

The Dynamics of Integration: Russia and the Near Abroad

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A country which declared its independence will never join any union.

—Uzbek President Karimov (Interfax, 28 March 1997)

We used to live in one big country and now cannot be completely separate.

—Moldovan President Lucinschi (Chisinau Infotag, 31 March 1997)

Since the birth of the Commonwealth of Independent States (CIS) in late 1991, relations among its states have shown sharply contradictory tendencies. The dissolution of the Soviet Union amid declarations of independence by the union republics at once triggered counteractions to put the Soviet Humpty Dumpty together again.¹ These efforts stirred some of the former republics to oppose any arrangement threatening their newly declared national sovereignty. Meanwhile, in the new spirit of independence, all the states began seeking contacts with nations and organizations outside the CIS, vigorously forging regional and global alliances with great potential for changing the power landscape in the post-Soviet space and for greatly complicating CIS integration plans.

In this article I seek to identify the key factors encouraging CIS integration and disintegration, to weigh the relative strength of the factors after the five-plus years of the “civilized divorce” of the former Soviet republics, and to consider the probable shape of CIS institutions and relations in the next century.

Integrating Factors

The establishment of the CIS policymaking organs (Council of Heads of State and Council of Prime Ministers) was already approved when the Soviet flag was lowered over the Kremlin on Christmas Day, 1991. More than five years later, the CIS institutional anatomy continues to evolve in pursuit of reintegration. In the long run, whether the commonwealth persists at all as a viable political entity appears to depend chiefly on how well CIS institutions can serve the vital nation-

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al interests of Russia and its non-Russian partners. In this respect, Russia's interests take precedence, for Russia's relative size, resources, and legacy of history have assigned to Moscow the pivotal role in making the CIS work. Without Russia there would be no commonwealth. At the same time, CIS institutions also serve the national interests of the non-Russian states, for those states cannot yet stand alone, secure their borders, or develop their economies successfully in isolation. According to Oleg Bogomolov, head of Russia's Federation Council Committee on CIS Affairs, all the states need one another so much that "the tendency toward convergence cannot be stopped now."²

Foremost among the factors driving the integration process is the need of the commonwealth countries to reestablish cooperation among their dislocated, reforming economies. As will be discussed here more fully in later pages, much CIS institution building to date has sought simply to recreate a single economic space within the commonwealth, with a fully functioning economic union and with customs and currency unions based on a common set of legal specifications. In this spirit, the 28 March 1997 summit of CIS presidents in Moscow showcased once again these familiar long-term economic goals of the commonwealth. In addition, Yeltsin defined new, timely economic targets with more immediate appeal that might reward specific coordinated actions of CIS partners. Thus, while particular attention focused, in Yeltsin's words, "on long-term economic questions of integration," he went on to discuss "the more effective use of existing—and the creation of new—transport routes and corridors and the formation of financial industrial groups."³

Next to economic imperatives, national security needs drive integration. The burden of Soviet defense, largely bequeathed to Russia, is heavy. As Colonel General Andrei Nikolaev, director of Russia's Border Services has noted, even Russia lacks the financial, technical, or human resources for a "Russia-only" border defense of its 4,669-mile border with Kazakhstan.⁴ Joint CIS military forces have been mobilized to defend Tajikistan. CIS observers and peacekeepers actively seek to settle the Nagorno-Karabakh, Abkhazian, and other regional conflicts. An air defense system has been activated. Security forces have combined to fight crime and drug trafficking throughout the CIS.

To man the former Soviet borders, a border defense plan of the CIS outer perimeter has combined Russian forces with local troops along the non-Russian stretches of the former Soviet Union. Describing the arrangement in Kyrgyzstan, President Askar Akaev said, "We have delegated the major responsibility for guarding our border to the central command of the Russian Border Troops, and we consider that this is the only right way."⁵ Under one of many bilateral agreements with Russia, Kyrgyzstan finances 20 percent of the maintenance costs of the border troops and recruits Kyrgyz officers and soldiers who serve in the border troops both within Kyrgyzstan and elsewhere.

By December 1994, under various bilateral agreements, Russian forces cooperated with local troops, putting 9,000 Russians in Armenia, 5,000 in Georgia, 25,000–30,000 in Belarus, 5,000 in Uzbekistan, 3,500 in Kyrgystan, 24,000 in Tajikistan, and 15,000 in Turkmenistan.⁶ Still, this left several gaps in the CIS joint

border plan; specifically, in Moldova, where the 7,000 troops of Russia's 14th Army were due to withdraw over a three-year period, and in Azerbaijan and Ukraine, whose defense ministers refused to sign the CIS joint border defense agreement approved by their CIS colleagues in Almaty, Kazakhstan, on 9 February 1995.⁷

Defying integration, Ukraine's Foreign Minister Hennady Udovenko said confidently, "Our own border troops ensure the security of our borders. We don't need anyone's help."⁸ However, even Ukraine was quick to approve the creation of a joint CIS Air Defense Force when this CIS cooperative defense plan was introduced for approval on 10 February 1995 at the Almaty summit. And despite the refusal of Azerbaijan, Moldova, and Turkmenistan representatives to sign a multilateral agreement, all announced their intention to participate through appropriate bilateral arrangements with Russia. A week later, Colonel General Viktor Prudnikov, commander-in-chief of Russia's air defense troops and commander-in-chief of the new commonwealth allied air defense system, informed the press that organizational, legal, and military-technical preparations were already under way. Russian air defense expertise, he noted, was needed by all CIS partners, and Russian air defense men were already serving in Latvia (outside the CIS), Azerbaijan, Belarus, Kazakhstan, Tajikistan, Turkmenistan, and Uzbekistan.⁹

