CHAPTER II

RUSSIA AFTER DISINTEGRATION OF USSR

Immediately after the disintegration of USSR, Russia was confronted with a 'giant task' of giving a clear-cut definition of Russia's 'strategic interests' in the post communist world. According to Franklyn Holzman and Robert Legvold there were three important features which distinguished the Soviet policy-making system:

i. It enforced greater centralization [concentration of decision-making power].

ii. It maintained deeper differentiation [role specialization of institutions and individuals].

iii. It allowed much less participation [access to the decision-making process].

Thus before disintegration, the right to have an overall view about foreign policy issues and strategic interests of erstwhile USSR was in essence restricted to the Politburo. The Communist Party was at the core of the process. Decisions were taken by the politburo or by key groups drawn from its members; the Secretariat acted as the main channel, sifter, and organizer of the information the Politburo needed to

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make its decisions. To define the 'strategic interests' of Russia in the post communist World was the task to be undertaken by Russia in a totally new and unexpected domestic and international environment.

It was for the first time in Russian history that the political course of the country was being choreographed not only by Kremlin leadership but by parts of the intelligentsia and society as well. The debates on the 'strategic interests' was discussed by government, professional foreign policy institutions, political parties, research centres and the mass media. During the winter of 1990-1991 the KGB, the armed forces, and the International Department appeared at times to be forwarding their own foreign policies, jarringly at odds with the new political thinking of Gorbachev and the Foreign Ministry. This led to uncomfortable complications in relations with the West and with the former Soviet-bloc states. The sudden and unexpected demise of USSR and the subsequent uncertainty about Russian national interest engaged the Russian political elites in the foreign policy debate. The issues of

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3 Jeffery Checkel cites a report that at this time 'relations between two of the primary contestants - the Ministries of Defence and Foreign Affairs - had become so bad that at many high level meetings representatives of the two institutions would not even address each other, in Jeffery Checkel, "Russian Foreign Policy: Back to the future?" RFE/RL Research Report, October 16, 1992, p.22.
national interests and identity were handled by the Russian politicians who were inexperienced in these matters. The effective operation of the previous ultra-centralized system depended on the party apparatus. When this collapsed at a stroke at the end of August 1991, an enormous overload was ploughed on the information-processing and political-control capacity of the Presidency and the Foreign Ministry. The new politically active elite had in most cases little experience of foreign policy matters. They were therefore more likely to be willing to support unrealistic and destabilizing policies.4

In the new domestic environment political views got sharply polarized. All groups were there to attack the Russian leadership for paying, insufficient attention to Russian interests in the 'near abroad'. There was resentment in army and defence-industrial circles about the material implications for them of the demilitarized foreign policy line preferred by the Foreign Ministry.5 Attempts were made by these groups to undermine the government and mobilize public opinion in support of their policies and programmes. The role of Russia in the world -- an old conception -- was severely attacked and a consensus for its replacement was difficult to achieve. Foreign Minster Kozyev's

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5 Ibid.
conciliatory approach to the West was treated as offending the wounded national feelings of the country. For these groups, Russian national interests should be based upon the realities of Russia's geographical position at the centre of the Eurasian land mass and Russia's long history of inter-dependence with the other members of the Commonwealth of Independent States. The ultra-nationalists, neo-communists and the centrists shared in common a concern for the near abroad, particularly those former Soviet republics with significant Russian minorities, from Ukraine and Moldova in the West, through the Caucasus to Kazakhstan and the states of Central Asia.6

National interest for Russia was to secure the universal interests of the whole society within the nation state. But since, 1991, this realm of national interest was complicated further when some 25 million Russian-speaking citizens were living outside the Russian Federation in other former republics of USSR. The Russian speaking citizens were left with uncertainty regarding their citizenship rights and status and an ambiguous relationship with the Moscow.7 Apart from this, call for

6 Peter Sheeran, "Defining the National Interest: Russian Foreign Policy and Domestic Politics", in Roger E. Kanet and Alexander V. Kozhemakin (eds.), The Foreign Policy of the Russian Federation (New York, St. Martin's Press Inc., 1997), p.8

increased autonomy, independence and sovereignty from various regions within the Russian Federation also stimulated reactive policies from the main political groups who were wishing to maintain the territorial integrity of the State.

The second most important aspect of Russia's 'giant task' was to confront threats to political and military stability on its borders, which are traditionally considered to be major potential threats to a state's stability and calls for an immediate and often drastic action. Since 1991 Russia's periphery has been beset with crises and conflict. The events in the 'near abroad', from Moldova through Georgia to Tajikistan, had forced the Russian political elite to define and redefine their 'Strategic interests'. All the major groups attacked the Russian leadership for paying insufficient attention to Russian interests in the 'near abroad' and made this issue into a main plank in their attempts to undermine the government and mobilize public opinion in support of their policies and programmes. In a major international conference convened immediately after the Soviet collapse in March 1992 in Tehran, many prominent 'Soviet' and Western scholars identified Russia's prolonged domestic weakness along with the collapse of the ideology of communism as the twin pillars opening Russia's periphery to regional and international competition. Iran and Turkey, for example, were singled out as the 'new kids on the block, with considerable prospects
for influence and domination in the former Soviet periphery in the South. 8

The task ahead of Russia was further complicated by the inheritance of partly reformed Soviet-era constitution and political institutional structures that ensured confusion and competition. Since 1991 Parliament and President were engaged in a struggle for power, with both sides involved in a serious dispute, over which institution had competency over policy making. The Parliament consistently opposed the President's policies, and most observers saw this as overstepping the bounds of acceptable behaviour, as an only partially democratically elected chamber was constantly seeking to obstruct and undermine government policy and a democratically elected President. It was a confusing picture, which ultimately led to governmental impotence and gridlock, as the conflict between the two institutions became increasingly more hostile and volatile. 9


9 V. Savelev and R. Huber, "Russian Parliament and Foreign Policy", International Affairs (Moscow, no. 3, 1993), pp. 37-8, 43; Nezavisimaja gazeta, December 19, 1992. The constitution did not, however define what should happen if the president were to take up a position contradicting that of the legislature; Ruslan Khasbulatov, chairman of the Supreme Soviet, February 6, 1992, Diplomaticheskii vestnik, no. 6, 1992, p.32; Nezavisimaja gazeta, March 28, 1992, cited from Ruslan Khasbulatov, The Struggle for Russia: Power and Change in the Democratic Revolution (London and New York, Routledge, 1993).
The dispute between Parliament and President came to a head in the autumn of 1993 when, for the third time in modern Russian history, an elected assembly was unconstitutionally and forcibly disbanded by executed authority. Although Yeltsin lacked any proper constitutional authority to disband the Parliament, he justified his actions by arguing that the Parliament itself was undermining government by constantly blocking a democratically elected president from fulfilling his duties. It was hoped that the institutional crisis would be solved by holding elections to a new bicameral Parliament, simultaneously with a plebiscite on a new constitution, held on 12 December 1993. Yeltsin had warned that to vote 'no' for the constitution would confront Russians with the possibility of civil war. He tried to prevent the publication of any criticism to the draft text and he essentially staked his own reputation on the plebiscite.

With this background, the leadership of the new Russian state was confronted with several foreign political problems. The central one was to effect a definitive break from the communist past. Russia after assuming the status of legal heir to the former Soviet Union was to

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10 The first occasion was in July 1906 when the Tsar sent troops in the close down Russia's first Duma just two months after its opening session. The second occasion occurred when the Bolsheviks used troops to disband the Constituent Assembly in January 1918 during its first session.

ensure a space for itself in the new world order. The international community was there to watch carefully, how Russia would cope with its difficult legacy. Western states’ expectation was to see Russia gets transformed into a capitalist and democratic country. In such an atmosphere Russia was to carefully interact with its former allies - the new democratic states of Eastern and Central Europe - as well as towards the former Soviet republics who had the status of independent states. Indeed, the threats the Russian leaders saw to their country were remarkably similar to those that concerned American officials: terrorism, religious fundamentalism, and nuclear proliferation.\(^\text{12}\)

The disintegration of the Soviet Union left Russia to look for a new basis for its security policy and to grapple with the question of whether Russia is a super power or ‘just’ a regional great power. Russia being stretched from Europe to Asia was to look for its regional interests as a priority consideration. Russia despite lack of global reach and interests of Soviet Union was to maintain strong influence and interests around its borders. It was Russia's policy towards ‘near abroad’ that caused a major concern in the West over the nature and direction of Russian foreign policy.

