



The devaluation of the concept of autonomy: national minorities in the former Soviet Union

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Ever since the 1960s and in most parts of the world, ethno-political conflict has grown as a source of concern in the international arena. In Africa and South Asia, in the post-communist states of Eastern Europe and Eurasia, as well as in Western Europe, old grievances have been revived, and new conflicts have erupted between ethnically defined social groups. As a result of this, research on ethnic conflict and its resolution has mushroomed in recent years. One of the principal and most effective solutions for the resolution of ethnic conflict is that of regional autonomy. Thus Ted R. Gurr has argued that ‘negotiated regional autonomy has proved to be an effective antidote for ethno-political wars of secession in Western and Third World States’.¹

However, if one tries to apply this model to the conflicts of the former Soviet Union, in particular in the Caucasus, the prospects for autonomy become less clear. In many other cases, it seems, the state power at first pursues an assimilation policy, which gives rise to increased conflict. Meanwhile the minority group advocates autonomy or secession; in the end the issue is settled as the state accepts the minority’s bid for autonomy. However, this model does not fit to the former Soviet Union. What we see there is that, quite to the contrary, it is the state that advocates autonomy for the minority, which in turn refuses to accept any solution short of independence.

This circumstance does not necessarily mean that the secessionist movements in the area are in essence more radical and less ready for compromise than movements such as those of the Miskitos in Nicaragua, the Nagas and Tripuras in India, or the Basques in Spain, all parties to conflicts that have been solved by regional autonomy. Rather, it has to do with the way the entire concept of autonomy is viewed by peoples that have experienced the Soviet form of federalism. Before moving to analysing the reasons for the difference in perception, and the possible solutions to this problem, it is necessary to recapitulate the forms of self-determination that exist.

Federalism, autonomy and independence²

If one is to assume that a territorial solution is to be found to an ethno-political

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conflict—presupposing that the ethnic minority is geographically concentrated in a certain area of the country in question—there are three possible solutions: a federal system, autonomy, and outright independence. A federal system can be defined as a constitutional arrangement through which power is divided between the central government and the local (provincial or regional) governments.³ The main characteristic of a federal system is that the different constituting units of the state are given the same rights *vis-à-vis* the central government. Hence no specific provision is made in favour of the ethnic minority if compared with other regions of the country. This implies that the model might prove irrelevant in some cases, if the claims of the ethnic minority are unique in the country, which is often the case. However it might be a useful solution in multi-ethnic states; India is an example. Independence as a result of secession is a solution by which a new independent state is created, the ethnic minority breaking out of the state it formerly belonged to in order to create a state of their own. The most recent examples of secession are the independence of Eritrea from Ethiopia and of Slovakia from Czechoslovakia in 1993. Needless to say, it is very difficult to achieve peaceful secession, as the central power is generally reluctant to renounce its territorial integrity. The current attempts of Chechnia, Abkhazia, or Nagorno-Karabakh to secede from Russia, Georgia and Azerbaijan respectively, can be taken as an example of this. The Czech-Slovak ‘amicable divorce’ must be seen as being the exception rather than the rule. Between these two solutions, autonomy is an arrangement whereby the ethnic minority in conflict with the state is given exclusive rights; it is a solution which can be tailor-made to the needs and wishes of a minority.⁴ It may include issues such as territory, language, natural resources, legal systems, taxation, etc.⁵ It is also worth noting that a federal system in itself does not preclude the creation of autonomous region.

In any case, autonomy is a solution which enables the minority to exercise its right to self-determination to a certain extent—albeit short of complete self-determination—while preserving the territorial integrity of the state. Hence this solution is a compromise between the insistence on the part of the central power on sovereignty and integrity on the one hand, and the claim to self-determination of the ethnic minority on the other. Its popularity as a solution to ethnic conflicts stems very much from its being virtually the only form of compromise available.

The case of the former Soviet Union

While analysing the ethnopolitical conflicts in the former Soviet Union, we see a somewhat different picture. According to the Soviet form of federalism based on *national* delimitation between its constituting parts, the union was organized in a hierarchical structure of entities with different levels of autonomy. At the top of the echelon were the 15 union republics (SSR), which theoretically had the right to secede from the USSR. They had constitutions of their own, and were basically organized as smaller models of the USSR itself. Hierarchically under these as well as under their jurisdiction were the autonomous republics

(ASSR) which had constitutions of their own but no right to secession. The third level was the autonomous oblasts (regions, AO), which had the right only to limited self-determination in terms of culture, language, etc. These were as a rule under the jurisdiction of the union republics as well.

