

Glimpse of Security Architecture of Post-Soviet Space: The Soviet Legacy

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Abstract

Although nearly two decades have passed since the USSR crumbled, its legacy is still helping to shape security within, and relations between, former member states, as well as their relations with other states in the world.

Already back in the 90's of the past century, it seemed like peace and security should have been within the interests of not just this region, but of the whole world, notably due to region's geographic location and geo-strategic potential and its increasing importance as the main link of transport and communication projects.

Apart from the geopolitical significance, the stability of Post-Soviet Space is imperiled by numerous domestic and transnational security challenges, such as: unresolved conflicts, socio-economic hardships, organized crime, trafficking and migration. The scale and scope of these transnational problems require a coordinated action. Since the region is intensely divided by conflicts and the competing interests of regional powers, the region would benefit from a greater cross-border collaboration. However, regional cooperation is not as well developed as it could be, hampering economic development, security and further destabilizing the area.

This became even more important after the tragic events of 9/11, which made it apparent, that there exist no conflicts or crises of more and less important and these problems could have been resolved only through joint cooperation at the international and regional levels.

Keywords: Geopolitical Significance, Post-Soviet Space, Security Challenges, Soviet Legacy, Transnational Security, USSR

Introduction

After the collapse of the Soviet Union, ethnically, linguistically and culturally diverse successor states were left behind. As these states tried to form domestic policies and governing institutions, the interests of their various populations were (and still are) often in conflict. Civil war erupted in Tajikistan and Georgia. Riots swept Kyrgyzstan. Armed conflicts broke out in Moldova and Russia. But others, have shown that multiculturalism needn't always result in widespread, violent conflict.

The Politics of the Black Sea Region are affected with many diverse political, security and economic interests. The region is a dynamic and complex area in which many national and international actors have key interests, including Russia, the US and EU. The European Union stretches to the sea's western coast, where it meets former Soviet territory as well as EU candidate Turkey. Changing relationships with the USA, China, as well as with institutions such as the European Union and NATO, are shaping the security agendas of states in the region and beyond.

Regional tensions include those over NATO enlargement, a US anti-ballistic missile system, access to the Black Sea, democ-

ratization, spheres of interest and the conflict zones of Abkhazia, South Ossetia, Nagorno-Karabakh and Transnistria. In addition, the region's close proximity to the Caspian basin offers the prospect of alternative energy resources and routes to western states. (Weaver, 2013)

Moreover, the region is affected with other security threats and challenges, including energy politics; insurgency; transnational organised crime; and the domestic, regional, and geopolitical impact of the "colour revolutions".

25 years after the dissolution of USSR, several ancestor states have made significant progress towards building independent democratic states. Besides, the recent "orange" and "velvet revolutions" in Ukraine and Georgia have been considered a flagship model for urging further democratization processes in post-Soviet states.

The positive impacts of these "success stories" are closely linked to factors such as the socializing role of the European Union and NATO in the region. Moreover, other international organizations (such as CoE and OSCE) are plugged in improving mechanisms for

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the purpose of better human rights situation and political stability.

Yet, these developments are contrasted by the current situation in Central Asia and the Caucasus, where democratization efforts have either stalled, not been initiated or were met by a policy of the iron fist. **It is a tragic irony that the conflict between Georgia and Russia over secessionist South Ossetia in August 2008 might be considered a further illustration of how differently democracy has taken root in the area and how conflicting geopolitical agendas of various actors might affect the outcome of democracy promotion efforts and their effects for regional security.** (Bosold D., 2009)

Current democratization processes of Post-Soviet space is not complimentary for Russia. Creating insecurities (military confrontations, energy leverage, economic (trade) wars, etc.) has been approved mechanism of Russian foreign policy towards Black Sea democracies. Specifically, Russia used the ultimate goal of its foreign policy against Georgia and Ukraine, with the aim to prevent them from turning to the Euro-Atlantic direction and demonstrate to other Post-Soviet states that explosive democratization might not lead to the proclaimed goals of stability, prosperity and security. As soon as the new democratic elites (after colored revolutions) of Georgia and Ukraine proclaimed intention to join NATO and the EU, a number of diverse crises erupted in their bilateral relations with Russia. This become official justification of sudden interruptions of gas supply for Georgia, embargo for import of Georgian wine and mineral water and other Ukrainian dairy products and was crowned with ultimate increase of gas prices for both countries.