A substantial disparity between Russian and Western views on peacekeeping in the Former Soviet Union (FSU) was quiet evident. The international debate on peacekeeping in the FSU was concentrated on the nature and legitimacy of Russian-dominated interventions. While the Western community was urging Moscow to abide by classic United Nations (UN) standards of peacekeeping (such as impartiality, consent, minimum force and UN control), Russia was pushing for the recognition of certain peculiarities of peacekeeping operations in the Commonwealth of Independent States (CIS) and of Russia's 'special role' in those operations. Although Russian official did not reject the international rules of peacekeeping, they argued that those rules should be relaxed in certain cases so that Russia can cope with the new challenges posed by post-Cold War conflicts. Russia was obliged to impose stability in the conflict ridden regions around its borders and was perplexed by West, which was offering plenty of advice about the norms of international behaviour, but very little material support or understanding for Russia's difficult case.13

After discussing the reasons for the 'giant task' ahead of Russia in the aftermath of sudden and unexpected demise of USSR, it becomes essential to observe some of its reflections in the development of Russia's

domestic politics. When the competitive elections were introduced in March 1989, Yeltsin became a Deputy to the Congress of People's Deputies and a year later he was elected by the Sverdlovsk constituency to be a deputy to the Russian Parliament. In May 1990, Russian deputies narrowly elected him as chairman of the Russian Parliament, and the following year in June 1991, Yeltsin was elected by the Russian people to the new post of President of Russia. These electoral victories gave Yeltsin a popular legitimacy, which Gorbachev was missing at the crucial period of Russia's transformation. As a result, a base of support separate from party and state was developed by Yeltsin in Russia.

Yeltsin's defiance during the August coup marked the disappearance of the Soviet Union. He was identified around the world as a true defender of democracy. Gorbachev who had played a pivotal role in bringing down communism was left with no authority to complete the process of reform. The failed August coup gave Yeltsin his chance to take power in Russia and sweep away the old Soviet system.

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14 Boris Yeltsin describes his increasing stormy relationship with Mikhail Gorbachev, including the Soviet leader's fatal indecision and his failure at the end of his reign to embrace genuine economic and political reform: Boris Yeltsin, The Struggle for Russia, Translated by Catherine A. Fitzatrick (New York, Random House, 1994), pp. 15-21.

15 An hour-by-hour account of the fateful August coup and description of Yeltsin's decision to climb atop a tank in front of the Russian "White House" to his working of key Russian generals. The disoriented Gorbachev returning to Moscow after the coup and grasping the consequences of the failed coup in the end of the Soviet Union and Gorbachev's career as well has been discussed by Yeltsin himself, in ibid., pp. 41-103.
The CPSU was suspended, the KGB broken up, the USSR abolished and the command economy was abandoned. With the old guard defeated or in disarray, Yeltsin was there to supervise the transition to a capitalist, liberal democratic state.

In the domestic field, however, Yeltsin faced enormous problems. The incomplete reforms started by Gorbachev was far from complete. Yeltsin despite being a popular figure in Russia was not fully equipped for the proposed reforms. Most people, in fact, were grossly ignorant about the implications of reform and Yeltsin made the mistake of not encouraging a more wide-ranging debate on the subject. From 1989 to 1991, there ensued an increasing number of reforms pointing towards the end of the Soviet system: for example, the legalization of small private business in August 1990; the reduction of state control in October 1990; and further denationalization and privatization in July 1991. Widespread dissatisfaction was reflected in strikes, for which the least cause was the not anti-alcohol campaign, which as one opponent declared, amounted to 'the castration of the working class'. Gradually, the campaign was relaxed, and by the early 1990s the Russians were catching up and even overtaking the world's other leading drinkers.16

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The economy had been in decline since 1988 and it was in severe
crisis by the time Yeltsin took over. Gorbachev conceded early in 1988
that if the income from sales at home of soft drinks and sales abroad of
another liquid, oil, were deducted from the Soviet budget, there had
been no significant economic growth for about twenty years, and even,
from 1981 to 1985, some decline.\textsuperscript{17} The dissolution of the
Union only
served to further exacerbate these problems. Finally, there was the
problem of power. Yeltsin who had authority as Russian President, but
his ability to implement policy remained limited. Centrifugal forces
combined with weak central institutions to reduce substantively his
power as President.

Yeltsin after coming to power in 1991-92 made a deliberate
tryatment to ignore the importance of political reform and
democratization. Before the launch of shock therapy Yeltsin failed to
gain approval from the people for his reform programme. He also
failed to draw up a new constitution to deal with the post-Soviet
realities. In other republics referenda or elections were held, but Yeltsin
wanted to move ahead quickly. He was determined to change all that
and resolved to push through economic reforms with the minimum of
consultation. As a result three features of the post communist Russian
system became especially significant. The first one was the weakness

\footnote{17 \it ibid.}
of law, in particular judicial institutions that can maintain the boundary between state and society.

A second major weakness of the post-communist order was poorly developed political structures. There were no nationally organized political parties which can offer a choice of candidates and programmes at periodic elections, give some direction to public policy, and maintain a stable pattern of interaction with the society. And lastly, the emerging post-communist order appeared to be based on a limited and poorly qualified commitment to democratic values.\(^\text{18}\)

In November 1991, a new government was set up and the liberal Yegor Gaidar was appointed in charge of the economic policy. He was inspired by the Polish example and favoured a dash to the market - or shock therapy.\(^\text{19}\) Before the announcement of this policy controversy started inside Russia over the strategy taken up by Gaidar.\(^\text{20}\) The argument taken up by Yegor Gaidar was that the only realistic alternative for Russia was shock therapy. The economic crisis he had

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18 Stephen White surveys the attempts to implement democratic institutions in Russia. The essential question raised by him is to consider first months of Russia to be democratic Russia or simply post-communism, or even a new form of authoritarianism. Stephen White, "Russia's experiment with democracy", Current History, October 1992, pp. 310-313.

19 Shock therapy consisted of three interrelated policies - the freezing of prices, cut in state spending and a swift move towards privatization.

inherited in the autumn and winter of 1991 needed a radical surgery for the revival of Russian economy. Any delay, he said, would only make the situation worse with the state facing the very real possibility of bankruptcy and hyperinflation. Gaidar despite being so realistic in his approach was criticised severely by the Chairman of the Supreme Soviet, Ruslan Khasbulatov. International Monetary Fund together with U.S. were attacked for supporting Premier Yegor Gaidar, who was pushing economic reform by lifting price controls.\(^{21}\)

In May 1992, most state subsidies and price controls were abolished. Later in the same year, more complete privatization was announced in August, while in October, all Russian citizens were given vouchers to enable them to buy shares in denationalized industry. In other words Russian people were to be thrown in at the deep end of the free market pool so that they would all the more quickly learn to swim in it. But unfortunately too many sank, before Gaidar himself sank in December 1992. Nevertheless, halfway through 1993, more than 2000 large firms with about 3 million employees were privatized. More than 30,000 smaller enterprises were setup. Nearly 200 thousand agricultural holdings were privatized during the same period.\(^{22}\)

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\(^{21}\) *Ibid.*

In the first month of shock therapy, consumer prices rose four-fold and producer prices five-fold. Annual inflation rates never subsequently fell below three figures (Appendix 1). As the table shows, the Russian economy entered a period of unprecedented collapse. Industrial and agricultural output was more than halved in the first four years of reform. The annual per capita income fell from $4,110 in 1990 to $2,650 in 1994.