The readiness of CIS members to accept the unified air defense plan indicated that by 1995 the euphoria of the early days of divorce had given way to more sober calculations by the CIS partners about where their immediate national interests lay. A comment of the Ukrainian air defense troops commander is revealing in this regard. Insisting that air defense membership did not infringe Ukraine's sovereignty, he said, "It allows us to solve to mutual advantage problems concerning air defense equipment and improvement of its technology (which is produced in Russia), while at the same time permitting our Ukrainian Armed Forces to receive updated reports on the aero-space situation and radar recognition."¹⁰

Another problem pressing Russia's leaders to push for integration is the welfare of the twenty-two million Russians who now live and work in the non-Russian CIS states. This has brought about cooperation between several of the CIS states, such as the Russian-Belarus treaty, which addresses language and educational issues by allowing the inhabitants of both countries equal access to academic institutions in Russia and in Belarus. Similarly, Kyrgyzstan and Russia have signed reciprocal agreements to satisfy certain vital needs of the other country's national group now residing within its boundaries, and six states have signed a CIS agreement setting up a fund to aid refugees and displaced persons. In 1996, Russia created a government commission to deal with the affairs of fellow countrymen abroad, chaired by Deputy Prime Minister Aleksei Bolshakov.¹¹

The Russian diaspora itself, whose members are often more advanced technically and more successful economically in adapting to free market mechanisms than their non-Russian compatriots, promote integration by instigating needed reforms. In addition, the Russian language, ubiquitous throughout the CIS, forms an important basis of union infrastructure.

Various currents of thought in Russia come together in support of integration. These include: patriotism, nostalgia for the old order, and a yearning to fulfill

Russia's messianic destiny and to compensate for the traumatic loss of power the Soviet Union formerly enjoyed. Many "integrationists" urge a more active CIS integration policy as a proper Russian response to the eastward expansion of NATO. Overall, they see Russia's strategic and geopolitical interests as inseparably bound up with the CIS countries—the "Near Abroad." They believe that Russia must give first priority to creating a belt of stability in the Near Abroad and must actively discourage the freewheeling independence of Soviet-successor states. According to Andranik Migranyan, an expert on CIS affairs in the Russian State Duma, who strongly supports this view: "To encourage integration, Russia might find it necessary in a number of instances to make serious economic sacrifices for the sake of [its own] strategic and geopolitical interests."¹²

Centrifugal Factors

Russia's elite, however, is far from united concerning the desirability of reintegrating the former Soviet space. A large number of so-called "isolationists" want to cut Russia adrift from its neighbors in order to permit their country to develop free from the onerous burden of commonwealth obligations—free, indeed, to promote what they consider to be "the best interests of Russians in Russia."¹³ Isolationist views have been expressed by General Alexander Lebed who, as Russia's former Security Council secretary, asserted that Russian forces should guard only Russia's borders and assign to non-Russian states the burden of defending the rest of the old Soviet perimeter. Another prominent isolationist is the economic reformer, previous prime minister, and Duma activist, Yegor Gaidar. He has criticized Russia's subsidies to the weaker economies of its neighbors and on this basis has opposed the monetary union of Russia and Belarus. By the time of the 2 April 1997 signing of the union treaty between Russia and Belarus, an influential "young guard" opposed to that treaty had gained prominence in Moscow, and were dubbed by some, "evolutionist-Westernizers." They included the two first deputy prime ministers, Anatoly Chubais and Boris Nemtsov, Deputy Prime Minister Alfred Kokh, and the head of the Presidential Administration, Valentin Yumashev.¹⁴

The most powerful deterrents working to impede integration of the commonwealth arise from the nationalist ambitions of non-Russian states for greater independence from Moscow. The dream of achieving, sooner or later, complete economic and political freedom has led some non-Russian CIS states to resist full cooperation with commonwealth initiatives from the start. Thus, Ukraine has refused to join the CIS Intergovernmental Economic Committee (MEK) and the Interparliamentary Assembly (CIS/MPA), choosing observer status, and Turkmenistan has consistently avoided CIS arrangements seen as threatening its sovereignty.

The thirst for independence from Moscow has moved all the non-Russian CIS states to seek new kinds of alliances, both within and outside the CIS.¹⁵ Mutually profitable regional alliances are being created across the former Soviet borders to the west, south, and east. The trilateral alliance between Turkmenistan, Ukraine, and Iran and numerous other bilateral treaties between Central Asian countries with Iran, Turkey, and China illustrate this trend. Other partnerships with countries of

the “Far Abroad,” especially in Eastern and Western Europe and with the United States and Japan, are providing the CIS non-Russian states opportunities for economic development bypassing Moscow. Such amalgams of CIS with non-CIS countries also offer opportunities for international opponents of Russia and of CIS integration to try to influence the integration process negatively. In addition, bilateral negotiations with countries of the Far Abroad, or with international organizations (the International Monetary Fund, for example) strengthen the independence of the CIS countries from Moscow and undermine the pressures for integration.¹⁶

Another powerful obstacle to integration is the ineffective performance of CIS mechanisms to date. Examples of the failure of CIS institutions are now leg-

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endary. Aman Tuleev, appointed on 22 August 1996 as Russia’s minister for CIS affairs, started his job complaining about the “recently signed 600 agreements, most of which cannot be implemented.” CIS missions, he said, were not only unclear and unfulfilled, but overlapping, and he added

that enormous amounts of money were being wasted by Russia’s government on the bureaucracy dealing with CIS affairs.¹⁷ At their March 1997 summit, the CIS presidents made this issue a major focus of their complaints.

