governing parties as they are trying to build modern states.

CASPIAN OIL: A NEW DIMENSION

Oil is not a new phenomenon for the Caucasus, where the tradition in oil exploitation existed for a century. However, the current situation is completely different from the previous one. Disintegration of the USSR and the discovery of new significant oil reserves in the Caspian basin focuses the international spotlight on the Caucasus, puts the newly independent Caucasian states on both political and economic maps of the world, and transforms them into international actors and objects of international rivalry. Georgia can benefit from Caspian oil both politically and economically because of its favourable location. It can serve as a transit route and strengthen its security through the international community's interest in maintaining the extraction and transportation of oil to international markets. Paradoxical ly, Caspian oil may be both beneficial and dangerous to Georgia because of Russia's rising fear and perception of Western influence in the Caspian region as a threat to its security and economic interests. Russia cannot stop oil extraction in the Caspian, but it can pursue an active policy in controlling the oil transportation routes, aiming at having a monopoly on Caspian oil transport. Hence, the conflict of interest between Russia and Georgia is clear, and Russia has enough means to make the South Caucasus, and namely Georgia, less attractive to Western energy companies and governments.

Some political and military establishment groups in Russia still believe that they can integrate the South Caucasus and Central Asia into a common space that would be dominated by Russia. They support policies in the Caucasus that preserve regional conflicts and the potential for new types of conflicts and that enable Russia to gain political concessions to maintain control over the CIS borders while deterring foreign investment in the South Caucasus. Such tactics have brought Russia only limited, short-term success. Russia has neither increased nor maintained its security in the Caucasus. Rather, by creating ethnic conflicts, Moscow has encouraged an exodus of the Russian population, discouraged Russian investment, increased regional distrust of Russia, increased tensions with Turkey and created a vacuum of

constructive policies which could, if implemented, transform the Caucasian states into genuine allies of Russia, supportive of its political and economic interests in the region.

On the other hand, there are some signs of a rather different approach detected among some of Russia's business groups. These groups see more benefits in a stable and secure economic environment in the Caucasus and support a more constructive approach to the region.

The Caucasian states want a stable and economically prosperous Russia so that they might look upon Russia as a genuine source of security.

It is clear that such a Russian policy does not contribute to Georgia's security and well-being. On the other hand, if Russia chooses a more geo-economic approach to the Caspian oil and contributes to its development and delivery to international markets, it will consequently contribute to co-operation in the Caspian region and the Caucasus in particular. No economic development can take place in the Caucasus without security, regional co-operation and benefits from Caspian oil. It also seems that in the long run, positive involvement of Russia in the regional security of and economic co-operation in the Caucasus would be beneficial for Russia itself. It would contribute to Russia's own security and well-being.

Regional instability remains a negative factor for the development of a Caspian energy infrastructure. The key to stability in the Caucasus is Russia. Western powers, as well as other regional powers, can have a significant influence in shaping Russia's behaviour. Alongside a real commitment to the independence of the Caucasian states financially, politically and morally, Western powers should encourage Russia to play a more positive role in the region. There is nothing unnatural or illogical in Russia being the major trading partner of the Caucasian states or having specific interests there.

It is obvious that Georgia still has much to do in order to preserve the current level of political stability and to enhance it further, but any political stability requires Georgia to be supported by the development of a prosperous economy. Yet, serious problems still remain unresolved, ethnic conflicts among them. The situation in Abkhazia is still very serious; but unlike Abkhazia, the attempts to restore peace in the South Ossetia (Tskhinvali) region have been increasingly successful and there are very good prospects for a peaceful settlement of that conflict.

The gradual economic development of Georgia depends on improving cooperation within the Caucasus region. Georgia has very good relations with all its neighbors and can serve as a bridge not only between East and West, but also between North and South. The idea of a "Eurasian Corridor" looks beyond Central Asia and includes China and Japan.

An important element of Georgia's economic resurrection could be the Caspian oil-exporting pipeline. The early oil pipeline Baku-Supsa is near completion. It makes Georgia an actor in the Caspian oil business. A larger pipeline would further contribute to Georgia's political stability and economic well-being.

The future of Georgia and, to a great extent, the whole region depends on the volume and geography of the proven reserves of Caspian oil. If they grow, outside powers will have more influence on the security dynamics and economic development of the Caucasus.

Georgia views multiple pipelines as a key factor to ensuring that no regional power can exercise full control over the energy routes. The implementation of Caspian energy projects requires a stable environment. Thus, all efforts of the international community have to be directed towards stabilizing the region. The concept, a "Peaceful Caucasus" (an initiative of President Edward Shevardnadze), completely meets this challenge.