The consumption of goods and services dropped 33 per cent over the period 1991 to 1995 and capital investment as a per centage of GDP fell from 23.4 per cent in 1989 to 15.1 per cent in 1995. The budget deficit did decline from the heights of 1991, but it remained stubbornly resistant to monetarist policy at about 9 per cent of GDP for much of the period.

Shock therapy had devastating impact on the majority of Russian citizens. While seven per cent of the Russian population were officially registered as dollar millionaires, more than a third were living below the poverty line — a figure that had more than tripled since the launch of

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25 Russian Economic Trends, n. 23, p.117 and 121.

Gaidar's reforms. Official unemployment remained remarkably low throughout the period, but 10 per cent of the Russian labour force worked part-time and large number of workers went unpaid often for months at a time. Mortality rates rose by 16 per cent and birthrates declined by 14 per cent over the period 1992-94. Men's life expectancy fell to 59 years in 1994 to become the lowest in Europe. Cuts in state spending also led to a crisis in arts and education. Georgy Arbatov, an advisor to successive Soviet leaders, described this process as the 'de-intellectualization' of Russian society.

The dramatic impact of shock therapy gave a serious blow in the minds of the Russian people. The explosion in crime in the Russian society was spreading widely. Once a safest country in the world, Russia overtook US in the mid-1990s in the number of homicides per year. Mafia operations took over large sectors of the market and posed a potential threat to democracy and the economic reform process itself.

27 *Russian Economic Trends*, no. 23, p. 120.
30 *Moscow News*, n.28.
31 Georgy Arbatov, n. 29, p. 92.
It was estimated that up to 40 per cent of Russia's wealth was controlled by criminal cartels.\textsuperscript{33}

In such circumstances, it was quiet obvious that the attack on Gaidar's policy would be from all sections of the society. Opposition in the Parliament and outright rejection in certain sections of the Russian media became a routine affair. Yeltsin's own Vice-President, Alexander Rutskoi condemned shock therapy even before it was launched as 'economic genocide',\textsuperscript{34} and termed dismissed Gaidar and his colleagues as 'little boys in pink shorts and yellow boots'.\textsuperscript{35} Grigory Yavlinsky, that reformist economist who had earlier drafted 500-day programme, expressed his concern over the social effects of shock therapy.\textsuperscript{36} By late 1993, even the Clinton Administration began to agree, arguing that the Russian people had seen all shock and no therapy.

Anders Aslund, the Western academic and adviser to Gaidar's team, was the first serious economist to have an optimistic view about Russia's prospects. He argued that in Russia, despite all the hardships and problems, the foundations of market system had been laid by


\textsuperscript{34} As cited in Mike Bower, Russian Foreign Policy and the End of the Cold War, (Vermont: Dartmouth Publishing Company, 1997), p. 168.

\textsuperscript{35} Ibid.

Equally satisfying Aslund was that the state was no longer dominating the Russian economy. Investments were increasingly raised by private firms. Private enterprises by 1994 were employing about 60 per cent of the work force and generating about 60 per cent of Russian GNP. Retail and services were almost entirely privately owned and the prices were freed on all except a handful of goods and services.

The most important observation to be made was the fall in GDP since 1992. But according to Aslund's interpretation it was the official statistics, which underestimated the growing importance of the private sector in Russian economy. More importantly, much of this decline was explicable in terms of essential economic restructuring. Understandably, Russian economy also needed time to get accustomed to market disciplines and enterprises to respond to consumer demands rather than state orders. Russia's earlier old-fashioned emphasis on iron and steel was to be shifted in favour of services and consumer goods. A new balance was to be maintained which was typical of a modern developed economy.

The official journal, *Russian Economic Trends*, accepted that the economic situation had improved since 1994 but argued that economic performance remained patchy. For example, industrial output for 1995

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37 Anders Aslund, n. 20, p. 3.

was down by three per cent but the decline, the journal said, was ‘concentrated in a few under-performing industries’. Thus, although chemicals and metallurgy experienced ‘significant growth’, the production of consumer goods had fallen by 12 per cent in 1995, and clothing and textiles by 20 per cent since 1990. The agricultural sector also showed little sign of recovery since the Soviet era with grain production for 1995 down by almost a third on the average since the 1960s.

The performance of Russian economy at the macro level was strong enough. The large trade deficit in 1991 was swollen into a trade surplus of $20 billion by the end of 1995. The monthly inflation rate was also down to its lowest ever-monthly figure of 3.2 per cent by the end of 1995. The OECD predicted that Russia was likely to experience 3 per cent growth in 1996 and 10 per cent growth thereafter. This always looks far too optimistic. Nevertheless, Russia was able to attract more foreign investment into the country, including an offer from the IMF of a $10.2 billion loan over a three-year period in March 1996. It appeared that some of the estimated $40 billion which had fled the

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39 Russian Economic Trends, n. 23, p.64

40 Ibid., p. 67 and 75.

41 Ibid.

country since 1992, was beginning to trickle back.\textsuperscript{43} There is no doubt that legal and economic uncertainties were prevailing in Russia. Its after-effect was that Russia remained a risky and often frustrating place for the outside investors. Despite improving statistics at the macro-economic level, Yeltsin failed to improve the living standards of the majority of Russian citizens. In real terms it remained below those of 1985 level when Gorbachev first embarked on the process of perestroika.

After a brief description about the economic development in Russia, a question can be raised on Yeltsin as a policy-maker and a political leader. Did the liberal economic policies taken up by Yeltsin led to the economic collapse or the latter was due to difficulties of the transition? According to Boris Riazov, a Russian economic consultant, the economic crisis by early 1995 was over. But the economic depression had just begun. For him, economic depression is better than a crisis. In his prediction the depression would last at least until the year 2000.\textsuperscript{44} Thus considering the difficulties of the transition and emphasizing the long-term nature of economic reform in Russia, the term ‘shock therapy’ was a misnomer according to Yeltsin and his associates.

In the domestic political scene Russia took a start with a confused institutional framework and a lack of experience in the

\textsuperscript{43} Time, 31 July, 1995.

\textsuperscript{44} Russian Review, 27 January, 1995.
democratic process of comprise and coalition building. In the process of transition the principal institutional actors, particularly the Presidency and the Parliament lacked clearly defined boundaries and competencies and a democratic culture which led to a struggle between President and Parliament. In all the liberal democracies a division of responsibilities and competencies with checks and balances is built in the political system to prevent the abuse of executive powers. One key role of legislature is to check, challenge, monitor and legitimize policies undertaken in the name of the state by the executive branch of the government. If no tension is prevalent between Parliament and the executive branch of the government it can be concluded that legislative is not performing its proper role. A constitutional framework involving a separation of power provides the government to wield exercisable effective power in the process of inter-governmental and institutional rivalry without any destructive hindrance.