Herewith, the most adverse in the process is the hard power politics manifested by Russia against Georgia and Ukraine. New armed conflicts have broken out, as Russian-Georgian war concluded with 20% occupation of Georgian territories and as unfortunate current events in Ukraine that seem to change on a weekly, if not daily basis. In reacting to the pro-Western regime change in Ukraine in February 2014 by reincorporating Crimea into Russia, and later by supporting an anti-Kiev revolt in the eastern Donbas region, Russia broke free from the U.S. domination in post-Cold War system and openly challenged Washington. (Guseletov, 2015)

The recent developments of political policies in regional states highlight the different trajectories and processes of democratization in states of former communist rule. The experience gained through ongoing democratization processes measure level of democracies in general, successful cases and current challenges and obstacles to democratization. Thus, further highlighting the lessons that should be learned from soviet past and emphasizing directions for future democracies.

The Soviet Legacy

After dismantling the former Soviet republics encountered the challenge to secure their independence by building decent international institutional arrangements of political and economic character. Indeed, newly emerged independent States had to solve serious problem of making alliances with international political and economic structures in order to maintain peace and security. In order to cope with numerous threats and challenges regional states needed quite clear understanding of the national economic and political policies in the long-term perspective.

According to the general analysis of trends characterizing different arrangements of Post-Soviet republics, we can conclude that majority of the regional states rather active in searching for allies inside and outside of the region. However, practical gains of virtually all regional arrangements are rather modest.

It is obvious that any successful regional cooperation critically depends upon the selection of proper allies. It is clear that Russia still remains an important political and economic partner for some

post-soviet republics and important security partner for few of them. The following reasons are justifying this assumption:

➤ Firstly, Russia still remains an important economic and political partner for most of accessory states because of historical reasons. This fact can be attributed mostly to the heritage from old centralized Soviet system and somehow inert processes of recovering from the soviet ascendancy.

➤ Secondly, Russia still exercises regional hegemony over the post-Soviet states through the means of employing different tactics. The Russian plan is rather simple: Punish countries that refuse to come under its influence, while rewarding countries and political leaders that cooperate with Russia with lucrative political and security deals.

➤ Thirdly, Energy sector and transportation of oil and gas have become already (and will be in the future) important factors shaping relations in the post-Soviet space. For many countries the further economic development depends on successful construction of pipelines and transportation networks.

Taking into consideration all above-mentioned, dissolution of Soviet Union, a traumatic break-up for all states. Like a marriage, majority of property was jointly earned and owned, thus, it was hard to make a clean break. Transition period - that is still going on - has not been easy for any successor state. Rather, after the collapse of the USSR former Soviet republics have clearly demonstrated two principal ways of political and economic self-determination, comprising both -international and regional dimensions.

➤ The first one can be tentatively named "**Baltic way**". This strategy in practical terms means joining existing political and economic organizations like NATO, Council of Europe and EU. And now we can say that this strategy was successfully implemented by Estonia, Latvia, and Lithuania. This strategy has a clear distinctive feature – avoidance of any strong institutionalized ties with the former Soviet republics. (Burakovsky, n.d.) Soon after declaring independence, all of three Baltic republics have officially declared EU membership as the national priority. At the same time rejecting the very idea of participating in any regional arrangements with other post-soviet republics. These countries have positioned themselves politically beyond the bounds of economic and political groupings emerged on the post-Soviet space. Since 1990, the economies of Baltic States have grown around fourfold and democratic achievements are exemplary.