Georgia is doing everything within its power to develop co-operation within the region as it believes that the small states of the Caucasus must focus their diplomatic energies on security in the region themselves, and that they cannot rely on outside powers.

SECURITY THREATS IN THE CAUCASUS: GEORGIA'S VIEW

For every country, national security problems and priorities are of vital and primary importance. Newly independent states are particularly sensitive to security problems as they lack the experience that comes from independent statehood, including an experience, and even more, a culture in strategic planning and foreign policy engineering. Furthermore, newly independent states—being in an early stage of existence as sovereign, autonomous actors—feel very insecure and quite uncertain about what their security interests and priorities should be and how to go about defining them. Thus, they tend to underestimate certain security threats, exaggerate others and sometimes even miss vital factors in the game called national security planning. In addition, their strategic vision, as well as their calculations, are mainly based on historical memories, which are constructed according to ethnic lines or a division between "us" and "them," and according to the classical pattern of "insiders" and "outsiders," "friends" and "enemies." These calculations are also grounded on a frequently quite unrealistic assessment of the global political and economic systems when looked at from the states' perspectives in terms of security.

The region and context in which these states find themselves can complicate or reduce their security problems as well as their tasks within foreign policy. Every region has its own distinctive security environment, which is, most of all, defined by the region's geo-strategic and geo-economic position. This, in turn, is influenced or determined by the level of interest the major world powers have in this particular region; by the level of interest the more powerful neighbors and regional powers have in the region, and the way in which they are involved in the region's political and economical life; and by the security issues and situations within the countries themselves, which includes and is influenced by the amity-enmity patterns intrinsic to the region.

THREATS TO THE REGION'S SECURITY AND THE ROLE OF REGIONAL POWERS

The internal security problems the Caucasian states have to face make them not only extremely vulnerable to domestic unrest but also to threats from the outside. This is all the more so here in the Caucasus region, as none of the Caucasian states is economically self-reliant and all of them are currently undergoing economic and social crises. The weakness of their statehood makes the Caucasian states more sensitive and biased in their vision of the external environment to such a degree that this vision itself can become dangerous or even threatening. Their concept of "national security," in fact, is still problematic, as it is strongly influenced by the inertia of the "Soviet mentality" and haunted by the experience of the past.

Security is the successful management of change because change provokes a potential for crisis and conflict. The Caucasus region is going through a process of transition and rapid change. Regional security in the Caucasus would mean the successful management of change towards an equitable and peaceful order. This can only be achieved through a responsible policy of the main regional powers.

The Caucasian states form a regional security complex that is still in its embryonic state. Relationships within a potential security complex are still overshadowed and strongly influenced by their relationships to the more powerful neighbors and players. In some instances, external forces and factors manipulate political groups, revisionist ethnic factions or even entire states within the region for their own interests, thereby adding to the insecurity within the region. The security structures and arrangements of the CIS have little positive effect on the security environment of the region.

The weak Caucasian states are still incapable of defending their national interests and of providing for their security on their own. Consequently, the security concerns raised by the states in this region and the foreign policy behaviour they display may originate from their own belief that they are incapable of relying solely on their own means and that the solution to any "security dilemma" must come from outside.

The states of the Caucasus have no other alternative than to develop an economic co-operation within the region and to solve the question of security on their own. Armenia, nevertheless, seeks Russia's protection partly because of its different security concerns and partly because of its confrontation with Azerbaijan over the Nagorno-Karabakh. As a consequence, co-operation in the region, whether in terms of economics or security, is not promoted.

Security threats within each country in this region, as well as in the overall region, pose not only a problem to the region itself. Ethnic tensions and conflicts within the states of this region can easily spill over their borders, aggravate security structures, and affect the amity-enmity pattern within and outside the CIS (such as in Iran and Turkey for example). There is an urgent need for a more positive involvement of outside powers in this region, aimed at supporting regional co-operation and at contributing to the region's security. The Caucasian states would prefer co-operation to anarchy; they would prefer co-operation to the selfish and "negative" meddling of outside powers in the affairs of the regional states; they would prefer it to the chaos that results and is produced by the "security dilemma." It is truly in the interest of the regional actors to play a more constructive role in establishing a "healthy" security environment in the Caucasus. It is time for the states of this region to think more about regional co-operation on economic matters, as well as on matters of security, as it is the only way to preserve their recently gained independence and to fully develop their economic potential.