In Russia after 1991 Parliament and president were engaged in a struggle for power, with both sides involved in a serious dispute over which institution had competency over policy-making. An important reason was the absence of any clear demarcation and division of powers between Parliament and Presidency, as the new Russian federal state was operating under the 1978, Brezhnev period constitution with numerous amendments.
Under the Soviet constitution as it stood in 1992, the executive was subordinate to the legislative branch, and, although the President could nominate the Prime Minister and other ministers, the appointments required ratification by the Parliament. While Yeltsin did not have the constitutional powers to disband the Parliament, the Parliament could impeach the president. But Yeltsin was given temporary powers by the Parliament to rule by decree after the collapse of USSR. The requirement for the strong executive power was perceived necessary to tackle the acute political and economic situation in the early post-Soviet period.\(^45\)

Yeltsin wielding emergency powers for twelve months by November 1991 ignored the importance of political reforms and democratization. The most important failure in this regard was to draw a new constitution to face the post-Soviet realities. The result was the weak operation of law with special reference to judicial institutions, which were to maintain the boundaries between the state and the society. For example banning or suspension of the Communist Party of the Soviet Union and a number of newspapers without any legality shows weakness of judicial institutions. Newspapers could be suspended if advocating the forcible overthrow of the government. But

when the government of a country decides whether the information in
the press is 'accurate' or 'false', it is a step towards dictatorship.\(^{46}\)

Yeltsin's failure to develop consensus within government and
Parliament to carry out its economic reform programme further shows
some sort of authoritarian tendencies in the institution of Presidency.
The remarkable defection of Rutskoi and Khasbulatov from the Yeltsin
camp in the autumn of 1991 was, at least in part, attributable to their
exclusion from top decision making groups. Rutskoi always claimed
that the first time, he heard of the Belovezhsky agreement, which
formally wound up the USSR, was from TV.\(^{47}\)

Yeltsin's failure to build a coalition with the Parliament let to the
development of reactionary opposition. His inability to win over not
only the recalcitrant hard liners but also loosing the support of other
more moderate and pragmatic deputies widened the gap between
Presidency and Parliament. Anatoly Chubais, Minister of privatization,
said 65 per cent of deputies supported Yeltsin in April 1992, but by
October that figure had been almost halved.\(^{48}\) Opposition to Yeltsin's
reform programmes, led by Rutskoi and Khasbulatov started gaining
ground as no formal programme for shock therapy was ever published

\(^{46}\) Stephen White, n. 18, p. 312.


\(^{48}\) \textit{The Guardian}, 19 October, 1992.
by the government and was never formally approved by the Parliament.49

By the end of 1992, relations between Parliament and the President worsened considerably. In December, the Congress rejected Yeltsin's appeal to extend his emergency rule and also refused his call for a referendum to decide the issues of executive power. However, after a compromise between Yeltsin and Khasbulatov, again in March 1993 the dispute gained momentum. The Congress refused to hold referendum as agreed before and proposed amendments to the constitutions. The amendments proposed that the government could present draft laws to Parliament without the approval of President. The Parliament also rejected the President's right to issue decrees or dissolve any popularly elected body. In response, Yeltsin went on TV on 20 March 1993 to announce a referendum for 25 April and in the interim the imposition of 'special rule'. The decree was declared unconstitutional by the Constitutional Court and the Congress started impeachment proceeding against the President. But the impeachment motion failed by 70 votes to get the required two-thirds majority in the Congress. As a result, Yeltsin and deputies agreed for referendum, which proved out to be a vote of confidence in Yeltsin and his economic programme.

49 Ander Ausland, n. 20, p.88.
A respectable 64 per cent of the electorate voted, of those, 58 per cent supported Yeltsin as President and 53 per cent backed the continuation of economic reform. The result gravely weakened the position of the conservatives who were claiming to speak on behalf of the vast majority of ordinary Russian people. Though Yeltsin failed to get the absolute majority required to call new Parliamentary elections, he dissolved the congress, announced fresh Parliamentary elections and called a referendum on the new constitution. Both votes were to be held on 12 December 1993. Yeltsin made his intentions clear that he fully expected the people to back him and vote for a more reform minded Parliament. Both Rutskoi and Khasbulatov denounced the Presidents decree as an effective coup d'etat and called an emergency session of Parliament. Here both the institutions instead of fighting for their ideals through ballot boxes were engaged in the occupation of White House. The Constitutional Court intervened on 22 September and declared Yeltsin decree to be unlawful. In the light of this ruling, the Congress stripped Yeltsin of his powers as President and sworn in Alexender Rutskoi as acting President. The dissident members of the

50 Rossiiskaya gazeta, 6 May, 1993, as cited in Mike Bower, n. 34, p. 173.
51 Rossiiskie vesti, 22 September, 1993, as cited in ibid.
52 Moscow Times, 22 September, 1993, as cited in ibid.
53 Rossiiskaya gazeta, 23 September, 1993, as cited in ibid.
Congress formed their own government and occupied the White House.

On 4th October 1993, the assault on the White House was made. From various positions around the building, tanks shelled the White House without any response. Finally, in evening the rebels came out of the burning building and Rutskoi and Khasbulatov were both arrested. Yeltsin in storming the White House anticipated the restoration of his prestige as the right man for a crisis. Yeltsin and his supporters, however, were disappointed. Unlike August 1991, Yeltsin was not perceived in Russia as the hero of the hour. The former Soviet President, Mikhail Gorbachev, articulated a common view when he said that the assault on the White House on Monday morning had been unnecessary since the danger of revolution had already passed.

Yeltsin's political dogmatism and unwillingness to compromise led to the undermining of democratic traditions and strengthened the authoritarian tendencies in Russia. Yeltsin's decision to announce a

55 The majority, including Defence Minister, Pavel Grachev, remained loyal to Yeltsin throughout the crisis and other prominent government figures, such as the Prime Minister, Viktor Chernomyrdin, also came out forcefully behind Yeltsin emergency measures.
57 Russia has been devastated during the past two years. The current crisis (political crisis in 1993) will further shake Russia by its very roots, and the future democracy will also be in peril. This view was published in Hindi, *Daily Hindustan*, New Delhi, 8 October, 1993.
referendum for 25 April and the imposition of 'special rule' was taken up without bringing the Parliament into confidence. Even though, the result of the referendum did not favour a new Parliamentary election, Yeltsin in a seventeen-point decree dissolved the Congress. Thus instead of a constructive opposition a reactionary position emerged to criticize each and every move of the government.

After the defeat of Rutskoi and Khusbulatov in October 1993, Yeltsin drew up a new constitution with the aim of giving the President far greater executive powers at the expense of Parliament and the republics.58 Before the election, Yeltsin closed down the constitutional court, reduced the power of local government and suspended publication of some newspapers. In such an atmosphere it was difficult to expect December election to be democratic in any sense.59 Though all the registered parties were accorded time on television to debate the issues but the murder of democracy was done by forbidding any discussion on the new constitution.

Under the new constitution, Presidents had the right to veto Parliamentary legislation, allowed to dissolve Parliament and declare a state of emergency. The President had the right to issue decrees, which the new Federal assembly could not cancel. Any change to the constitution required a two-thirds majority in both the Federal Council and State Duma. The Current Digest of the Post-Soviet Press, Vol. XLV, No.20, 1993, pp.10-14.

Some vague concessions were made in the later stage by Yeltsin in which parties and blocks were allowed to contest the elections, if they accepted the principles of democracy and received 100,000 signatures. Only 13 parties were successful and registered for the elections.
No party or bloc won a majority in the Parliament. But Zhirinovsky and Zyuganov got a legitimate voice in Russian politics. The position of Gaidar got weakened as leader of Russia's Choice Party and he resigned as Deputy Prime Minister in January 1994. During 1994 and 1995, the disagreements between the executive head and the legislative bodies continued to exist without an amicable solution. The reason was that the President enjoying enormous power, could be impeached only on the grounds of treason or other serious crime. Further the impeachment process can be undertaken only after the ruling of the Constitutional Court and Supreme Court and a two-thirds majority in both Houses of the Parliament. But the vote indicated that, since the April referendum, the Russian people had turned against reform. There was no possibility that the nationalist and communist deputies could be dismissed as unrepresentative of public opinion. It was clear that the Duma was not going to be totally subservient to the President.