➤ The second strategy can be named as a "**mixed**" one in the sense that in this case former Soviet republics have been trying to combine accession to existing political and economic organizations (like NATO, WTO, closer relations with EU, etc.) with searches for different interstate institutional arrangements on the post-Soviet space. In fact we can say that this strategy consists of two elements:

- Pro-regional component (that is establishing different structures on the post-Soviet space) and
- External component (joining different arrangements outside CIS area). (Burakovsky, n.d.)

➤ The third strategy can be named as "**a (lone) way**" - We have already discussed two strategies above, whereas there is a third strategy as well. When 3 Baltic States (Estonia, Latvia and Lithuania) and four CIS countries (representatives of a mixed strategy) have already accessed to WTO, Turkmenistan did not apply for accession at all.

This is a clear implication of so called "third strategy", comprising the state that does not consider regional or international cooperation an important factor shaping state's political and economic wellbeing. Nowadays, the region has attracted attention of powerful international economic and political organizations, who have their own interests within the region and have subsequent impact on economic and political affairs. Today, into so complex world, it is almost inconceivable for a small, not signified states to survive and operate without proper having regional or international cooperation.

No nation is home alone. Famine of international cooperation and alliances decrease the capacity of any state to manage global security threats and risks alone.

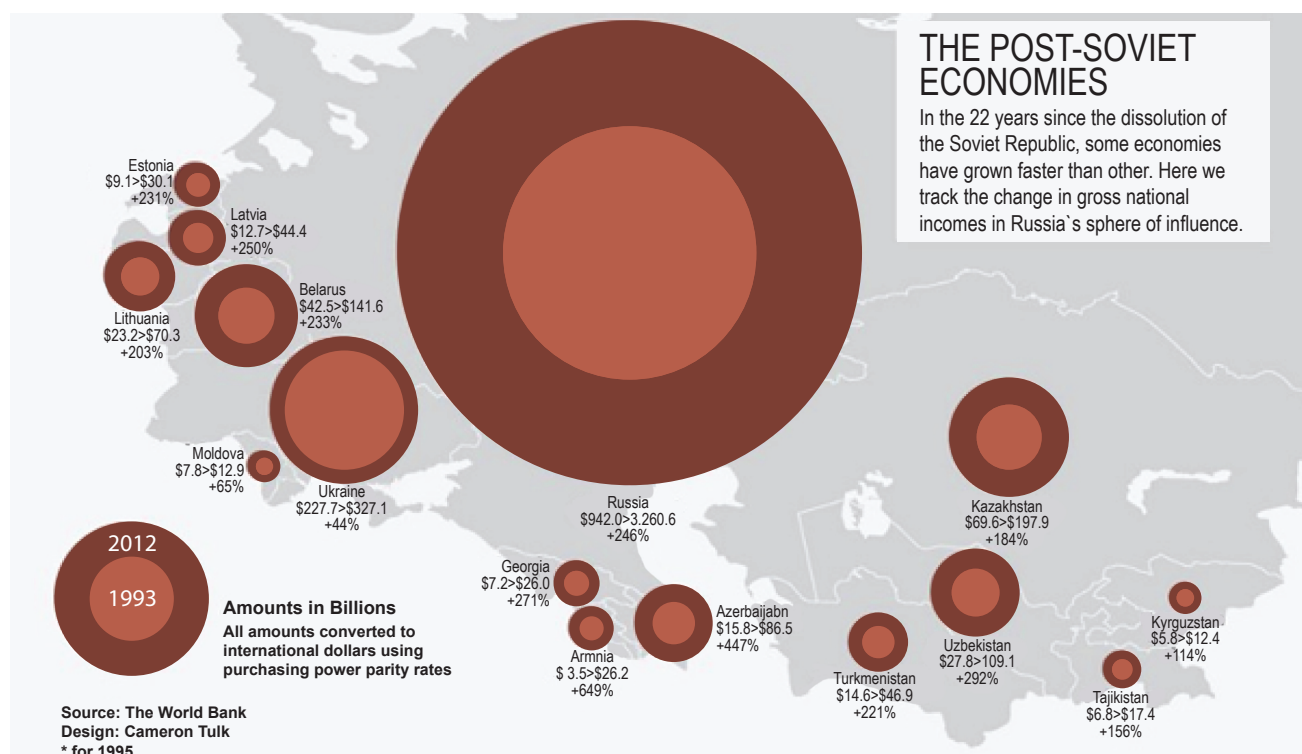
The map below shows changes in the post-Soviet countries' gross national income in 1993 and 2012. Indicating different levels of international dimensions, countries characterized with regional and/or international cooperation trend to achieve higher level of economic growth that so called "landlocked" states. (Dunnett, 2015)