Hence the Soviet Union was from its very beginning, particularly after the national delimitation of 1924,⁶ a whole system of hierarchically different regional autonomies in theory, but only in theory. From the beginning, and according to Lenin's professed ideas of liberating the peoples oppressed by Tsarist Russia, it is possible that the system might have been genuinely intended to pave the way for the self-determination of the numerous ethnic groups of the union, be it in a socialist framework. However, the 1924 delimitations were engineered primarily by Stalin, who had a background as Commissar for Nationalities. Stalin's perception of the national minorities was far more careful than Lenin's. Hence he paradoxically used the 'nativization' process of the 1920s to increase the power of the centre and diminish the actual power of the autonomies. Two strategies were used.

The first was quite simply to ensure that the autonomous structures were given no actual political power, their authority being restricted to the cultural and social spheres. Hence actual power remained in Moscow; the autonomies, so to speak, never became autonomous. The second strategy was to use national delimitation to create sources of dissent among the Caucasian peoples in particular, whom Stalin saw as the most disloyal in the union—a perception later exemplified by the deportations of the second world war.⁷ Thus a number of borders between ethnic communities were drawn in a way that does not correspond to the demographic realities. A series of brief examples should illustrate this.

In the North Caucasus, the most flagrant example is the delimitation between the Turkic Karachai/Balkar peoples on the one hand and the Circassian Kabardin/Cherkess on the other. Settlement patterns would logically have allowed a division of the region inhabited by these peoples according to an East-West axis, and would have united the Karachai and Balkars, which are in fact one people speaking a common language; and the Kabardins and the Cherkess, which are both Circassian peoples. Hence two republics, 'Karachai-Balkar' and 'Kabardin-Cherkess' would have been the logical solution. But, quite to the contrary, Stalin chose to divide the area along a North-South axis, which also split these peoples in two republics, but united the Karachai and the Cherkess in one, and the Kabardins and the Balkars in the other. The territories of these new entities were also drawn further north, so as to contain large numbers of Russians; as the Circassian and Turkic peoples have no history of cooperation, rather having lived side by side for centuries with mutual suspicion, the Russian population was able to play a leading role in these entities, thus preventing any unified Caucasian action against the centre. Furthermore, artificial distinctions between very similar peoples were created or reinforced. Besides the case of the Karachai and the Balkars, the Circassians were divided into Adyge, Cherkess and Kabardins; the Vainakh people were equally

artificially divided into Chechens and Ingush. Another fact which proves this argument is the practice of changing the hierarchical status of an autonomous region according to the whims of the decision-makers in Moscow. Thus Abkhazia was first a union republic (SSR) in a treaty relationship with Georgia until 1931 when it was subjugated to the latter. Similarly the Chechens and Ingush first had republics of their own, which were merged in 1936 to a Chechen-Ingush republic, only to be abolished during the deportations of 1944 and then reinstated with slightly altered territory in 1957.

In the Transcaucasus, the 1921 treaties between the Soviet Union and the emerging Turkish republic created a map which brought conflict and dissent to the present day. Stalin actually managed to divide both the Armenian and Azeri peoples, creating the Armenian enclave of Nagorno-Karabakh (an AO) completely encircled by Azerbaijan, and the Azeri enclave of Nakhjivan (an ASSR), cut off from mainland Azerbaijan by Armenia. Both entities were put under the jurisdiction of the Azerbaijani SSR.⁸ Moreover, there are sizable Azeri and Armenian minorities in southern and south-eastern Georgia, as well as an Azeri minority in Dagestan, centred around the city of Derbent.

These illogical drawings of boundaries followed the logic of divide and rule. As the Soviet power, particularly after the Dagestani rebellion in 1920–22, feared unified action in the name of Islam by the Caucasian peoples, it sought to divide them and prevent them from contact with one another.

In Central Asia, the picture was similar. Whereas at the time the Turkic inhabitants at least generally had a perception of a common area, known as Turkestan, the Soviet regime eventually decided to divide the area into five republics: Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Uzbekistan, Turkmenistan, and Tajikistan.⁹ However, this division was neither logical nor immediate. Three points can be singled out to show the illogical character of these developments.

