

ARTICLES

**THE NEW WORLD ORDER IN THE  
POST-COMMUNIST PERIOD**

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*Introduction*

International relations prior to the 1990s were shaped by the Cold War and were characterized by tension and detente, two diametrically opposed forces which nevertheless formed a symbiotic relationship. The end of the Cold War began when the world Communist system collapsed, and it was officially declared dead with the Paris Charter in the fall of 1990.

For the first time in over half a century a new world order is said to be emerging, but what exactly is it? It is not an easy task to define the present state of international relations for at least three reasons: first, one cannot consider the events of the last few years as history-making events; second, the entire world is still shifting from a bipolar to a multi-polar configuration and thus could be said to be in a period of transition; and third, this period of transition is rather unstable and hence unpredictable. Hence, it would be premature to make any firm predictions.

*The Emergence of the Commonwealth of Independent States*

I will deal in this section with the present Commonwealth of Independent States (CIS) and its pressing contemporary issues and prospects. In my considered opinion, the disintegration of the Soviet Union was preordained by the natural course of history, but that the appearance of the CIS was anything but inevitable. The fact of the matter is that its creation was illegal and conspiratorial because not all of the fifteen republics which had initially formed the Soviet Union gave their consent. It is an open secret that the meeting of the presidents of Russia, Ukraine and Belarus in Minsk gave rise to many conflicting and insoluble problems. The consequences of their inconsiderate handling of the matter are being felt today. Hence I find it hard to clearly define the relations among the CIS members from the standpoint of international relations. The CIS cannot be compared with either the British Commonwealth, the European Union, or APEC. If we consider the CIS an international federation or union, we discover that its twelve member countries are not federated to each other. Few, if any, common interests are shared by Tajikistan, Moldova, Armenia, and Belarus, and Armenia and Azerbaijan are actually fighting each other. Since the CIS was

not formed in accordance with international law and existing global practices, it is extremely fragile and bound to be short-lived.

The disintegration of the Soviet Union had both positive and negative consequences worldwide. The positive results were of course an end of the Cold War, to the arms race, and to regional conflicts where the two superpowers had fought each other by proxy. Besides, mankind was finally delivered from the specter of Stalinist totalitarianism. On the negative side, the CIS has become a breeding ground for a host of problems, to wit, regional conflicts, political crises, ethnic clashes, ideological confusion, nationalistic reaches, neo-Bolshevik conservatism, separatism and fascism. The CIS has also come face-to-face with the dangers of Islamic fundamentalism which could destabilize several of its member states. In time, the CIS might become the arena of a new East-West conflict, this time between Christianity and Islam.

*The Influence of the CIS on International Relations and World Politics.*

Let me first look at the attitudes toward the CIS on the part of the United States, Western Europe, NATO, and the Conference on Security and Cooperation in Europe. Neither the United States nor Western Europe suspected that they would have to deal with an unstable and unreliable partner such as the CIS where democracy is slow in coming and human rights abuses are rampant. As a result, no truly equitable partnership has been developed between the United States and the Russian Federation. Similarly, Western Europe is unable to choose the right strategic and tactical approach in its relationship with Russia and its partners in the CIS and is most reluctant to admit all CIS members into the Conference on Security and Cooperation in Europe.

As the legitimate successor to the Soviet Union, Russia is entitled to an equitable partnership, but actual conditions are not conducive to such a relationship. For the West, domestic political life in Russia is not as important as long-term stability, yet the two are intimately linked. A country where the quality of life goes down and the crime rate goes up will not be able to shoulder any responsibility for maintaining global peace. The prospects become ominous when this country has enormous stockpiles of nuclear and conventional weapons and millions of men under arms.

Moving on to Asia, we can state categorically that, with the important exception of Mongolia, the creation of the CIS has had not much of an impact. Asians in general are not much concerned with the internal crisis in the CIS, but several attempts are being made to fill the vacuum created by the breakup of the Soviet Union. Iran, Turkey, Afghanistan and, to a lesser extent, Iraq are all trying to extend their influence in Central Asia, with Islamic fundamentalists often working through

the governments of some of these countries. A somewhat different response to the breakup of the Soviet Union is found in North Korea where until recently a concerted attempt was being made to give that country a nuclear capability.

*The Post-Communist and Communist Countries of the 1990s*

With the collapse of the world socialist system, all countries under that system were immediately affected but in divergent ways. Mongolia and Eastern European countries gained genuine political independence from Moscow. The more economically developed countries in Eastern Europe could once again join in European culture and civilization from which they had been deliberately isolated during the Cold War. Some but not all of these countries also returned to a market economy which they had before the Second World War. A ripple effect was observed in Yugoslavia where that country broke up into several smaller states, with horrendous results that are still besetting that unfortunate country. In Asia, only Mongolia completely abandoned the Communist system of government. China and Vietnam have shifted to a hybrid form which introduced free-market economics while allowing the Communist party to retain authoritarian control over state and society. The results so far in both countries have shown rapid economic growth. If the aforementioned countries can be considered beneficiaries of the Soviet breakup, there are also some losers, including some of the CIS countries, Cuba, and North Korea.