Finally, differences in the rates of modernization of the economic and political systems of the CIS states seriously hinder integration, and will continue to present obstacles for the indefinite future. In the following section, in which I examine the latest integration efforts within the CIS and the obstacles they are encountering, these difficulties will be more fully explored.

Integration in Theory and Practice

By 24 December 1993, at the Turkmen capital of Ashgabat, with Georgia having joined the CIS, all twelve former Soviet republics (minus the three Baltic states) came together for the first time. The “Doughty Dozen” signed a landmark agreement to create a commonwealth Economic Union that would regulate economic affairs and coordinate policies throughout the CIS.¹⁸ This union was intended to coordinate prices and taxes, further develop courts of arbitration and other commonwealth courts, encourage currency stabilization, set up a permanent union commission, provide for free trade zones, and lay the groundwork for a customs union.¹⁹ Implementation of these proposals was to be ensured by establishing a rotating CIS executive chairmanship, officially mandated to take all steps necessary to activate the Economic Union and its permanent structures and to pursue vigorously the whole process of economic reintegration. Boris Yeltsin was named executive chairman for 1994 (and has been reappointed each year through 1997).

Anthems of approval from the leaders of the non-Russian states accompanied the signing of these accords. The Belarus prime minister defended the concept of

monetary union before critics who accused him of betraying his country's national sovereignty, by arguing that "making concessions today, our republic will be able tomorrow to improve the living standards of its citizens and to solve many economic problems, and thereby to save Belarus' sovereignty and statehood."²⁰ Support for the union also came from the first vice chairman of the Belarus Council of Ministers. Endorsing Russian-Belarus economic cooperation, he attacked the general idea of economic autonomy, saying that it could divide CIS countries: "Integration is the only way to develop the economy, and history will never forgive us if the idea of establishing closed economies prevails."²¹

Other CIS leaders voiced their own logic for supporting economic unification. Uzbekistan's president, Islam Karimov, told an audience of industrialists and entrepreneurs in Tashkent that Uzbekistan's future was inconceivable without Russia and that he unequivocally favored "the restoration and development of economic ties among the CIS countries."²² Tajikistan's prime minister, visiting Moscow in February 1994 to try to bring Tajikistan into the ruble zone with Russia, noted that 87 percent of Tajikistan's economic ties were with Russian enterprises and said his country was "destined to succeed only with Russia."²³ And Kyrgyzstan's President Askar Akaev attributed his country's industrial modernization to its economic ties with Russia. "If we break off these relations," he said, "there is a risk that the Kyrgyz will go back to their traditional nomadic life of cattle breeders."²⁴ Finally, Georgia's President Shevardnadze predicted that CIS integration of the member states' economies would make a major contribution to the democratic development of all the member countries. In Shevardnadze's words, "None of the countries will be able to overcome their deep economic crisis without such integration; I am strongly convinced of this. They will not be able to create a market economy."²⁵

Through 1994 the invention of CIS economic mechanisms accelerated, and in 1995 economic integration rolled ahead—on paper.²⁶

On 14 September 1995, Yeltsin issued a decree, "On the Strategic Course of the Russian Federation in Relations with CIS Countries," which was an important statement of Russia's intention to "deepen integration processes in the CIS."²⁷ Russia pledged to "help make other CIS countries politically and economically stable states which will pursue friendly policies toward Russia," and to "act as the leading force in forging a new system of political and economic relations throughout the former Soviet Union." As a practical step, this policy statement noted that "economically, one of the ways of strengthening the CIS is a gradual enlargement of the customs union of states linked to Russia by dint of an integrated economy"²⁸ In line with this position, on 16 January 1996, the heads of state, meeting in Moscow, examined the progress of the customs union; Tajikistan and Kyrgyzstan joined it, and Uzbekistan indicated growing interest in becoming a member.²⁹

On 26 July 1996, the Economic Union of the CIS approved the main points of a plan for the mutual economic integration of union member countries in 1996–97. This plan, already approved by the presidium of the Intergovernmental Economic Committee (MEK), was designed to remove more customs and monetary bar-

riers between the CIS states. However, major difficulties continued. Russia's deputy prime minister, Aleksei Bolshakov, who chaired the meeting, complained that the MEK's efforts to deepen integration were being generally thwarted by the failure of some member states to supply information and to comply with the requirements of the agreement. Once again, he voiced a familiar complaint—that "the integration processes in the CIS are contradictory." And once again, he called for more active efforts to coordinate the economic policies of the participating countries and to back up these efforts with legislative programs.³⁰

Meanwhile, for a number of reasons, bilateral agreements between the CIS countries have proved to be far more effective than CIS multilateral agreements. During the first five years of the commonwealth's existence, a web of hundreds of intra-CIS bilateral treaties has been woven around and through the commonwealth concept. Whereas multilateral treaties carry the whiff of Moscow's imperial ambitions, threatening the non-Russian states with the possibility that Moscow may impose a hierarchical dictatorship over their policies and decisions, bilateral agreements place two unequal partners on a relatively even playing field, at least paying lip service to the sovereignty of the smaller state. Diplomatic ties, for example, amount to immediate affirmations of the sovereignty and international status of the newly independent states. Also, bilateral agreements, applied to limited objectives, can be more easily realized and can be tailored to accommodate the national interests of both sides.³¹ In aggregate, Russia's numerous bilateral ties with the non-Russian states—while allowing these states to effectively develop other relationships—form an overall organizational pattern in sharp contrast to the centralized, imperial Soviet hierarchy of the past.