First, the inhabitants of Central Asia of the time had not as a rule developed a particularly distinct national identity. Identity was generally speaking either sub-national (tribes, clans) or supra-national—belonging to the Muslim community of believers. There was hardly any differentiation between Kazakhs and Kyrgyz; even between Turkic-speaking Uzbeks and Iranian-speaking Tajiks, there seems to have been no major problems. People were generally bilingual and one's mother tongue was not a major issue of identity. However, by forming distinct 'republics', the Soviet state managed to give birth to distinct national identities among the inhabitants of Turkestan, again to prevent unified action. Hence the republican structures preceded, and resulted in, the formation of national identities.

Without going into the chaotic history of changes in the national status of different territories in the 1920s, a second factor is that the entities' level in the hierarchy as well as their territorial boundaries, once set, did not remain as such but were changed at will by Moscow. The Kazakhs were first called Kyrgyz (and the Kyrgyz were given the name Kara-Kyrgyz) and had an ASSR within the Russian union republic (the RSFSR); later they were promoted to an SSR of their own. Similarly, the Tajiks initially only had an autonomous status within

Uzbekistan before receiving their own SSR. Hence, in Central Asia, just like in the Caucasus, the national delimitations served the purposes of Moscow's imperial ambitions rather than to reflect the actual situation.

Third, the borders of the five eventual republics were drawn in a quite arbitrary way, with basically all Central Asian states having part of their titular nationality in one or more of their neighbours' territory—no Central Asian state can claim to be nationally homogeneous. Perhaps the most blatant example is the drawing of the Tajik-Uzbek border, which has left large numbers of both Uzbeks and Tajiks on the 'wrong' side of the border; the predominantly Tajik historical cities of Samarkand and Bukhara both lying within Uzbekistan.¹⁰ The Fergana valley also deserves mention here. The valley was divided into Uzbek, Kyrgyz and Tajik sectors. This kind of arbitrary divisions naturally led to instability and difficulties in the relations between the now independent states. The late Soviet period indeed saw great unrest in the Fergana valley, with clashes between Kyrgyz and Uzbeks in Kyrgyzstan's Osh region, as well as between Uzbeks and Meskhetian Turks in Uzbekistan. The same argument is valid also for the northern boundary of Kazakhstan, which is drawn in a fashion so as to include large homogeneous Russian-populated regions, something which naturally increases Kazakhstan's vulnerability towards Russia.

Hence the Soviet form of federalism, with its hierarchical system of autonomies, was clearly perfidious and designed to serve the interest of Moscow, with complete disregard for, and even perhaps designed against the interests of, the native population. Naturally, the elites of the peoples that suffered from this policy became increasingly aware of the misuse of the concept of national autonomy which had been put into system by Moscow in order to spread dissent and facilitate Russian rule over these territories.

The post-Soviet conflicts

As the Soviet Union was about to meet its destiny, a whole range of ethnopolitical conflicts came to the surface. The roots of many of them had been directly created by Soviet rule; however most of them built upon older grievances and historical problems between the communities in question. Besides the events in the Fergana valley and the war in Tajikistan, Central Asia was largely spared the ethnic warfare seen in the Caucasus. In Moldova, however, conflict erupted between the majority Moldavians and the Russian-speaking minority in the self-proclaimed republic of Transdnistria (heavily backed by Moscow) when the Moldovan leadership made its plans to unify with its close ethnic kin in Romania public. Nevertheless, the region of the former Soviet Union which has been the most plagued by ethnopolitical conflict remains the Caucasus.¹¹ Ethnic tensions that had been dormant since the Soviet incorporation of the Transcaucasus were allowed to reemerge as Gorbachev's *Glasnost*' and attempt at democratization lightened the political atmosphere in the union.

Already in the late 1980s, the old grievances between Azeris and Armenians over the disputed region of Nagorno-Karabakh, a conflict which had been left

smouldering in the early 1920s, began to escalate. The starting point was demonstrations in the enclave's capital Stepanakert in February 1988, which later spread to Baku and Yerevan. During 1988, ethnic cleansing first in Armenia and later in Azerbaijan developed unhindered, resulting in large refugee flows in both directions. By 1989 there were almost no Azeris left in Armenia, whereas by early 1990 the majority of Azerbaijan's Armenians had been forced to flee.¹² In early 1992, that is immediately after the break-up of the Soviet Union, the situation in Nagorno-Karabakh degenerated into full-scale war, and by 1994 the Karabakh Armenians, with the help of regular units of the Armenia armed forces and occasionally supported by Soviet troops,¹³ had secured control not only of Nagorno Karabakh but also of its surrounding, homogeneously Azeri-populated areas, from which the Azeri population was subsequently expelled. Ever since, and despite international efforts to reach a political solution to the conflict, a deadlock has developed, as the Azerbaijani government demands the restoration of its lost territories to its control, while the Karabakh Armenians demand recognition of their independence and right to unify with Armenia.