In February 1994, the first action that the Duma took was to grant amnesty to all those involved in both the August coup and the

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60 On the party state, Zhirinovsky's liberal Democratic Party of Russia [LDPR] recorded the highest vote with 23 per cent; and Russia's choice led by Gaidar got only 15 per cent. The LDPR won 64 seats; the communists 48 seats and their close allies, the Agrarian Party 33; and the Reformers 70, though they did better in constituency but out of 450 it was well short of expected Parliamentary majority. In Paul Dukes, A History of Russia: Medieval, Modern, Contemporary C. 882-1996 (London, MacMillan Press Ltd., 1998), p.337.
siege of the White House. This resulted in the re-entry of the opposition into the political fray. Thus after election Yeltsin failed to consolidate his position and his popularity declined dramatically in 1994 (Table 2 in Appendix). Two heart attacks weakened his position further and the Parliamentary elections at the end of the year confirmed the decline of the reformers. Russia's Choice Party, led by Gaidar, gained only nine seats, Yabloko got 45, and Chernomyrdin's new centrist party, Our Home is Russia, picked up 55.61 The vote for Zhirinovsky's Liberal Party fell, but he still held on to 51 seats. But the main winner in December was the communist Party and its close ally, the Agrarian Party, which together won 187 seats.62

For the Presidential election in June 1996, the communist candidate, Gennady Zyuganov was well ahead of Yeltsin in all opinion polls as the campaign process began in early 1996. But Yeltsin surprised the people with the vigour he undertook his election campaigning. The final result in the first round, however, was close. Yeltsin won 35 per cent of the vote, with Zyuganov trailing by only three per cent.63 Alexander Lebed coming third with almost 15 per cent of vote manifested the

61 Gaidar changed the name of his party leading upto the Parliamentary elections in 1995 from Russia's choice to Russia's Democratic choice.


63 Ibid., p. 393.
reactionary opposition to Yeltsin's reform programmes. Lebed an authoritarian Russian nationalist campaigned against crime and corruption which hit the chord of the public. The electorate who voted to lebed otherwise would have voted to communist. After Lebed's strong first round performance he was brought briefly into the Yeltsin administration until, his dismissal in 1996, as head of the powerful Security Council. Lebed's support for Yeltsin appeared important for Yeltsin's final victory when he received 53 per cent of vote - a decisive 13 per cent ahead of Zynganov.64

Yeltsin was still considered to be the best man for continuing the reform process.65 But Yeltsin was not initiating democracy as a means to bring reforms. The transfer of power through constitution was not undertaken. The attempt is not to equate Russian Parliamentary process with the one found in a 'normal' eastern democracy. But the bewildering number of parties and combinations presenting candidates for election was to be taken into account since the summer of 1992. There is a Humour Party, and an Idiots's Party of Russia, whose slogan is 'Give the people beer and sausage'. A guide to the newly formed parties and

64 Political Calendar, 4 July, 1996, p.5

65 The balance of power in the Kremlin began to shift as Yeltsin sacked a number of his closest advisers - Defence Minister Pavel Grachev, Interior Minister Mikhail Baruskov and his personal bodyguard Alexander Korzhakov. The new power brokers who emerged were Yeltsin's own daughter, Tatyana Dyachenko, and the former Minister of privatization, Anatoly Chubais.
associations that was published in late 1991 listed over 300 of then, including at least 9 anarchist parties, 17 monarchists parties, and 53 of a 'nationalist - patriotic' character. Even the chauvinist movement Pamyat has at least 10 distinct tendencies. In 1995, the voters were asked to express a preference for one out of no less than 43 electoral units or blocs, of various hues and sizes or to register a negative reaction to all of them.

Moreover both before and during the 1996 presidential election campaign, influential figures in the Yeltsin camp, fearing a communist victory, routinely spoke to the press about postponing or canceling the presidential election. Doubts were also frequently expressed in the Russian media, that Yeltsin would ever voluntarily give up power to Zyuganov. The media was manipulated in such a way, which led to the fear that a communist victory might lead to civil war. Yet despite all the rumours, the Presidential election did go ahead on schedule, and despite Yeltsin's control over much of the media, international monitors declared the election free and fair. Furthermore, 69 and 67 per cent respectively


68 Political calendar, n. 64, p.2.
voted in the two rounds of voting which was more than in Presidential elections in the United States.⁶⁹

Nevertheless, democracy in Russia survived despite the economic and political hardships since 1991. It was because of the people of Russia who reacted patiently without leading to a civil war situation as predicted at times by the leaders of the country. Storming the White House has got to be a thing of the past. What Russia needs is a viable and responsible opposition, which can offer the Russian people a credible alternative government. Thus following unstable political and economic development in Russia, the strategic interest of Russia demanded political and military stability at its borders.

With the emergence of newly independent states of Central Asian republics a dramatic change occurred for Russia's strategic interest in its landscape of Eurasia. Russia's aim to preserve the control over the external borders of the CIS in Central Asia, settling the question of the deployment of Russian troops and military bases in the region and retaining the military infrastructure and equipment were parts of the integrated system of Russia's military security. It was difficult for Russia to remain neutral to the ethnic tensions and conflicts in Central Asia, as 10 million ethnic Russian were living in the region and conflicts in the

⁶⁹ Ibid., p.7.
region could be directly destabilize the situation in some of the neighbouring regions of the Russian Federation.

It was also difficult for Russia to sever economic ties with Central Asia, since Russian industry was dependent on the raw materials and other supplies from the region. Central Asia, an important market for Russian products demanded trade and economic relations to be preserved. For Russia Central Asia remained part of its 'near abroad', a natural sphere of influence in which Russia has strategic as well as political and economic interest. Russia's special interest in Central Asia was based on the historical background of these states [they were part of the Tsarist and Soviet empires], their proximity and the presence in them of a large Russian diaspora.

Evolution of Russian policy towards Central Asian Republics

With the demise of the USSR, the regional balance of power began to acquire important political meaning in the fight for succession within hierarchy. Mikhail Gorbachev was relying on almost total support of a 'monolithic block' of Central Asian deputies in the Supreme Soviet of the

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70 In May 1992 Yevgeni Ambartsumov then chairman of the Russian Duma's Committee on International Affairs observed that "Russia is something larger that the Russian federation in its present borders. Therefore, one must see its geopolitical interests more broadly than what is currently defined by the maps. That is our starting point as we develop our conception of mutual relations with 'our own foreign countries'." As Quoted in Boris Rumer, "The Gathering Storm", Orbis, Vol. 37, no. 1, Winter 1993, p. 91; While he was foreign minister, Andrei Kozyrev asserted Russia's right to use force to protect "geopolitical positions that took centuries to conquer" in the Near Abroad, RFE/RL News Briefs October 4-8, 1993, p.7.
USSR to fight against the internal opposition. The political elites of Central Asia were supportive of Gorbachev and his plan for saving the Union. These elites since early 1980s were acquiring considerable autonomy from Moscow while preserving all the favourable advantages of economic nature. They succeeded in redistributing the Union budget in their favour through massive centralized subsidies. During the period of perestroika, the autonomy of Central Asian republics, together with their ability to enjoy preferential treatment from ‘the centre’, continued and was even raised to new levels. Until the very end, Central Asian elites supported Gorbachev, not for his own sake but because he was identified with lucrative benefits and sources of legitimacy for their own rule, such as support by the Army and the security apparatus. The symbiotic relationship between Moscow (which could be identified with Russia and Russian interests under the Soviet regime) and Central Asian elites

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71 Since 1989 the internal opposition was being identified with Boris Yeltsin. By the spring and summer of 1991, the Central Asian Republics turned into the most staunch supporters of Gorbachev’s ‘9+1’ proposal on assuring the survival of the USSR that would preserve powerful central authority while delegating more autonomy to other members of the new federal state.