New Efforts to Tighten Integration

In spring 1996, two treaties were signed by CIS subgroups with the clear purpose of jump-starting the sluggish integration process. The first agreement, signed on 29 March 1996 by Russia, Belarus, Kazakhstan, and Kyrgyzstan, called for measures to deepen the economic and humanitarian integration of these four countries. The second, signed by Boris Yeltsin and Alexander Lukashenko four days later, was the Treaty on the Community of Sovereign Republics, linking Russia and Belarus.³²

The treaty of four nations focused on limited objectives. Giving economic tasks priority, it sought to coordinate reforms and create conditions (including necessary legal bases) to facilitate the operation of a common market and free economic activity. Specific economic targets were: to form a single customs territory, take steps toward achieving an effective payments system, substantially decrease inflation, stabilize the exchange rates of national currencies, achieve the total convertibility of national currencies, and ensure mutual access to the currency markets of the member states. The four nations' central banks were to create an interbank union for mutual consultations and the coordination of measures.³³ The aims of integration included social progress, equal opportunities for citizen education, and democratic development for the member states. Other areas in which coordination was sought were legislation, foreign policy, and external border protection.

An institutional structure was created by the four-nation agreement and follow-up legislation in June 1996, consisting of three main bodies. First was an *Interstate Council*, made up of the heads of state, prime ministers, and foreign ministers of the four states. Its mission was to formulate policy and plans of action. Second was an *Integration Committee*, a permanent executive organ of sixty members—fifteen from each state—including the first deputy premiers of the states, their ministers of economy and finance, and ministers for cooperation with the CIS. And third was a legislative body, the *Interparliamentary Committee* (MPK), made up of deputies selected by the four state legislatures.

When the Integration Committee held its second meeting, on 25–26 July in Moscow, Chairman Nigmatzhan Isingarín (deputy prime minister of Kazakhstan) attacked his job with great enthusiasm. Boasting that the “Four” were ahead of other commonwealth members in their efforts to form a customs union before the current year ended, he challenged the other CIS states to follow their lead. Looking ahead, Isingarín listed his committee’s immediate tasks: setting up a common transport system, standardizing value-added tax and excise duties, and creating a unified education area.³⁴

Meanwhile, the third body, the Interparliamentary Committee of the four nations began operations.³⁵ This committee, made up of legislators from the four states, planned to meet at four-month intervals either in St. Petersburg or in a capital of one of the participating states. However, its permanent headquarters were established in St. Petersburg, which was also the permanent location of the CIS legislature—the commonwealth Interparliamentary Assembly. It was intended that the two parliamentary bodies would work closely together so that the CIS assembly could provide the four-nation Interparliamentary Committee with informational, legal, technical-material, and organizational support. Almbet Matubraimov, speaker of one chamber of the Kyrgyz parliament, was chosen by the deputies from their ranks to chair the four-nation legislative committee for a one-year term.³⁶ A bureau, made up of two deputies from each country’s delegation, was charged with organizing the work of the committee.

Guided by the CIS legislative assembly, the four-nation MPK is expected to prepare legislative acts that will bring the legal systems of their states into harmony and, in particular, will provide a legal basis for solving problems that face their efforts to deepen integration among the four states. When the bureau of the MPK met in St. Petersburg in March 1997, it announced preliminary progress in writing model legislative acts on a customs tariff, currency regulation, bankruptcy, free economic zones, and legislation in ecological, social, and humanitarian policies.

A major question yet to be answered concerns what kind of integrative impact and follow-up this coordinated legislation will have on the social structure in the four nations. One observer warns that the CIS parliamentary assembly, the CIS/MPA, which is to act as the MPK’s mentor, but which has the power only to make recommendations, has by now produced more than a thousand legal documents that remain only on paper—not an encouraging prognosis.³⁷ With more time, correctives may nullify this criticism; in the meantime, laying the legal base for integration is important for the commonwealth. Gennady Seleznyov, the speak-

er of Russia's State Duma, who also chairs the CIS/MPA, has viewed its work optimistically. Specifically, he lauded the CIS/MPA on its fifth birthday for its achievements in resolving inter-ethnic conflicts within the CIS, its success in having 70 percent of its model legislative acts adopted by CIS legislatures, and its growing data bank, "a kind of legislative palette for all the CIS member countries."³⁸

Meanwhile, the most ambitious integrational effort to date in terms of seeking a tighter merger between CIS states was initiated by the Treaty on the Community of Sovereign Republics, linking Russia and Belarus. At the April 1996 signing, Sergei Baburin, deputy chairman of Russia's State Duma, leader of the Russian Common Union, and a strong supporter of integration, hailed the alliance as the "'small' nucleus of a future unitary union statehood on the territory of the former Soviet Union, a kind of basic model on which the economic, political, legal, and other mechanisms of reunification will get a trial run."³⁹ Valery Serov, then Russia's minister for CIS affairs, called it the third of three major stages of cooperation, the first stage being the CIS itself and the second being the quadrilateral agreement.⁴⁰