Georgia has been troubled by armed conflict with two of the five minorities on its territory: the Abkhaz in the northwest, and the South Ossetians in the northeast. Incompatibilities between the Abkhaz and Ossetians on the one hand, and the Georgian government on the other, led to a wish in both regions to secede and unify with the ethnic kin in the RSFSR, that is the Circassian North Caucasus in the case of the Abkhaz,¹⁴ and North Ossetia for the Ossetians.¹⁵ With *Glasnost'*, the Abkhaz (who by 1989 had been reduced to a minority of only 17 per cent in their republic) were permitted to voice their grievances and their fear of total assimilation or ethnic annihilation—the Abkhaz nation numbers only an estimated 105,000 people. At the same time, the Georgian political arena became increasingly dominated by chauvinism and xenophobia, directed both against Russia and the ethnic minorities.¹⁶ This reinforced the minorities' determination to distance themselves from Tbilisi, and hence all parties gradually embarked upon a confrontational course. As relations continued to deteriorate, and the Georgian intentions to secede from the Soviet Union became evident, the Abkhaz and Ossetians decided that they could not remain within a nationalistic, independent Georgian state outside of the Soviet Union. Subsequently, war erupted in South Ossetia, which could only be stopped in the summer of 1992 with heavy Russian involvement. War came to Abkhazia—which received strong support from North Caucasian mountaineers—in 1992, and lasted until late 1993; in both territories, ethnic Georgians were forced to leave and to seek refuge in Georgia proper.

Ever since, the three territories of Nagorno-Karabakh, Abkhazia, and South Ossetia have *de facto* been out of the control of their respective central governments in Baku and Tbilisi. In fact, the separatist forces have been able to consolidate their power, and three unrecognized but for all practical purposes independent states exist today.¹⁷ Furthermore, during 1996 all three held parliamentary or presidential elections, despite loud protests from the Azerbaijani and Georgian governments, which argue that no elections in the enclaves could be

legitimate until Azeri or Georgian refugees were allowed to return to their homes.¹⁸

Negotiations searching for political solutions to the conflicts have been under way, both with Russian involvement and international presence, in the form of the OSCE in Nagorno-Karabakh and South Ossetia and the UN in Abkhazia. However, these efforts have been unsuccessful, in the sense that their only result so far has been to reaffirm the deadlock and show the incompatible positions of the parties, although a reconciliation may be under way in South Ossetia. The Azerbaijani and Georgian governments are not ready to accept the demand of the enclaves, that is the granting of independence (including the right to federate with ethnic kin in the Russian Federation or in Armenia). The case of Nagorno Karabakh is further complicated by the 'buffer zones' surrounding Nagorno Karabakh that Azerbaijan wants unconditionally returned to its direct sovereignty. Important disagreement remains on the very basic issue—the status of these enclaves. Whereas the Georgian and Azerbaijani sides demand the return of the rebellious territories to their sovereignty, including a renewed solution based on the concept of autonomy, more generous and certainly more real than in the past, the separatists categorically refuse this scenario. Instead, they seek to gain international recognition for their secession and for their right to total self-determination.

Although some progress is currently under way in the case of South Ossetia, which arguably was the less severe of the three conflicts, the Abkhaz and in particular the Karabakh Armenians refuse the idea of returning to the sovereignty of the central power. Hence, they refuse to accept the concept of autonomy as the solution to the conflicts, instead advocating to solve them—or to actually having solved them—through secession. In negotiations, the Abkhaz and Karabakh Armenians refuse any solution based upon what they term 'vertical' relations, in other words their subordination to Georgia or Azerbaijan. They argue that a solution must be based on 'horizontal' relations, that is equality in status; hence both argue for confederations between entities with equal status.

