

One might argue that this does not really matter - that, when push comes to shove, Russia has to play ball, and, if it doesn't - so what? From a narrow and short term security perspective, such a position may be correct. However, it discounts the future heavily. Russia will probably recover. Recovery may already be beginning under Vladimir Putin. When it does so, it would be preferable for Russia to do so within a framework of European security whose legitimacy it accepts. It would not be an exaggeration to argue that the principal long term security challenge facing the Euro-Atlantic community in the longer term is what to do with Russia.

Closely associated is the question of what to do about the security problems of the non-Russian newly independent states. Here we run into a Catch-22. To the extent that international organizations (the UN, NATO, the EU, and the OSCE) attempt to address these issues through reaching out to the former Soviet republics, they risk enhancing Russian perceptions of insecurity and victimisation further. To the extent that they do not respond to the security needs of these republics, the latter remain dependent on Russia and vulnerable to Russian pressure.

Given recent events in Chechnya, this issue is of growing importance. In an immediate sense, there is considerable danger of spillover into Georgia along that country's border with Chechnya, as Russian forces attempt to prevent Chechen rebel use of Georgia's territory as a sanctuary. Georgia has been placed under pressure by the Russian Federation to allow military operations against Chechen forces from Russian bases in Georgia. Russian aircraft have repeatedly violated Georgian air space and have bombed targets inside Georgia's borders. And Russia has sought to deploy its own forces on Georgia's side of the border to seal it.

In a more general sense, the proactive Russian policy in Chechnya has important implications for the regional politics and security of the Caucasian region. It is unclear whether Chechnya is a "one-off" or whether it is the harbinger of a more concerted Russian campaign to restore influence south of the Caucasus range. The latter view is widely shared in the region itself. The former chief foreign policy adviser to Azerbaijan's President Aliiev declared recently that "the military campaign reflects Russia's imperial designs in the Caucasus and threatens the sovereignty of all the independent states in the region, particularly that of Azerbaijan and Georgia."<sup>32</sup>

If indeed this is Russian policy, it carries significant implications not only for Caucasian OSCE members, but also for Western European states and the United States, as well as for the OSCE itself. The OSCE is supposed to be uniform from a security perspective; the construction of special spheres of influence and responsibility contradicts the norms of equality and indivisibility that lie at the institution's core. Moreover, given the growth of substantial Western economic involvement in the region's energy sector, Russian policy could provoke specific tensions with Western OSCE members on this issue. Growing Canadian interest in this region is suggested the hearings of the Parliamentary Committee on Foreign Affairs and Trade hearings on the region in 2000.

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<sup>32</sup> Beatrice Hogan, "Caucasus: Ex-Aliiev Aide Warns of Russian Ambitions," *Turkistan Newsletter* (23 February, 2000).