Future plans and prospects were one thing; implementing the Russian-Belarus treaty was another. The economic merger quickly aroused acrimony. Within three months after signing the pact with Russia, Belarus President Lukashenko and Prime Minister Chyhir complained that the Russians were "grossly violating" the economic agreements and the CIS customs union treaty, damaging Belarus export industries, and pushing up the Belarus trade deficit. In addition, they argued, Moscow had not honored the arrangement whereby Russia had agreed to cancel past Belarus debts to Russia in exchange for receiving from Belarus rent-free use of military installations and free passage of Russian fuels to the West. Western analysts observed, "Russian protectionist interests are strong and often work at cross purposes with Russian political policies toward CIS countries, creating counter-incentives to their reintegration."⁴¹

By August 1996, Valery Serov was blaming two familiar circumstances for blocking the deeper economic merger of Russia and Belarus. First, he identified the failure of both sides to implement their plans: "If all we plan today is implemented a deeper merger is possible," said Serov. Second, he blamed "a certain lag of Belarus in the development of reform," and he added: "Two economies with such different approaches to such economic processes as privatization, the establishment of uniform taxation, uniform customs, and other services cannot be integrated."⁴²

Whatever the eventual outcome, critical disparities between the two states (Belarus having one-fifteenth of the population of Russia and one-fortieth of Russia's GDP in 1996, owing Russia millions of dollars for energy, and possessing virtually no privatized industry) would sow the path toward union with difficulties.⁴³ Such difficulties have frustrated CIS economic integration from the start, and only time will tell if—within the more limited parameters of this two-country treaty—they can be managed.

Looking Ahead

What conclusions can be drawn from this survey of the CIS during its first five-plus years?

Yeltsin's announcement in September 1995 of a "Strategic Policy toward the CIS Countries" indicated that integration within the CIS would grow because Russia's leaders had decided that it was in Russia's national interests to have it grow. Chernomydin reaffirmed this position on 19 July 1996, when he met with Russia's ambassadors to the CIS countries and declared CIS countries to be a zone of "Russia's vital interests." He called for a policy of integration whereby Russia's relations would be tailored to each state individually according to a multi-stage, multi-level strategy of integration that would gradually draw the CIS states together more closely.⁴⁴ The goal of this strategy was not to restore the former Soviet Union, but simply to refashion the current loose commonwealth into a much stronger confederation. In this model, each nation would participate in various power-sharing arrangements and mutual-sum games with partners both inside and outside the CIS, but with its independence increasingly curtailed by commonwealth regulation. This fundamentally Russian policy will surely meet serious challenges during the next few years.

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An important forecast of the coming shape of the CIS was published in May 1996 by distinguished foreign policy experts from Russia's Council on Foreign and Defense Policy and representatives of executive and legislative authority, business and academic groups, and the mass media. This group presented as a "rather realistic scenario" the "very high probability" that a confederation of the former Soviet republics will be formed by the year 2000, made up of Russia, Belarus, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Tajikistan, and Armenia.⁴⁵ The council's report sees "a significant, but not predominant probability" that Ukraine, Uzbekistan, Georgia, and Moldova may also be included, but it predicts that Azerbaijan and Turkmenistan will remain aloof. It also makes a critically important assumption that CIS integration depends to a very significant degree on Russia's successful economic growth: "Only a powerful and dynamically developing Russia can be the kind of magnet that will create a field of attraction for a new 'association of lands' on an eminently voluntary basis."⁴⁶

This upbeat analysis, promising much-needed stability for a perpetually troubled area of the world, appears to be anchored in sands of wishful thinking. It overlooks the fact that Russia's GDP, falling annually since the dissolution of the USSR, began to reverse this course only in 1997, and it ignores the staggering record of unpaid taxes and wages, and the overall indebtedness of Russia's government and industry. In addition, the Council's time frame is overly ambitious, failing to heed the wisdom of the CIS permanent secretary, Ivan Korotchenya, who cautioned in May 1996 that, "The process of integration cannot be rushed."⁴⁷ Korotchenya warned that, although a customs union was apparently taking shape,

the creation of a currency union of the CIS countries could be expected only in fifteen or twenty years.

While integration moves slowly, the power landscape of the CIS will continue to undergo change influenced by other forces. The CIS states, transformed by domestic and external developments, are discovering fresh and unexpected solutions to old problems as new sources of power emerge. Time adds feasibility to promising alternatives that will draw the non-Russian states away from the magnetism of Russia's economy described by the Foreign Council study as the fundamental integrative force. The example of Ukraine indicates how alignments can be affected over time as integration stalls and other options appear. Thus Kiev, which from the start was reticent to cooperate fully with the commonwealth and with CIS institutions, by 1996 appeared more and more boldly to be cultivating Western options—seeking to enter the Council of Europe as a first step toward eventual membership in the European Union, joining NATO's Partnership for Peace program and the Central European Initiative, a regional trade forum. "Integration with the West," said Ukraine's foreign minister, Pavlo Lazarenko, "is the main thrust of our foreign policy," and he emphasized that his country was "more openly looking abroad for support," especially from the United States, Germany, and Poland.⁴⁸