Thus, these conflicts seem to differ markedly from the usual pattern of global ethnic conflict in the refusal on the part of the ethnic minority to accept to solve the conflict through continued coexistence in a single territorial entity. This is all the more interesting, for example in the case of Nagorno-Karabakh, where Azerbaijani officials during negotiations have offered the Karabakh Armenians a comparatively surprisingly high level of autonomy, albeit not specified in detail, only to be refused. Indeed, Azeri officials have proposed 'A formula resulting in a status higher than autonomy but stopping short of independence; a wider autonomy than existing anywhere presently, without therefore renouncing the territorial integrity of Azerbaijan'.¹⁹

Now the question is whether this refusal of the solution of autonomy is conditioned by circumstances proper to the Transcaucasian conflicts. Other nearby examples from the Soviet Union would suggest that this is not the case. In fact the Chechen conflict, among others, also showed a similar distrust on the

part of the minority for the concept of autonomy. Indeed, during the years of Chechnia's *de facto* independence 1991–94, Moscow seemed ready to offer Chechnia quite generous conditions of self-rule and wide-stretching rights, even surpassing the conditions already given to Tatarstan and Bashkortostan with which Russia managed to sign separate treaties in 1994. The Chechen leadership still rejects today any solution that would keep Chechnia under Moscow's jurisdiction. The Chechens have proven their readiness to go to war to achieve independence; and nothing seems to suggest that they would be any less ready to do the same again. Even in the cases of Tatarstan and Bashkortostan, Moscow had tremendous difficulties in reaching a negotiated solution by which these territories renounced their declarations of independence, which had been issued roughly at the same time as Chechnia's.²⁰ This despite the fact that these republics are encircled by Russia and have no territorial connection to the outside world. Only after substantial guarantees and concessions from the Russian side, amounting to near-independence in the economic sphere, did the leaders of these two republics agree to delegate their authority to Moscow. In the Balkans, the recent events in Kosovo seem to constitute a parallel to the situation in the Caucasus. Kosovo for a number of years had an autonomous position within the Yugoslav Federation; however the autonomy was unilaterally revoked in 1989. Recently, much like the Karabakh Armenians, the Albanian nationalists in Kosovo have also been highly sceptical about a solution based on the concept of autonomy.

The devaluation of the concept of autonomy

Throughout the former Soviet Union, the concept of autonomy suffers from a distinctively lower value and appreciation as a solution to the grievances of ethnic minorities than in other areas of the world. Moreover, a striking circumstance regarding the post-Soviet conflicts needs to be mentioned. Although Azerbaijan and Georgia, as well as Central Asia, harbour numerous minorities of various sizes and problems, only those that were the holders of an autonomous status actually rebelled. Kurds, Lezgins, and Talysh in Azerbaijan, and Armenians and Azeris in Georgia have been comparatively inactive, having no autonomous status.²¹ Meanwhile Armenians in Azerbaijan, Abkhaz and Ossetians in Georgia, and Chechens in the Russian Federation, all holders of an autonomous status, revolted. In a sense, then, the autonomous status seems to have fuelled rather than diminished minority demands—a factor which is helpful in understanding why Central Asia, where there are fewer autonomous regions, has had a lower propensity for conflict than the Caucasus. In a sense, an autonomous status carried with it a state structure around which ethnic mobilization took place, and was clearly instrumental in increasing awareness of national identity.²²

In retrospect, the Stalinist legacy meant that the whole hierarchy of autonomous structures, which was the very structure of the Soviet Union, never resulted in self-determination for the peripheries. The centralized and totalitarian

character of the Soviet state never permitted the autonomous entities—be it union republics or lower-ranking entities—to exercise any autonomy. It could even be argued that the federal structure of the union legitimized the totalitarian rule of the centre over the peripheries; it was used as a rhetoric to conceal the suppression of the minorities. Hence, the state structures of the entities, which in theory had most of the characteristics of independent, democratic states, were the outward and inward figurehead of a totalitarian system. With people working in and with republican governments or constitutions, or oblast parliaments, a semblance of self-determination was kept alive. But it remained a semblance.

The obvious outcome is that now when the national minorities have acquired self-rule on their own, often through the use of force, they are extremely reluctant to accept a return to an autonomous status which they know by experience, expect never to grant them the amount of self-determination promised. The hypocrisy of the past explains this seemingly cynical view. Minorities such as the Abkhaz and Karabakh Armenians fear that if they accept any agreement that gives them *on paper* the rights they perceive a need for, they may never be able to exercise these rights if they accept subjugation to their former central government. Autonomy becomes dangerous and risky; secession or a confederation whereby they enjoy equal status as their former overlord—and keep their armed forces—becomes the only safe way for national survival and development. Again, the example of Kosovo is illustrating. Kosovars saw their autonomy revoked unilaterally once in 1989; from their perspective, there is no reason why Belgrade would respect a new autonomy in the long run. Consequently, independence or unification with Albania becomes the advocated solution.