All post-soviet states except Belarus, Tajikistan and Turkmenistan have some contractual relations with EU (see **Table 1**) The growing importance of the EU as a strong political ally has urged the development of a wide range of cooperative mechanisms between the EU and its post-soviet neighbours. The EU enlargement process to include countries in Central and Eastern Europe has shed light on new territorial horizons by bringing parts of the former Soviet space into the EU's focus. (Moga, T. Lucian, & Alexeev D., 2013)

The EU's expansion to the East has a structural nature, changing the long-term international structures that shape the nature of EU-Russian interaction. First, EU enlargement cements new governance linkages and behaviours for some of Russia's closest neighbours. Second, enlargement poses choices for Russia's other important previously absent neighbours (such as Ukraine, Belarus

Table 2: Agreements between EU and the Former Soviet Republics

Country	Agreement, entered in force
Armenia	Partnership and Cooperation Agreement, 1 July 1999
Azerbaijan	Partnership and Cooperation Agreement, 1 July 1999
Belarus	Partnership and Cooperation Agreement, signed in March 1995 but is not yet in force. The Interim agreement is also not in force
Georgia	Partnership and Cooperation Agreement, 1 July 1999
Kazakhstan	Partnership and Cooperation Agreement, 1 July 1999
Kyrgyzstan	Partnership and Cooperation Agreement, 1 July 1999
Moldova	Partnership and Cooperation Agreement, 1 July 1999
Russia	Partnership and Cooperation Agreement, 1 December 1997
Tajikistan	No Partnership and Cooperation Agreement proposed
Turkmenistan	Partnership and Cooperation Agreement signed in May 1998 but is not yet in force. The interim agreement is not yet in force
Ukraine	Partnership and Cooperation Agreement, 1 March 1998
Uzbekistan	Partnership and Cooperation Agreement, 1 July 1999



Map 1: Post -Soviet countries` gross national income in 1993 and 2012. (Hromadske International)

and Georgia). Finally, the inclusion in the European market of Russia's formerly most important trading partners challenges the very nature of Russia's own approach to building a market economy. (DeBardeleben, n.d.)

While taking into an account, that small and economically and politically comparatively weak states, as a rule, cannot consistently ensure external security without support from large and strong allies or being a part of some group system of security, the second necessary condition is first the desire of the powers or power centers, interested in this region, and then agreement on turning the region from an arena of economic or military-political confrontation into an arena of cooperation in these spheres.

Final Remarks

Let us remember that the main threats and consequently, the factors of security, which are universally well known: military, political, economic (energy can be distinguished separately, due to the special significance of energy resources and prominent threats of manipulating with energy resources in lucrative political deals), social (which includes human rights, demography, etc.), cultural and informational. Already for quite a lengthy period of time, terrorism has been singled out as a separate threat, which started more and more actively exploiting the Eurasian space.

It is known, that in spite of existence of admissible threats on various levels, they still affect security and that, when talking about

security, even if only one component is missing, one cannot talk anymore about "consistent and stable" security (thus, for example, it is practically impossible for states of the region to have common environmental threats and a common system of environmental security and different military-political threats and systems of security; maybe "on different levels", but not different).

