**Forum:** Historical Security Council

**Issue:** Addressing the humanitarian consequences of the Soviet Union's dissolution

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Introduction

The dissolution of the Soviet Union that resulted in the end of the country as a sovereign state resulted in its 15 consitutent republics gaining full independence on the 26th of December, 1991. Many reasons contributed to this collapse, including economic stagnation and overextension of the Soviet Union’s military, stemming from the Cold War and US policy of containment. The effects of the dissolution resulted in many humanitarian consequences around the world, both positively and negatively.The fall of the Berlin wall on November 9th, 1989 finally allowed east and west Germany to reunite, and that ended the Cold War. As the Soviet Union’s governmental power loosened, countries such as Estonia, Lithuania and Latvia began declaring independence, and by the summer of 1990, many communist Eastern European governments were replaced by democratically elected governments. As a result of the Soviet Union’s dissolution, US’s influence as a glower power on the world’s economy and society increased. Between 1989 and 1991, the gross national product in Soviet countries fell by 20 percent, this period of economic breakdown greatly increased poverty and lowered the average quality of life of its citizens, and the downfall in Russia and its surrounding countries created more opporutnities for corruption and crime. In order to address these negative humanitarian consequences, actions have to be taken by governments and international organizations. For example, notably, many different forms of Humanitarian Intervention and Peacekeeping were imposed upon the Former Soviet Union and Eastern Europe to ensure peace and reduce the suffering of the innocent civilians who reside there. However, none of these methods are perfect, humanitarian aid is not being sufficiently provided to all civilians in the areas, and peacekeeping methods are creating tension because people may view it as a form of invasion. There is desperate need for more international action to help aid the civilians facing the humanitarian consequences of the Soviet Union’s dissolution, and ensure peace and prosperity in the Former Soviety Union region.

Definition of Key Terms

Humanitarian Consequences

There are the impacts or side effects of events on different groups and parties who may or may not be willingly involved. These consequences may not necessarily be negative, but it is consequences are more commonly negative if they have to be dealt with by the UN. If an event has caused many negative humanitarian consequences on people, it may result in a humanitarian crises, which is an emergency situation that affects an entire community of people that often results in high levels of mortality.

**Self-Determination**

The process by which a country, formerly a part of another country, declares independence so that they can determine their own statehood and form their own government.

**Ethnic Conflict**

Conflicts between groups of people of different ethinicity residing in the same region or country, often resulting in violence and discrimination.

**Economic disintegration**

The slowly worsening of a country’s economy as a result of factors such as war and separation.

**Political instability**

Often occurring in countries with newly established governments, political instability could result from multiple parties trying to gain power and control over a country, resulting in conflicts between the parties.

**International Intervention**

Actions taken internationally by countries all around the world to address a specific world problem, such as providing humanitarian aid to refugees in need.

Background

Historical Context

History of the Soviet Union

Before the Soviet Union was formed, Russia was ruled by the monarchy led by Czar Nicholas II. However, the war against Germany was extremely costly, bring despair and suffering to the Russian people, throwing mass amounts of people into poverty and suffering. In a desperate attempt to end their despair, a group of people named the Bolsheviks, led by Lenin overthrew the Czar in the Russian Revolution of 1917, and they established a socialist state. Towards the end of world war II, the Soviet Union advanced in Geman territory and captured most of Eastern Europe, which they held onto after the end of the war, creating a massive country, the consisted of many different ethnic groups.

Factors contributing to the Dissolution of the Soviet Union

No single factor could be the cause for the dissolution of such a large and powerful country. I was the three main factors: Political, Economic and Social, that all contributed to the weakning of The Communist Part and ultimately the Soviet Union’s dissolution

Political Factors: The Soviet Union was ruled by The Communist party, and they established and enforced communism throughout the country. However, one of the factors that caused the Soviet Union’s instability was when Mikhail Gorbachev, the last leader of the Soviet Union, decided to allow elections with a multi-party system to create presidency for the Soviet Unions. Thi form of election was highly democratic, going against The Communist Party’s ideals and eventually destabilized communist control over the Soviet Union. Soon after, the rise of nationalism and desire for sovereignty within various countries such as Ukraine and Georgia led to the final and most immediate cause for the disintegration of the Soviet Union. The large scale failure that resulted in the explosion of the Chernobyl power station also greatly weakened the trust of the Soviet people in their government.

Economic Factors: During the cold war against the US, the Soviet Union spent yhuge amounts of fuding on military spending in order to beat the US in the arms race. However, this had negative affects in the Soviet Union’s economy. The Soviet Union relied on printing money to fund its military spending, and this led to wage hikes, ultimately leading to an inflationary spiral within the Soviet economy. The mismanagement of the governmental fiscal policy and sudden event of a sharp drop in Soviet oil prices, was the breaking point for the Soviet Union, and it plunged millions of people into poverty. The shortage for consumer iterms and even basic needs caused huge dissatisfaction within the Soviet people, weakening The Communist Party’s control over the country.