With regard to the prospects of all of these countries, they can be grouped into four categories. Some of them will succeed in both political and economic reforms. Others, including Mongolia, will experience successful political reforms but their economic transformation will be slow and crisis-ridden. A third category of countries will experience the reverse, with booming economies but human rights abuses and little if any real democratic reforms. Finally, a few unfortunate countries will continue to have neither political nor economic reforms. As to the prospects of a revived world Communist movement, I have consistently maintained that there is practically no chance, and I will continue to try to persuade the many persons in Mongolia who still believe in the movement that they should abandon a lost cause.

*The New World Order*

The new period in international relations has suddenly brought before the world's politicians, diplomats, and researchers a totally new situation. Not a single nation or international organization has predicted such a sudden and dramatic change, nor was anyone prepared for such a change and the tensions that it has brought with it.

The world has not bid farewell to armaments; on the contrary, more countries than during the Cold War are arming themselves, and military expenditures are generally on the rise. Whereas during the previous era, most local or regional wars were either suppressed or managed by one or the other superpower or both, at present neither the United States nor any international body has been able to do the same. The specter in the former Yugoslavia is a gruesome example of the kind of new danger I have described, and it has every possibility of spreading.

The contradictions that kept the two old superpowers locked in a deadly standoff are unquestionably gone, but new ones have taken their place. Scores of countries are now busily engaged in maintaining or expanding their spheres of influence. They include the two nuclear superpowers as well as regional powerhouses like China and many smaller countries around the world. In addition to countries, there is at least one entity that perhaps has expanded its influence more than anyone else, and that is Islamic fundamentalism. During the Cold War, its sphere of influence hardly went beyond Iran and Afghanistan, but now it is spreading rapidly. Once again, Bosnia comes to mind, but also Turkey, Algeria, and other countries.

One of the most volatile areas in the period of the new world order is the CIS. I indicated earlier that its formation was ill-advised, and I will now add that the process of disintegration that began with the breakup of the Soviet Union will continue perhaps for another thirty or forty years. Exactly what the final result of this process will be is impossible to predict at this time, but it seems certain that it will not stop at sweeping away what little substance the CIS presently has. It seems quite likely that the East European countries, the three Baltic States, Japan, Korea, and perhaps also Mongolia will be the first to sense the danger emanating from such a process.

The issue of nuclear armaments has taken a new turn. The START-1 and START-2 treaties concluded by the United States first with the Soviet Union and then with Russia helped scale down the stockpile of nuclear weapons in the world. But the breakup of the Soviet Union has also resulted in three new, nominally independent countries — Ukraine, Belarus, and Kazakhstan — possessing stockpiles of nuclear weapons. Agreements have been signed to remove all nuclear weapons from these three countries to Russia and their eventual destruction, but that does not address the danger of proliferation. Given inadequate safeguards there and in Russia, we must reckon with the danger that nuclear weapons and weapons-grade uranium fall into the hands of criminal elements who smuggle them to any customer willing to pay their price.

It would be naive to assume that the threat of Communism has completely disappeared with the collapse of the Soviet Union, and that it is unlikely to

spread from China, North Korea, or Cuba. On the other hand, it is not entirely out of the question that a new form of Communism, dressed up as nationalism and appealing to all kinds of reaches and fascist sentiments, could arise on the territory of one or more CIS states. Recent changes in Russian politics, for example, seem to point in that direction.

On the positive side, some local and regional conflicts that had been abetted by the two superpowers have now been allowed to die down. The civil wars in Mozambique and Angola are cases in point, although in Angola, and even more tragically in Afghanistan, the withdrawal of the two superpowers has not yet been sufficient to bring fighting to a complete stop. Another example of a "peace dividend" is the Middle East where the end of the Cold War has set in motion a process whereby it seems that Israel will finally be able to live peacefully with its neighbors.

### *Conclusion*

As I hope this discussion has made clear, it is still far too early to say definitively what the final shape of the new world order will be like. Ideally, it would be good to move away from the legacy of the Cold War when the power of two large countries determined the form and content of international relations. Many thoughtful persons continue to opt for strengthening the existing international organizations with a view toward the eventual creation of a world government. However, the few years since the end of the Cold War have made it abundantly clear that force is still very much the order of the day. Therefore, the best we can hope for, at least in the short term, is that modalities be found that channel that force away from war and toward peace.

I would be remiss if I ended my paper without saying a word about my own country. As I pointed out earlier, Mongolia has been relatively successful in weathering the sudden trauma caused by the collapse of the Soviet Union and is now well on its way toward political democracy and a market economy. However, the many potential dangers connected with the CIS and Islamic fundamentalism that I discussed in this paper could adversely impact Mongolia. This can happen if and when there will be more civil wars of the type we are presently witnessing in Chechnya and Tajikistan in regions of the CIS closer to Mongolia's borders.

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