Proceeding from the abovementioned, every person, state or region, if they want to have realistic, stable and consistent security, need security with all of its component parts.

"Conflict" is undoubtedly a main threat to security at all levels, starting with the family and ending with the world. In conditions of conflict inside the "levels" or between them, it is impossible to ensure real, stable and consistent security.

In accordance with the above-mentioned assumptions, it is also known, that in order to create a real, stable and consistent system of security, you need to do the following:

- Objectively and accurately define the existing and potential threats and challenges (difficulties – objective and subjective criteria);
- Neutralize the conflict threats (through preventive activities);
- In case of existing conflicts, resolve them as quickly as possible or consolidate conflict management processes.

Furthermore, for small, comparatively weak states (such as majority of former soviet republics), the main domestic and daily challenging threat is still an undemocratic state system. Its main characteristics are: undemocratic (or insufficiently democratic) Constitution and electoral legislation.

- As a consequence: corrupt Parliament and undemocratic laws;

- As a consequence: corrupt and undemocratic executive and judicial systems.

All of the above causes: ignoring of the law, corruption and refusal to implement any democratic reforms, not just from the side of the executive and judicial authority, but, what is possibly more significant, from the side of the population of the country. As a result, you end up with a "pseudo or failed state" and constant economic crisis and social tension, inability to resolve the conflicts existing inside the country, as well as the threat of arising of new conflicts and collapse of integrity of the country, which constantly cause destabilization in the broader region.

Indeed, main foreign threats of a country proceed exactly from its main domestic threats and are predetermined both by weakness of the national security system of the country itself and by attempts of outside hostile powers and power centers to contribute to this weakness and use it (including "conservation" of the existing conflicts and provoking new ones), in order to establish their influence over the country.

As a result, we end up with a weak defense capacity of the state and an inefficient and uncalculated foreign policy, disillusionment of foreign friendly or benevolent powers and international organizations, weakening (possible termination) of their economic and political assistance and, in the final run, lack of existence of an effective national security system of the country. (Zhgenti, 2009)

Conclusion

Security assurance in the region under consideration is essential for the member states, for the following reasons: firstly, due to the historic and geographic reasons security issues for many years have been more important in this region rather than in other ones. Secondly, the living conditions of the millions of their citizens or representatives of their nationalities are not just an issue for their own governments. Thirdly, security guarantees National interests of Post-Soviet countries in the region, which are:

- 1) Maintaining friendly relations with their neighbors, regardless of who is in power in these countries;
- 2) Prevention of "transit" security threats arising outside the region;
- 3) Ensuring internal stability and the absence of conflicts between them. (Guseletov, 2015)

If the above defined domestic threats are present in at least one or several countries of a region, they exceptionally intensify outside threats, not just for separate states of the region, but for the region as a whole. This is especially apparent in such regions, which are objects of attention, and consequently confrontation, of leading world powers or power centers, due to their special strategic, economic and military-political significance.

The most important of these conditions are, first of all, existence of a high level of ensuring internal security of the regional states and agreement between these states for finding ways to avoid existent common threats and challenges. Nowadays, establishing a real, stable and consistent system of regional security is possible only in theory and only provided that there undoubtedly exist several extremely significant conditions.

The most affective and enduring formula for strengthening security in the region and eliminating most prominent military-political security challenges could be preserving balance of power in the region. Thus, balancing interests of all role-players in the region and at the same time achieving collective security partnership of regional states could be a guarantee of maintaining stability and security in Post-Soviet Space. The role of civil society institutions is also promising in conflict management and resolution processes in united Post-Soviet space. Regional cooperation and unification is an essential tool in sake of regional prosperity and finding solutions for vital risks and threats. Post-soviet society should agree on collective effort and start cooperation from regional priorities.

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