GEORGIA'S VIEW ON THE REGION'S DEVELOPMENT

Georgia's priority concerning regional security and economic issues is to find a new role and function within the international system as well as within the region. This, however, cannot be achieved without stability and economic development in the region. Again, in order to obtain stability and economic development, certain factors have to be fulfilled.

The territorial integrity of states must be preserved. The instigators of conflicts must be condemned and conflict management must become a collective effort. Human rights must be protected always and everywhere. Restoration and preservation of peace and stability is impossible without the realization of these fundamental principles. Regional states have to co-operate in the promotion of ethnic and confessional tolerance. Extremist nationalism, xenophobia and separatism have to be collectively condemned and persecuted.

The basis for Georgia's vision of the Caucasus region is the belief in the necessity of promoting regional security and economic co-operation.

The security dynamic in the Caucasus is, first of all, determined by the regional powers: the interests and deeds of the regional powers shape the security environment of this region.

Georgia perceives the role of the regional powers to be one of not only giving support to the region's newly independent states in building their statehood, but also one of promoting regional co-operation and interdependence. Hence, regional powers have to play a major role in preserving the territorial integrity and in promoting the economic dynamism of the newly independent Caucasus states.

Georgia sees its future within a regional context more in geo-economic terms than in geopolitical ones. Georgia feels that Azerbaijan also looks at its future in a similar way. Armenia, however, still perceives the complicated political and economic issues of this region more through a geopolitical lens; it relies heavily on external support rather than on developing

confidence itself, and working towards co-operation within the region.

The region's future has to be seen in an economic context. Otherwise, the Caucasus may remain underdeveloped; it will lack an integrative and co-operative spirit, the necessary links, and will stay open to conflicts. Regional security can be developed through economic co-operation, which not only brings stability and economic dynamism to all three small independent states, but also benefits regional powers both in their security and in their economics. The Caucasus may play the role of a bridge for regional powers, even more the role of a bridge for the East-West and North-South trade.

Mass transport as well as means of communications must be protected. Everything necessary must be done to ensure free access to these means. One of the most important political and economic resources of the Caucasus is its favourable location; through its location, the region can acquire global importance. Thus, any communication blockade has to be considered a criminal act directed against the well-being of the whole region. A co-operation in environmental issues has to be developed.

Georgia perceives the role of the regional powers in the Caucasus in terms of how they are best able to find responsible approaches to the potential problems of the region. The regional powers (Iran, Russia and Turkey) are multiethnic states interested in preserving their own territorial integrity and internal unity. Thus, the Georgian view is that the regional powers are deeply concerned with the Caucasian problems and would like to solve them first, as it serves their own interests to do so.

The conflicts, which already have taken place in the Caucasus, have shown the regional powers that internal problems and instability within each of the Caucasian states may spill over the regional boundaries and affect the interests of the regional powers (including their security concerns). They may trigger unexpected processes and changes, and may even threaten the security of the regional powers themselves (as has been the case with Russia).

CONCLUSION

Georgia's national security can be provided for by a strong and developed statehood. Internal unity, political stability and economic dynamism are the cornerstones of security. Georgia, in its security policy, cannot rely only on the ineffective CIS structure. Georgian disillusionment with the CIS at the official level corresponds to the low regard with which this organization is held by popular opinion. On the other hand, without stability and security in the region, Georgia cannot feel secure. Hence, Georgia has to do its best to promote regional security and economic cooperation.

The weak Caucasian states are still incapable of maintaining their security by themselves. The states of the Caucasus have no alternative but to develop economic cooperation within the region and to solve the problem of security on their own. Nevertheless, there is an urgent need for a more positive involvement of the outside powers in the region. The role of the regional powers (Russia, Iran and Turkey) is of particular importance. It is truly in the interest of the regional powers to play a more constructive role in establishing a "healthy" security and economic environment in the Caucasus.

The function of the regional powers in the Caucasus should be to strengthen regional security, to support the political and economic development of the newly independent states, and should not be to attempt (as has been the case in some instances) to turn these states into impotent satellites and quasi-states incapable of preserving internal stability. On the other hand, it is now imperative for the states of this region to think more about regional co-operation on economic matters, as well as on matters of security, as this is the only way to preserve their recently gained independence and to fully develop their economic potential.

In short, the need for stability in the Middle East, Turkey and Russia, and the growth of the Caucasus economic importance as an energy source and transit corridor linked to Central Asia, make this region increasingly important to international community.

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