

Overview

The collapse of the Soviet Union in 1991 led to the emergence of 15 independent post-Soviet states. These countries have since navigated complex relationships with Russia, the former imperial center.

Key Themes: Independence and sovereignty, economic ties, security concerns, and the influence of external powers like the EU, NATO, and China.

Historical Context

The Collapse of the Soviet Union **Dissolution:** The Soviet Union formally dissolved on December 25, 1991, resulting in the independence of 15 republics.

Formation of New States: Each republic declared independence, leading to the establishment of new governments and the need to navigate their post-Soviet identities.

Legacy of the Soviet Era **Economic Interdependence:** The Soviet Union's centralized economy created deep economic ties among the republics, complicating their transition to independent economies.

Cultural and Linguistic Bonds: Russian language and culture remained influential in many post-Soviet states, particularly in Central Asia and Eastern Europe.

Historical Context (cont)

Security and Military Relations: The Soviet military infrastructure and alliances persisted, influencing post-Soviet security dynamics.

Russia's Approach to Post-Soviet States

The Concept of the "Near Abroad" **Definition:** Russia's term for the former Soviet republics, emphasizing its special interests and influence in these regions.

Strategic Importance: Russia views these states as a buffer zone against Western influence and a vital part of its sphere of influence.

The Commonwealth of Independent States (CIS) **Formation:** Established in December 1991 as a loose association of former Soviet republics, aiming to maintain cooperation in political, economic, and military areas.

Effectiveness: The CIS has been largely symbolic, with limited real influence on the policies of its member states.

Russia's Approach to Post-Soviet States (cont)

The Eurasian Economic Union (EAEU) **Purpose:** A regional economic union led by Russia, aiming to integrate the economies of several post-Soviet states.

Members: Includes Russia, Belarus, Kazakhstan, Armenia, and Kyrgyzstan.

Criticism: Some member states view the EAEU as a tool for Russian economic dominance.

Collective Security Treaty Organization (CSTO) **Overview:** A military alliance formed in 1992 among several post-Soviet states, led by Russia.

Members: Includes Russia, Belarus, Armenia, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, and Tajikistan.

Purpose: To ensure mutual defense and maintain regional security, often seen as a counterbalance to NATO.

Eastern Europe Dynamics & Relations with Russia

Ukraine Orange Revolution (2004) and Euromaidan (2013-2014): Popular movements against pro-Russian governments, leading to tensions with Russia.



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Eastern Europe Dynamics & Relations with Russia (cont)

Annexation of Crimea (2014): Russia's annexation led to international condemnation and ongoing conflict in Eastern Ukraine.

Current Relations: Highly strained, with Ukraine seeking closer ties with the EU and NATO.

Belarus **Authoritarian Rule:** Under Alexander Lukashenko, Belarus has maintained close ties with Russia, relying on Russian economic and military support.

Recent Protests (2020): Demonstrations against Lukashenko's government have tested the relationship, with Russia supporting Lukashenko.

Union State: Talks of deeper integration with Russia remain ongoing but face domestic resistance.

The Caucasus Dynamics and Relations with Russia

Georgia **Rose Revolution (2003):** Led to a pro-Western government and increased tensions with Russia.

Russo-Georgian War (2008): Conflict over South Ossetia and Abkhazia, resulting in Russian military intervention and the recognition of these regions as independent states by Russia.

Current Relations: Diplomatic relations are severed, with Georgia pursuing closer ties with NATO and the EU.

The Caucasus Dynamics and Relations with Russia (cont)

Armenia **Reliance on Russia:** Armenia has strong military and economic ties with Russia, particularly due to security concerns with Azerbaijan.

Nagorno-Karabakh Conflict: Armenia relies on Russian support, although recent conflicts have shown limits to this backing.

Azerbaijan **Balancing Relations:** Maintains a strategic partnership with Russia but also develops ties with Turkey and the West.

Energy Exports: Azerbaijan's oil and gas exports allow for some independence from Russian influence.

Central Asia Dynamics and Relations with Russia

Kazakhstan **Economic and Security Ties:** Strong ties with Russia, but Kazakhstan also pursues a multi-vector foreign policy, engaging with China and the West.

Language and Cultural Policy: Kazakhstan has been promoting the Kazakh language and culture, slowly reducing Russian influence.

Central Asia Dynamics and Relations with Russia (cont)

Uzbekistan **Isolationist to Engagement:** Initially pursued an isolationist policy under Islam Karimov, but recent leadership has re-engaged with Russia and other global powers.

Security Concerns: Cooperation with Russia on security, particularly in combating terrorism and extremism.

Turkmenistan **Neutrality:** Maintains a policy of neutrality, with limited but cordial relations with Russia.

Energy Exports: Focuses on energy exports, particularly natural gas, while avoiding deep political ties with Russia.

Kyrgyzstan and Tajikistan **Dependency on Russia:** Both countries rely heavily on Russian economic aid, military assistance, and remittances from migrant workers in Russia.

Security Alliances: Both are members of the CSTO and closely aligned with Russian security policies.

External Influences

European Union and NATO **Eastern Partnership:** An EU initiative aimed at deepening ties with Eastern European post-Soviet states, including Ukraine, Georgia, and Moldova.

NATO Expansion: Russia views the expansion of NATO into former Soviet territories as a direct threat, leading to tensions and conflicts, such as in Ukraine and Georgia.

United States **Support for Democracy:** The U.S. has supported democratic movements in post-Soviet states, often leading to friction with Russia.

Sanctions: Imposed on Russia for its actions in Ukraine, including the annexation of Crimea and involvement in Eastern Ukraine.

China **Economic Influence:** China has become a significant economic partner for Central Asian states, challenging Russia's influence in the region.

Belt and Road Initiative: China's infrastructure and investment projects have further integrated Central Asia into its economic sphere.

Current Geopolitical Issues

Ongoing Conflicts **Ukraine Conflict:** The war in Eastern Ukraine, Crimea's status, and broader East-West tensions remain unresolved.

Nagorno-Karabakh: Ongoing instability between Armenia and Azerbaijan, with Russia playing a key role in peacekeeping.

Belarus Crisis: Domestic unrest and the question of deeper integration with Russia continue to loom over Belarus.

Economic Challenges **Energy Dependency:** Many post-Soviet states are heavily dependent on Russia for energy supplies, leading to complex economic relationships.

Sanctions and Counter-Sanctions: The impact of Western sanctions on Russia has had economic repercussions for several post-Soviet states.

Security Concerns **Terrorism and Extremism:** Central Asia faces threats from radical Islamist groups, with Russia often positioned as a security partner.

Current Geopolitical Issues (cont)

Cyber and Information Warfare: Russia's use of cyber tactics and propaganda in post-Soviet states, particularly in elections and public opinion, has been a source of tension.

Conclusion

Diverse Paths **Independent Trajectories:** While some post-Soviet states have sought closer ties with the West, others remain closely aligned with Russia, leading to a diverse geopolitical landscape.

Russia's Role: Russia continues to exert significant influence, but its relations with post-Soviet states are complex and often contentious.

Future Outlook **Regional Stability:** The future of post-Soviet states' relations with Russia will likely hinge on regional stability, economic development, and the balance of power between Russia and external influences like the EU, NATO, and China.

Potential for Conflict: Ongoing disputes, such as those in Ukraine and the Caucasus, could flare up, affecting broader regional and global security.