Economic opportunities from outside the CIS will continue to offer the non-Russian states of the commonwealth chances to increase their independence from Moscow. Some of these countries are becoming involved in the building and control of new gas and oil pipelines, the construction of railroads, the exploitation of previously untapped oil and other mineral resources with outside assistance, and other projects—all with immense potential for rearranging the power landscape of the post-Soviet world. Thus the Central Asian states now negotiate with Pakistan and Turkey, bypassing Russia, to build transport corridors and fuel pipelines through Pakistan to the Indian Ocean and through Iran and Turkey to Europe, and when Turkmen pipelines to Europe are completed, Turkmenistan will challenge Russia's position as the leading supplier of gas to Europe. Kazakhstan—a landlocked country—has successfully negotiated with China for rail access to the Pacific and signed an accord in May 1996 with the Islamic Republic of Iran that allows it, in a swapping arrangement, to sell oil on world markets.⁴⁹ Kazakhstan, Ukraine, Azerbaijan, and Georgia have together solicited funding from the European Bank of Reconstruction and Development to create a Transcaucasian transport corridor to move Caspian oil to Ukraine.⁵⁰

As new relations bring about further changes, so too time will reshape Yeltsin's "strategy" for a full reintegration of the commonwealth, for while Moscow's best chance to integrate the CIS surely depends on the swift recovery of Russia's domestic economic situation, speedy recovery is doubtful. In the meantime, without the powerful magnetism of a successful Russian economy, integration will move forward haltingly, powered mainly by Moscow's determination and powers of coercion. The CIS will remain an economic and political system in slow transition, with different degrees of internal cohesion. Even so, it is likely that by the end of the year 2010, a hard core of six countries (Russia, Belarus, Kazakh-

stan, Kyrgyzstan, Tajikistan, and Armenia), seeking to emulate the models of economic and political reform being developed in Moscow, will once again share a common economic space, a common market, and a common currency. The other non-Russian countries will undoubtedly continue to participate in commonwealth activities selectively.

Helping to further this integrative process are supplementary kinds of institutional cooperation that are being formed voluntarily by CIS states, in twos and threes, or more. The most remarkable and successful regional alliance of this type is the trilateral group of Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, and Uzbekistan, known informally as the Central Asian Union. (Recently, observer status was granted to Russia and Tajikistan.) Established on 23 September 1993 by the "Treaty on Creation of an Economic Union," this alliance has proceeded in successive years to proclaim its pursuit of a "Unified Economic Space" (10 February 1994) and to create various working bodies, including an "Interstate Council of Three Countries of Central Asia" (July 1994) and a "Central-Asian Bank."⁵¹ At a meeting of the Council of Prime Ministers of the Central Asian Union on 14 March 1997, in Bishkek, the ministers signed a number of documents intended to set up a single economic space during 1997–1998, to coordinate the basic guidelines of their laws regulating economic activity, and to promote the creation of joint ventures in priority sectors. A goal that was discussed for possible future action is the convertibility of the three nations' national currencies. Mindful of the pitfalls suffered by the CIS, the Kyrgyz premier declared that the alliance's Executive Interstate Council must establish "tight control over the implementation of the signed agreements."⁵² Despite the implied criticism in this order, the record of the alliance to date, in hard bargaining, facing tough economic problems, and hammering out solutions, has been remarkably positive.

The changes already introduced by the CIS, or under its aegis, into the first quarter of 1997 have transformed the individual states economically and politically and have brought them out of isolation into the world community. As they develop complex and significant relations with nations outside the former Soviet borders, the future shape of their relations within the CIS becomes more difficult to predict. So far, a modicum of integration has been achieved without greatly curbing the independence of the CIS states, and future integration along this path, though it will be convoluted and contradictory, appears assured. The compelling factor shaping this outcome is the reality that cooperation of many different kinds serves the vital interests of all the CIS countries. Whatever kind of federation or confederation awaits the Doughty Dozen in the next century, it will have been sanctioned by free agents realistically weighing the arrangements that best serve their nations' interests.

NOTES

1. Gennady Zyuganov's Russian Communist Party (CPRF) has consistently called for the "voluntary" restoration of the Soviet Union, and during the presidential election campaign, on 18 March 1996, the Communist-dominated Duma went so far as to pass two resolutions condemning earlier actions dissolving the USSR. The first resolution (passed 250