72 According to IMF data even in 1991, 44% of Tajikistan's budget, 42% of the Uzbek budget, 34%, of Kyrgyzstan, 23%, of Kazakhstan and 22% of Turkmenistan's were subsidized from Moscow. Sheila Marue and Erik Whitlock, “Central Asia and Economic Integration”, RFE/RL, Research Report, Vol. 2, No. 14, April 1993, p.34.
met with an abrupt and painful end by the 'Belovezhskaya Pushcha' agreements of 8th December 1991.73

Central Asian leadership after understanding their exclusion in the Belovezhskaya Pushcha agreements created the so-called 'Turkestan Confederation'. With the efforts of Kazakh President Nursultan Nazarbayev, the Central Asian leaders decided to become members of the CIS (Commonwealth of Independent States) provided they were given the status of its cofounders. But the radical economic reforms started by Russia without any consultations with the Central Asian states, the pro-Western orientation of the Russian foreign policy, the creation of independent Russian Armed Forces and the introduction of national currency were significant enough to prove Russia's attitude towards Central Asian states at that time. Russia trying hard to get itself integrated into Western economic and political structures was forced to ignore Central Asia to get full acceptance in the West.74 By and large Russia was supportive of priority relationships with the West and USA and displayed less interest in Central Asian states, which were viewed as

73 The Soviet Union was declared defunct on Dec. 8, when the leaders of the Slav republics of Belarus, Russia and Ukraine met near Minsk (Byelarus). The Presidents of Russia and Ukraine, Boris Yeltsin and Leonid Kravchuk, and the chair of the Supreme Soviet of Belarus, Stanislav Shushkevich, issued a statement: "The USSR, as a subject of international law and a geopolitical reality ceases to exist". They announced that the new body, which they had established, the Commonwealth of Independent states, was open to all republics of the former Soviet Union, and to any other state which shared its aims.

a burden and an alien civilization whose labour productivity differed greatly and the mentality was heavily based on the Islamic culture. In the first two years after the break-up of the USSR, Foreign Minister A. Kozyrev did not visit the Central Asian states even once. The perception of the 'Western civilization' was the ideal model for Russia to be achieved in the future.

To carry on the priorities of Russia, it was believed that Russia should at first ease all its financial burdens. In the late 1980s Moscow's subsidies to the Republics exceeded fifty billion US dollars.\(^75\) According to the IMF, in 1991, subsidies from Moscow made up 44 per cent of Tajikistan's budget, 42 per cent of Uzbekistan's and 22 per cent of Turkmenistan's.\(^76\) Apart from this Russia wanted to avoid demographic pressures. It was estimated that by the end of the twentieth century the population of Trans Caucasus and Central Asia would increase four times.\(^77\) And lastly, Russia wanted to utilise its full industrial and scientific potential to achieve better economic results and to minimize the influence of traditionalisms on the social and political processes in its transition to an 'open' political system and a law-ruled state. Thus for Russia Central Asia had no prospects in its short-term and long-term

\(75\) S. Marnie and E. Whitlock, n. 72, p. 43.

\(76\) G. Sitmaisky, "Kyrgyzia: Independence Gained, What next?" Asia and Africa Today, No. 6, 1995, p. 9

\(77\) Ibid., p. 11.
perspective because of its internal and external compulsions. As a result, Russia's action in Central Asian republics was not to be a well thought strategy but an attempt to improve its domestic situation and international image.

In political terms, close relations with Central Asia where authoritarian regimes are still sticking to the Communist nomenclatura will lead to suspicion in the Western World for Russian leadership. Russia's political alliance with the Central Asian region will also serve the interests of the conservative opposition in Russia instead of democratic movement in the country. Economically, Central Asia was considered to be a burden for Russia. Russia looking for a giant leap to westernize its economy through IMF, World Bank, Western and U.S. aid thought of 'isolationist policy' towards Central Asia. For Russia, present economic relations with the countries of the region will lead only to the continuance of the low-efficiency industries of the Russian economy. Russia can also find alternative sources of required raw material in other regions.

Geopolitically, a focus on Central Asia could displace Russia's priorities of integrating itself into Europe. Strategically and militarily,

Central Asia being a source of instability, conflicts and problems, any military intervention if required will lead to a high cost which would not be accepted or appreciated by the Russian public. Central Asia belonging to a different [Islamic, Eastern and developing] world reduced the hope of cooperation and consensus to bridge the civilizational incompatibility with Russia. Thus an all-Russian consensus to build relations with Central Asia was difficult to observe at the beginning of 1992.

However, Russian policy toward Central Asian republics within the ambit of CIS has gone through two phases. In the first phase since the early months of 1992 a Euro-Atlanticists approach having a Western orientation in the economic, political and foreign policy formulation was heavily followed. The creation of the short-lived 'Slavic Union' in the absence of the Central Asian republics was the starting point in this regard. Russia for some time at least gave a message to the Central Asian states and other regional actors such as Iran and Turkey that a historical shift in Moscow's strategic perception has taken place and a power vacuum which was filled by Russia for the past 200 years was now again open to penetration.

At the Tashkent meeting in May 1992, of the heads of the state and governments of Kazakhstan, Turkmenistan, Uzbekistan, Kyrgyzstan and Tajikistan, for the first time the viability of the CIS was questioned. The
participants emphasized the possibility of closer economic interaction among the countries of the region. Reacting to the neglect by Russia, the idea of a new Turkestan was discussed as a panacea for regional woes. The trend towards a 'prototype Central Asian association' was the reply of the Central Asian republics to the "Minsk Belovezhskaya Pushcha" of December 1991. Two dynamic regional actors with clear interest in the region, Iran and Turkey responded to the apparent vacuum. A series of diplomatic activities took place in the economic, cultural and political spheres between the Central Asian republics, Iran and Turkey.

For Russia during this phase, which lasted until mid-May 1992, was the short life of Euro-Atlanticist direction of Russian foreign and security policy. As economic difficulties mounted and the consequences of economic reforms created opportune grounds for political mobilization. The opponents of the Gaidar government, whose policies across the entire spectrum of foreign and domestic issues came under assault. The uncharacteristic passivity of Russian foreign policy towards Central Asian republics and lack of overt concern for the shrinking of Russia's underbelly was singled out in the course of this assault. Russian Defence Minister bitterly complained, "We are now facing a truly unprecedented situation, where the Moscow Military District has

essentially become a frontline location. This is altogether mind-boggling. The apparent US interest in Central Asia and high-visibility diplomacy of secretary Baker's Central Asian tour was perceived by Russian critics as a clear indication of the lack of direction in Moscow's policy towards Central Asian republics.

The Russian Foreign Ministry under the leadership of Andrey Kozyrev was criticised for neglecting Russia's great power status in pursuit of the 'Euro-Atlanticist course'. The disruption of ties with Central Asia was opposed by the majority of the old communist nomenclatura of Russia, who were still occupying powerful positions throughout the country and in its legislature. They were the one who were unable to reconcile themselves with the break-up of the USSR. Apart from them there were right wing xenophobic Russian nationalists who failed to reconcile the loss of the empire and the political victory of the democratic pro-Western coalition in Russia. From the ranks of the democratic coalition new circle of advocates of 'great power policies' for Russia reacted to the challenge of post-imperialism and reconstruction.


81 The United States Secretary of State James Baker arrived in Moscow on December 15, 1991 and held talks with Yeltsin together with the Soviet Defence and Interior Ministers Shaposhnikov and Barannikov, Gorbachev, the then Foreign Minister Eduard Shevardnadze and Russian government leaders. He travelled to meet the leadership of Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Ukraine and Belarus.
after their political victory over the old imperial center. According to
them alliance with Central Asian republics was the basis for 'the
Eurasian' concept of Russia's national interests.\(^8^2\) It was the Russian
nationalists who for the first time focussed the problems of Russians and
Russian-speaking minorities in the Central Asian republics. A
reasonable attack was made by the military circles for dismantling Soviet
military and strategic space facilities, starting with its Central Asian part
was fraught with direct and very serious threats to the defence
capabilities of Russia. Although diverse and incohesive, these criticisms
were too powerful to be ignored.\(^8^3\) The leadership of Gaidar and Kozyrev
were charged of trading Russia's great power status for Western aid and
falling into the category of second-rate players on the Eurasian scene.
However, there were certain developments, which forced Russia to have
a fresh look at its pro-Western policy. These developments included
inadequate Western financial assistance, NATO eastward expansion and
military attack on Russia's former allies like Yugoslavia and Iraq. With
the demise of Warsaw Pact and the collapse of the USSR, Russia was

\(^8^2\) Eurasianism as a philosophical concept should be distinguished from
Eurasianism as a political orientation. It has to be noted, however, that the
followers of political Eurasianism aspired to be seen as the offspring of the
philosophical tradition of Eurasianism. The linkage between to two, however, is
debatable, in Michael Mandelbaum, n. 12, p. 112.