Clearly, the main reason for the difficulties of resolving ethnic conflicts in the former Soviet Union through solutions of autonomy must be related to the Soviet legacy. Naturally, the readiness of the central governments to offer wide-ranging autonomy to their rebellious ethnic minorities might very well be based upon the same perception; that offering autonomy and implementing the decision are two very different and not necessarily related things. Just as in the past, autonomy is advocated, but the question is whether the central governments are ready to accept the adverse consequences for themselves of living with an actually—and not only theoretically—autonomous ethnic minority within their territory.

A solution to this dilemma: international control and guarantees?

At the core of the problem, then, is the fear that agreements will neither be respected nor implemented. This fear is justified, especially in the Transcaucasus, where the weight of the ethnic minorities demographically is very much lighter than that of their neighbours and former overlords. The Abkhaz, as mentioned earlier, number roughly 100,000, whereas there are four million Georgians. Similarly, the Karabakh Armenians number slightly over 150,000 compared to over six million Azeris. The fact that despite these figures the conflict led to their relative victories was primarily due to internal disorder in

Azerbaijan and Georgia, coupled with quite overt external support for the ambitions of the minorities.²³ With stable states and societies in these two countries, the minorities would not have had the same possibility to stand up against them militarily. Following this logic, the minorities are afraid that their autonomous status, once agreed upon, will gradually turn into repression due to their sheer numerical inferiority. Basically, the problem is that there is no confidence in the implementation of the basic principle of international law, *Pacta Sunt Servanda*.

If this is indeed the case, the solution to this dilemma lies in finding a way to assure these minorities that their rights will not be infringed upon. This necessarily involves foreign actors that are in a position to exert power over the central governments, and that would undertake to guarantee that the latter follow the agreements they have committed themselves to follow. The effect of international guarantees need not be discussed in detail here; suffice it to say that an example as to their importance and the means of implementation is the Dayton agreement in Bosnia-Herzegovina.

So far, the international community has been unable to play a decisive role in the area, partly because it has remained the sphere of influence of the Russian Federation. Hence, the minority leaders as well as the central governments of the conflict areas have been forced to turn to Russia in their search for a guarantor power. And it would be no exaggeration to say that Russia is not the most disinterested and objective guarantor that exists. Quite to the contrary, Russia is actively pursuing its own interests in the area; the experience of the last few years has shown that Russia is more inclined towards creating dissent between ethnic communities, following the divide and rule logic, than to work for the long-term resolution of conflicts. Hence the unwillingness of both Azerbaijan and Georgia, and even of the minorities, to assign too important a role to Russia.

This is where the international community comes back into the picture. For it has proven to be if not an overly effective, at least a relatively impartial and objective arbiter in conflicts. In fact, international organizations such as the UN and the OSCE are the only actors which could effectively solve the problem of the devaluation of the concept of autonomy, by providing effective and trustworthy guarantees for the implementation of the negotiated agreements. Furthermore, they can be helpful in formulating new arrangements that correspond to the particular circumstances in each conflict zone. In John Maresca's words, it is necessary to find formulas which provide secessionist groups with solutions ranging between autonomy and independence.²⁴ He is also right in pointing out that the Soviet system provided a framework for the settlement of conflicting claims to territory. However, as our analysis here has shown, the problem lies in implementing it in a convincing and secure manner, which could succeed in achieving the confidence of both parties. In this respect, the international community must bear the responsibility for presenting such solutions and guaranteeing their implementation. Needless to say, this is a process which requires support from the major states involved in these international organizations, as well as increased financial resources; the UN and OSCE are presently

not viewed as being able to guarantee any solution in practice given their limited mandate and limited resources. Nevertheless, it seems to be the only way to restore confidence in settlement mechanisms, which in turn is a necessity to prevent the escalation of the existing conflicts and renewed hostilities.

Notes and references

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23. On Russian involvement, see Thomas Goltz, 'Letter from Eurasia: the hidden Russian hand', *Foreign Policy*, No 92, Fall 1993.
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