- to 98) called for cancellation of the 12 December 1991 Supreme Soviet decision to dissolve the USSR; the second (252 to 33, with 5 abstentions) called for recognizing as legally binding the results of the 17 March 1991 referendum favoring preservation of the USSR; ITAR-TASS, 15 March 1996; from Foreign Broadcast Information Service, *Daily Report: Central Eurasia* (Washington, D.C.) (hereafter FBIS-SOV-), 96-052, 15 March 1996, 35.
2. *Nezavisimaya gazeta*, 28 June 1996, 2; FBIS-SOV-96-160-S, 16 August 1996, 1.
 3. Mayak Radio Network, 28 March 1997; FBIS-SOV-97-087, 31 March 1997.
 4. *Komsomol'skaya pravda*, 4 May 1995, 2; FBIS-SOV-95-089, 9 May 1995, 26; by comparison, the lengths of the U.S.-Canadian and U.S.-Mexican borders are 3,987 and 2,013 miles, respectively.
 5. Bishkek Kyrgyz Radio, 28 November 1994; FBIS-SOV-94-229, 29 November 1994, 52.
 6. *The Economist*, 10 December 1994, 55.
 7. Baku Azerbaijan Radio Televisiyasi, 21 July 1994; FBIS-SOV-94-141, 22 July 1994, 50; Reuters, Almaty, 10 February 1995.
 8. Associated Press, Almaty, 9 February 1995.
 9. ITAR-TASS, 17 February 1995; FBIS-SOV-95-034, 21 February 1995, 1.
 10. Kiev *UNIAN*, 20 February 1995; FBIS-SOV-95-034, 21 February 1995, 47.
 11. Vadim Kisin, RF deputy minister for cooperation with CIS states, "Our Fellow Countrymen Will Not Be Ignored," *Nezavisimaya gazeta*, 28 June 1996, 3; FBIS-SOV-96-160-S, 16 August 1996, 1.
 12. *Nezavisimaya gazeta*, 10 December 1994, 1, 3; FBIS-SOV-94-239, 13 December 1994, 4-9.
 13. *The Economist*, 10 December 1994, 55.
 14. Interfax, 1 April 1997; FBIS-SOV-97-091, 2 April 1997. Another group of prominent government leaders strongly supported the union treaty and were nicknamed "Integrators-Slavophiles." These included Deputy Minister Valery Serov, Foreign Minister Yevgeny Primakov, his first deputy minister, Boris Pastukhov, Yeltsin's representative to the Constitutional Court, Sergei Shakhrai, and Yeltsin's foreign affairs adviser at the time, Dmitry Ryurikov. Significantly, Yeltsin was positioned firmly with the integrationists.
 15. Jan S. Adams, "The CIS States: Going Global," *Post-Soviet Prospects* 5 (March 1997).
 16. James R. Millar, "The Failure of Shock Therapy," *Problems of Post-Communism* (Fall 1994): 23.
 17. Moscow Russian Television Network, 4 September 1996; FBIS-SOV-96-172, 4 September 1996, 1-2.
 18. The CIS institutional framework is based on multilateral agreements among the CIS states (such as the commonwealth charter and numerous treaties establishing CIS institutions), CIS institutions (such as the commonwealth administration in Minsk and Moscow and the Interparliamentary Assembly in St. Petersburg), and bilateral agreements among the CIS states (for example, diplomatic treaties, economic contracts, or cooperative military pacts). The bilateral ties, ubiquitous and effective, provide in the aggregate an extremely important reinforcement for integration.
 19. ITAR-TASS, 24 December 1993; FBIS-SOV-93-246, 27 December 1993, 17.
 20. Minsk *Respublika*, 11 December 1993, 1, 2; FBIS-SOV-93-240, 16 December 1993, 71-72.
 21. ITAR-TASS, 15 December 1993; FBIS-SOV-93-240, 16 December 1993, 71.
 22. Moscow Mayak Radio Network, 26 January 1994; FBIS-SOV-94-017, 26 January 1994, 57.
 23. ITAR-TASS, 17 February 1994; FBIS-SOV-94-034, 18 February 1994, 38.
 24. Interfax, 28 December 1993; FBIS-SOV-93-248, 29 December 1993, 44-45; *Pravda*, 29 December 1993, 1; FBIS-SOV-93-248, 29 December 1993, 45; Interfax, 27 January 1994; FBIS-SOV-94-019, 28 January 1994, 45.
 25. Tbilisi Radio, 27 December 1993; FBIS-SOV-93-247, 28 December 1993, 51.
 26. Main items on this CIS paper trail of economic institution-building include the fol-

lowing: At the summit meeting on 15 April 1994 in Moscow, the heads of state considered changes in the CIS organizational structure to create a Commission of Economic Union attached to the Coordinating Consultative Committee. Customs duties were to be reduced with a view to the eventual creation of a free trade area and customs union. On 8 July 1994, the Council of Heads of CIS Customs Services (excepting Turkmenistan) approved the draft framework for customs legislation. On 27 August 1994, CIS foreign and defense ministers, meeting in Minsk, approved draft papers on further economic integration. A meeting of heads of government, 9 September 1994, considered proposals for an Intergovernmental Economic Committee (MEK) and a payments union, and in October the heads of state approved creation of the MEK to supervise establishment of an Economic Union. They also signed agreements on a payments union, a free trade zone, and a customs zone. (Ukraine, protecting its sovereignty, joined the MEK as an associate, not a full, member.) On 18 November 1994 in Moscow, the MEK met for the first time to discuss future projects. On 28 January 1995, Belarus, Kazakhstan, and Russia agreed to establish a customs union. On 10 February 1995, in Almaty, the heads of state nominated temporary staff for the MEK headquarters in Moscow and voted to give Yeltsin a second term of office as chairman of the CIS Council of Heads of State. On 10 March 1995, the MEK established an Inter-State Currency Committee intended to expedite the future creation of a full-fledged currency market and securities market in every CIS country. On 26 May 1995, Belarus and Russia signed the first stage of the customs union, and Kazakhstan stated its intent to join by the end of the year.

27. Interfax, 16 September 1995; FBIS-SOV-95-180, 18 September 1995, 1.

28. *Ibid.*; Stephen Foye, "Russia and the Near Abroad," *Post-Soviet Prospects* 3 (December 1995).

29. British Information Services, New York, "Background Brief" (May 1996), 10.

30. Interfax, 26 July 1996; FBIS-SOV-96-146, 29 July 1996, 1–2; see also Grant Bagratyan, "Universal'noe raschyotnoe sredstvo v Sodruzhestve nezavisimykh gosudarstv," *Mezhdunarodnaya zhizn'*, August 1996, 57–59.