\(^8^3\) Eugene B. Rumer, "Russia and Central Asia After the Soviet Collapse", in Jed C.
Synder, (ed.), After Empire: The Emerging Geopolitics of Central Asia (Washington,
reluctant to see any extension eastward in the membership of NATO. In Moscow, NATO was perceived by some as an anti-Russian military coalition. Russia’s support for the Serbs in Bosnia was viewed in much of the Eastern Europe as a clear sign that Moscow had changed very little since the end of the Cold War. As a result, much of Eastern Europe worked West – to NATO and the EC (European Community changed into EU in 1993) – for security and aid.

West European leaders, however, were desperate to preserve the Atlantic Alliance if at all possible. Wars in Yugoslavia made Western Europe to recognize the need of American leadership and military participation in European security. President Clinton for his part was an enthusiastic supporter of NATO enlargement. It looked good policy from a moral point of view – the US could be seen to be responding to the wishes of small countries which had recently thrown off the yoke of communist dictatorship. It was good domestic politics too, since bolstered America’s image as a leader both at home and abroad.84 Finally, it also legitimized NATO’s continued existence and the US presence in Europe.

Yeltsin became concerned when the US and NATO began to assert themselves in Yugoslavia and failed to consult with Moscow over

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84 Mike Bower, n. 34, p. 216.
such important issues as air strikes. Yeltsin wanted Moscow to be
treated as an equal partner in the international decisions over Yugoslavia.
Russia was outraged that it was being excluded from the peace process
in Bosnia and Yeltsin described the NATO air strikes, in a moment of
grotesque hyperbole, as 'genocide'.\(^{85}\) This attempt of Western European
countries together with USA to marginalise Russia in Europe also
became the major cause for Russia's shift towards Central Asia.

The alternative to Gaidar's and Kozyrev's Euro-Atlanticist course
urged by their critics was the "near abroad - the "Eurasianist" school.\(^{86}\) It
was from mid-1992 that the second phase of Russian policy towards
Central Asia within the ambit of CIS was visible in the Tashkent Summit
became the litmus test dividing the former Soviet republics into two
camps. Russia, Kazakhstan, Uzbekistan, Turkmenistan, Tajikistan and
Armenia signed it. Ukraine, Belarus, Azerbaijan, Moldova and

\(^{85}\) *International Herald Tribune*, 13 September, 1995.

\(^{86}\) This school of thought, which derives from an intellectual tradition associated
with Russian émigré intellectuals in the decades just after the Bolshevik
revolution, regards Russia as historically, culturally, and geographically a
hybrid of Asia and Europe. Complicated policy prescriptions and conceptions
of identity follow from this. But one theme in contemporary Eurasianist
thinking is that Russia ought not to focus principally on the West as a partner in
foreign policy but should recognize the critical importance of the former Soviet
republics, Asia, and the Middle East.
Kyrgyzstan did not accede to the document. A serious accommodation of and adjustment to the emerging realities, which were being faced by Russia and the new Central Asian States saw their emancipation in the Treaty on Collective Security in Tashkent on 15 May 1992. The significance of Tashkent meeting, unlike all the previous "summits", was that its outcome witnessed a clearly defined consolidation of the participants around two ideological centres - Russia and Ukraine. Russia was trying to persuade all the CIS members to get united around itself, while Ukraine was trying to resist such a union. Thus Russia was trying to get closer to Central Asian republics within the ambit of commonwealth of independent states from mid-1992.

This clearly defined that consolidation of relations between Russia and Central Asian republics was the result of realization from both sides about their security, ethnic and economic interdependence. Russia could foresee the vulnerable external pressure and penetration from its 'southern flank', since the Central Asian states were young states with weak economies, unstable political systems and without any independent defence capability. For Russia the 'Islamic threat' was to be contained by protecting the borders of Central Asian states. The security of southern borders would not only enhance the physical security of the

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new Central Asian republics, but will also show Russia's sensitivity to all the regional actors.

The active role of Russia was not confined only to the political pressures from Moscow, but was forthcoming from the Central Asia itself. All Central Asian states without exception though with varying degrees of emphasis, preferred and in fact insisted on a substantive collective security system with active Russian participation. The Central Asian states from Kazakhstan to Turkmenistan were not satisfied with the token gesture of the nuclear umbrella of the CIS for their security. They were demanding a more comprehensive, meaningful security system, which included practical measures in dealing with conventional defence of their security and their borders. Earlier optimism over the formation of an 'Asian-Turkic/Islamic block' was fading in the face of the realities of historical interdependence with Russia. Commenting on the competent role of Russia in the security of Central Asia Askar Akayev, the President of Kyrgyzstan, argued: "The Eurasian entity hinged on Russia, would collapse if it (Russia) ceased to be a world power, with painful implication for Kyrgyzstan as well. That's why we must make our contribution to Russia's revival."  

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This resulted, with the desire of Russia and Central Asia in having border troops under a unified command. They agreed to reach an agreement on the joint use of air space and of the Baikonur and Plesetsk space-vehicle launching sites, and to fulfill the commitments of the former USSR with respect to the international treaties on chemical weapons and the reduction of armed forces. They also defined their position on such an important question as the creation of commonwealth peacekeeping force. Documents like "our "blue helmets" will be sent to hot spots only with the consent of the sides involved in a given conflicts' were signed by the majority of the meeting's participants. General Leonid Ivashov, head of the working group on defence issues, and one of the key participants in the preparation of the documents for the Tashkent summit, argued that the treaty 'confirms already established views particularly within the military circles of the Commonwealth governments, that the establishment of a system of collective security, or more accurately, its preservation, is a practical necessity and an objective requirement.'

The most significant aspect of the treaty on collective security was the development of close interaction between Russia and Central Asian republics which failed to happen immediately after the disintegration of USSR. Some of the initiatives like introduction of national currencies, the

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protection of the interests of those states which will remain in the Ruble zone, and measures to normalize the financial situation were accepted by the leading members of the Central Asian states. It was Kazakhstan, which took the lead on 25 May 1992. Nursultan Nazarbayev, following his trip to the United States, arrived in Moscow to sign the treaty on Friendship, Cooperation and Mutual assistance. Russia and Kazakhstan agreed to form a 'United military and strategic zone' and to jointly use the military bases, test sites and other military infrastructure. The treaty was characterized by Yeltsin's press office as a 'a kind of political test site, verifying the philosophy' of relations between newly independent states.

Russia’s establishing closer ties with Kazakhstan gave a message to other Central Asian states regarding Russia's renewed interest in the region. On the other hand the power vacuum created by Russia had encouraged its presence for the other regional actors like Iran, Turkey and Pakistan who were contemplating the formation of an 'Asian bloc'. Russia's passivity in the geopolitics of the region was discarded to mark the beginning of Russia's 'Eurasian' shift and of regaining some of the lost ground in the region.

The communique issued after Yeltsin and Nazarbayev's summit on February 26, 1993, whose contents were reiterated in the Ashkabad CIS summit in December 1993, was the repetition of the bilateral treaty signed in May 1992. It was elaborated further by Russia and Kazakh decision to 'sign a treaty on military cooperation in order to set up a united defence space and make joint use of military capabilities.'

On May 30, 1992, Russia and Uzbekistan signed the 'Treaty on the Fundamentals of Interstate Relations, Friendship and Cooperation'. Both the countries agreed to form in their territories 'a common military strategic area'. They also agreed to grant each other 'the right to use military facilities situated on their territories in case of necessity on the basis of mutual agreements'. In February 1993, Pavel Grachev, Minister of Defence, met Islam Karimov the President of Uzbekistan along with a Russian military delegation and discussed mutual cooperation in the field of Russian and Uzbek armed forces. This was in view of the presence of Russian officers who constitute more than 80 per cent of the

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94 Pavel Grachev heading the Russian military delegation discussed with Islam Karimov the integration of the two states positions in the sphere of military-technical cooperation, joint utilisation of strategic facilities such as anti-aircraft, intelligence gathering, and space monitoring facilities, and joint plans for combat, mobilizations, training, and military exercises of armed forces for both countries.
officer corps of Uzbekistan's armed forces, which conditions in the military relationship between Russia and Uzbekistan. The regional ethnic conflict in Tajikistan needed the intervention of Russia to prevent its penetration into Uzbekistan. As a result, a strong military arm of Russian-Uzbek political consensus in the region would be beneficial for Russia and Uzbekistan.

Russia and Kyrgyzstan signed the 'Friendship and cooperation Treaty on June 10, 1992, a treaty that according to Yeltsin raised their relations ‘to an absolutely equal footing’, and thus signifying the end to Russia's ‘imperial ambitions’. Russia's military presence in the region was concluded when the bilateral security treaty was signed with Turkmenistan. Under the treaty the formation of a national army for Turkmenistan was to be made under the joint command. The armed forces and other units of the former Soviet Union were to be stationed in Turkmenistan. The control of airforce and air defence systems was to be entirely with the Russian Armed forces [with some limited control by Turkmenistan].

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97 Valeriy Otchestsov, Member of Turmen Presidential Council interview in Nezavisimaya gazeta, June 16, 1992, p.3; reprinted in FBIS-SOV 92-117, June 17, 1992, pp. 53-54.
Russia and Tajikistan initiated a draft on the bilateral relations in July 1992 in Dushanbe. Russian Vice-Premier, Alexander Shokhin, the head of the Russian delegation, announced after the meeting with President Nabiyev that given the inability of Tajikistan to maintain its border security, Russia would take the border troops of the CIS under its jurisdiction.\footnote{Moscow Radio Rossi Network, July 21 and 22, 1992, in FBIS-SOV-92-141, July 22, 1992, p.72.} Deputy commander of the Central Asian border district, General Anatoly Martovitsky confirmed that the border troops would be brought to full strength.\footnote{Interfax, July 23, 1992; in FBIS-SOV 92-143, July 24, 1992, pp. 61-62.} Thus border troops were be brought to Tajikistan with the aim of securing its southern belly. This was the first initiative taken up by Russia with the troubled republic.

The invocation of collective security agreement for Tajikistan by the Alma-Ata meeting\footnote{Both the statements issued by Russia and Central Asian states concerning the need for intervention in Tajikistan. Interfax, September 4, 1992, in FBIS-SOV, September 8, 1992, pp. 4-5.} on November 4, 1992 gave a clear message that the former Soviet Union's southern border will be Russia's sphere of influence. Russia's direct involvement in Tajik crisis indicated the reluctance of Moscow to delegate total responsibility to Uzbek regional planning on the one hand and secure sympathy of the pro Moscow groups including former-communists elites on the other. Russia's direct intervention in Tajikistan resulted in fulfilling two aims of Russia. The
first one was the gradual abandonment of the position of 'positive neutrality', prevalent in the earlier stages of the crisis. It was immediately after the downfall of the 'democratic - Islamic' coalition government in Dushanbe, that of the Russian airborne units took part in a series of anti-guerrilla campaigns in Garm, Navabad, and Komsomolabad, while the Russian (CIS) airforce and helicopter gunships bombed opposition forces in these regions.101

The second aspect of Russia's intervention in Tajikistan was to get hold of the whole situation by creating an army of Tajikistan. The participation of General Pavel Grachev and top CIS military officials, such as CIS Deputy Chief of Staff Major-General Farrokh Niyazov, in planning the formation of the new army only signified the importance of security arrangements in the republic. Thirty-one Russian officers who arrived in Dushanbe on February 4, 1993, as part of the Russian military delegation assisted the new government in building the army.

While initially the Russian 201st Rifle Division was to become the nucleus of the new army,102 a subsequent decision indicated the use of the division as the independent Russian 'forward position' in Tajikistan (the division also recruits Tajik conscripts only from the pro-government


102 During the commemorations of the 50th anniversary of the battle of Stalingrad, Grachev had indicated such options in ITAR - TASS Moscow World Service, February 2, 1993, in BBC Summary, SU/1590, February 4, 1993.
strong hold in the northern region of the republic), and instead sought to use the armed formations of the ‘Front’ as the foundation of the new Tajik military.\textsuperscript{103}

The stark realities of Central Asian politics and the growing intensity of local contradictions and conflicts immediately after the disintegration of USSR demonstrated the insufficiency of limited or ‘reactive’ efforts at peacekeeping. The region was progressively demanding the direct use of counter force in achieving important goals of maintaining and safeguarding regional peace. Most important among them were the events in Tajikistan.\textsuperscript{104} The desire of the local powers in Tajikistan and Russia was to apply counter force or to devise new tactics of peacekeeping, which clearly meant a fairly wide use of military force.

In the initial phase of Tajik conflict, Moscow, instead of directly intervening, tried to guarantee the Republic's outside borders. The Russian motorized division No. 201 deployed in the republic had many

\textsuperscript{103} ITAR-TASS Moscow World Service, February 6, 1993, in BBC Summary, SU/1592, February 6, 1993.

\textsuperscript{104} The civil war in Tajikistan came as a result of political, ethnic and regional divisiveness. It was rooted in the power struggle between the opposition using democratic and Islamic slogans against the conservative neo-communist regime. As the result of this struggle, the unity of the Tajik ethnic group was destroyed, leading to a clash between Northern and Southern ethnic groups. The opposition was concentrated in the Garm and the Nagorno-Badakhshansk autonomous districts. Local military operations led to a considerable loss of lives and led to the exodus of population to the neighbouring republics of erstwhile USSR and Afghanistan. As a result the government of Rakhmonov failed to control the paralytic socio-economic life of the country. It was under these circumstances which created and contributed to continuous war force and invited support and presence of Russia and other former republic of erstwhile USSR, in Oliver Roy, \textit{The Civil War in Tajikistan: Causes and Implications} (Washington D.C. United States, Institute for Peace, 1993).
Tajik conscripts within its ranks, which made difficult for it to remain 'neutral'. But the superior skills demonstrated by the division's commanding officer, General Ashurov, helped to gain success in the republic. There was the involvement of the Uzbek troops who contained and defeated the 'democratic Islamic' opposition in the initial stages of the crisis.  

Russia in the initial phase tried to protect only the strategic installations of the Tajik territories. But from late 1992 adopted a policy to support the Rakhmonov government, and gradually replaced Uzbekistan in performing important power projection, both in the Tajik-Afghan border and inside Tajikistan. It was the events in the Tajik civil war which led to the escalation of direct Russian military involvement in Tajikistan. Russia's role as an intermediary and a direct 'legitimate' participant in the process of conflict resolution was by and large well accepted by the majority of the Central Asian elites.

Thus Russia after sidelining its 'Atlanticist' policy looked forward within the ambit of CIS to develop political and military relations with


106 The strategic installations in Tajikistan were the Kurgan Tube chemical works, the Nurek hydroelectric station and the Dushanbe rail road and airport.

Central Asian States. Russia was seen as a guarantor of the external borders of the CIS. Russia's change of approach to military and political issues was to a great extent result of pressure from the Russian military lobby. According to the military doctrine approved in October 1993, Russia was allowed to have military bases beyond its boundaries as well as delegate its troops to peacekeeping operations. It was difficult for Russian military lobby to reconcile to the idea of withdrawing all Russian troops to Russia.