31. Georgia's foreign minister, Irakly Menagarishvili, discussing Georgia's strengthening ties with Azerbaijan and Ukraine, which were making advances by means of bilateral accords, praised the effectiveness of bilateral agreements among CIS countries, calling them "much more beneficial" than multilateral accords, "which ignore the countries' specific interests"; Interfax, 24 February 1997; *Monitor*, 25 February 1997.

32. The text of the four-nation treaty appeared in *Rossiiskaya gazeta*, 2 April 1996, 3; FBIS-SOV-96-064, 2 April 1996, 11–14. A draft treaty of the two-nation treaty appeared in *Znanya yunosti*, Minsk, 12 April 1996, 2; FBIS-SOV-96-093-S, 13 May 1996, 7–10; the treaty officially came into force on 29 August 1996; ITAR-TASS, 29 August 1996; FBIS-SOV-96-170, 30 August 1996, 5; see also, Oleg K. Rybakov, "Pervoe pyatiletie SNG," *Mezhdunarodnaya zhizn'* 9 (September 1996): 18–21.

33. *Ibid.*

34. *Rossiiskaya gazeta*, 20 July 1996, 7; FBIS-SOV-96-142, 23 July 1996, 1–2.

35. *Rossiiskaya gazeta*, 22 June 1996, 10; FBIS-SOV-96-139-S, 18 July 1996, 15.

36. Yevgeny Denisenko, "Integration Committee Set Up. The Main Task is Synchronization of the Rate of Economic Reform," *Nezavisimaya gazeta*, 29 June 1996, 3; FBIS-SOV-96-139-S, 18 July 1996, 83.

37. Anna Kozyreva, "The Big Four Begins and . . . Wins?" *Rossiiskaya gazeta (Ekonomicheskii soiuz)*, 22 June 1996, 10; FBIS-SOV-96-139-S, 18 July 1996, 16–17.

38. *Rabochaya tribuna*, 14 March 1997, 1–2; FBIS-SOV-97-051. The first chairman of the CIS Interparliamentary Assembly, Ruslan Khasbulatov, considered the MPA one of the few commonwealth structures "with serious prospects," and capable of leading an "upsurge of integration," and of finding legal control mechanisms to enforce the implementation of CIS agreements; Jan S. Adams, "CIS: The Interparliamentary Assembly and Khasbulatov," *RFE/RL Research Report* 2 (25 June 1993): 19–23.

39. S. Baburin, "Reunification is Inevitable: But We Won't Live in a New Union State

until the 21st Century,” *Nezavisimaya gazeta*, 18 April 1996, 5; FBIS-SOV-96-093, 13 May 1996, 38. Proceeding at once to set up a governing structure, Russia and Belarus formed a joint Parliamentary Assembly of the Community of Russia and Belarus. The legislators of the new parliament held their first meeting in Smolensk on 25 June 1996 and elected a chairman (Semyon Sharetsky, chairman of the Belarus legislature), a first deputy chairman (Gennady Seleznyov, speaker of the Russian State Duma), and two deputy chairmen: Baburin, representing Russia, and Alexander Kozyr, chairman of the Belarus Legislative Subcommittee for CIS Affairs. Six standing commissions were established to deal with: legal and procedural questions, economic policy, social policy and cultural and humanitarian questions, foreign policy questions, security and defense and the fight against crime, and ecology and the use of the natural environment. Chairman of the Parliamentary Assembly Sharetsky and his three deputies, along with the chairmen of the six standing commissions, form the Council of the Assembly, which is the policymaking body of the Parliamentary Assembly. A Secretariat of thirty-two members is quartered in Moscow. Meanwhile, the major substantive work of the parliament has been to prepare a detailed program of model legislative acts to be enacted in 1996 and 1997. Priority was given to legislation defining the equal status of citizens of Russia and Belarus within the new Community of Russia and Belarus.

40. *Delovoi mir*, 17 May 1996, 1–2; FBIS-SOV-96-122-S.

41. Elizabeth Teague, Stephen Foye, and Vladimir Socor, *Fortnight in Review* 1, 3 (26 July 1996): 10.

42. Minsk, *Belapan*, 8 August 1996; FBIS-SOV-96-154, 8 August 1996, 40.

43. Peter Henderson, “Belarus Economy Seen Hard to Integrate with Russia,” *Reuter*, 14 March 1997.

44. Interfax, 29 July 1996; FBIS-SOV-96-146, 29 July 1996, 9.

45. S. A. Karaganov and V. T. Tretyakov, “Will the Union Be Restored: Future of the Post-Soviet Space: Theses of the Council on Foreign and Defense Policy,” *Nezavisimaya gazeta*, 23 May 1996, 4–5; FBIS-SOV-96-126-S, 28 June 1996, 17–29.

46. *Ibid.*

47. Interfax-AIF, 20 (20–26 May 1996), 21; FBIS-SOV-96-126-S, 28 June 1996, 11.

48. *The Economist*, 28 September 1996, 58–59.

49. Tehran, IRNA, 1 September 1996; FBIS-SOV-96-173, 5 September 1996, 46–47.

50. Itar-Tass, 26–27 March 1997; Interfax, 27, 29 March 1997; *Monitor* 2 (31 March 1997): 8–10.

51. *Delovoi mir*, 15 January 1997, 3; FBIS-SOV-97-16.

52. Bishkek Kyrgyz Radio, 13 March 1997; FBIS-SOV-97-073; Interfax, 14 March 1997; FBIS-SOV-97-073.