Social Factors: The large majority of the USSR’s population consisted of peasants and agricultural workers, followed by blue collar workers, white collar workers, and then the political-governmental elite and cultural and scientific intelligentsia. The serious problem of social inequality in the USSR led to dissatisfaction from those at the lower end of the social hierarchy, who represented the large majority of the population of the Soviet Union.

Immediate Humanitarian Consequences

Displacement and Population Movements

After the dissolution of the Soviet Union, as a result of reasons such as ethnic conflicts, nearly nine million people became uprooted, and seeked refuge in other locaitons, creating one of the most complex and problematic migrations ever internationally. It is vital the the UN addresses this issue to provide shelter to those who have not yet found an asylum.

Poverty and Economics hardship

The dissolution of the Soviet Union was caused by many economic factors, such as hyperinflation and serious income inequality. When the Soviet government signed itself out of existence in 1991, it was the final breaking point for many people, and millions of people fell below the poverty line overnight as unemployment drastically increased. Many people can no longer afford the consumer items they used to, and some even face the danggers of lacking the basic needs for food and shelter. The UN needs to find methods to provide humantirian aid to those whose lives are in danger.

Lack of access to basic services

Chaos immediately followed the Soviet Union’s dissolution, and during that period the government was a complete mess. People lost access tobasic services that are provided by a normal government, such as universal and free healthcare service, a key goal planned by the former Soviet government. With the economy already in serious trouble, the financial burden of having to pay for some of these vital services are too great for many, and they lost access to basic healthcare and education.

**Long-term Humanitarian Consequences**

Ethnic Conflict

When the Soviet Union collapsed in 1991, 15 new states were born, each with its own set of government and problems. Being a former country that consisted of many different ethnic groups,all of these ethnic group sbegan struggling for power in the different new states that were born following the disbanding of the Soviet Union. This led to problems such as civil disorder and conflict, in which many of those who do not want to be involved began seeking refuge in other countries.

Economic Disintegration

With different ethnic and political groups vying for control over the new states, noone actually cared about the citizens of the former Soviet Union. The conflict and wars in the region further worsened the USSR’s already weak economy, and noone was there to take care of that problem. As hyperinflation continued and different groups pouring money into military spending continued, little money was used to provide people with basic needs and services. Conflicts also ruined key areas such as farmlands and cities, causing food and shelter shortages for the Soviet people. This lack of access to basic needs and services led to the death of many people, and forced others to seek refuge elsewhere.

Political Instability

In addition to consisting of many ethnic gropus, the Soviet Union also consisted of many political parties, ranging from extreme communist to extreme facism. Similarly, once the Soviet Uinon collapsed and new states were formed, the many different political parties began struggling against each other to gain power in these newly established states, causing conflicts and civil disorder that resulted in the ultimate suffering of the Soviet people. It is vital that the UN addresses the problem of conflict in the former Soviet Uinon region, so that no more innocent people are being negatively affected in the crossfire.

**Major Parties Involved**

**Soviet Union/ United Soviet Socialist Republics (USSR)**

The Soviet Union is a Marxist-Communist state formed in 1917 following the Russian Revolution. During its final years, it consisted of 15 Soviet Socialist Republics (SSRs): Armenia, Azerbaijan, Belorussia (Belarus), Estonia, Georgia, Kazakhstan, Kirgiziya (Kyrgyzstan), Latvia, Lithuania, Moldavia (Moldova), Russia, Tajikistan, Turkmenistan, Ukraine, and Uzbekistan. The state was unanimously controlled by the Communist Party of the Soviet Union (CPSU) and subsidiary organizations. Additionally, the Soviet Union was one of the Big Five powers in the United Nations, meaning it had a permanent seat in the Security Council and veto power. The state was dissolved in September 1991 as demanded by the votes of the Congress of People's Deputies, the highest body of state authority at the time.

**Commonwealth of Independent States (CIS)**

After an agreement (the Belovezha Accords) was signed by Russia, Ukraine, and Belarus, the CIS was established to replace the USSR, with all former republics joining except for Georgia. This commonwealth strived to share a common policy for foreign affairs and defense among member states. As the USSR dissolved, the CIS was a crucial part of supporting the welfare of independent states during the transition.

**Russian Federation (Russia)**

The Russian Federation is a state that emerged after the USSR ceased to exist in 1991. Its goal was to transition from socialism to democracy and a market economy instead of a command economy. However, the state was in political and economic chaos like other former SSRs. Despite this, the Russian Federation instigated the creation of and holds most power in the Commonwealth of Independent States (CIS) and related organizations such as the Collective Security Treaty Organization (CSTO) and Eurasian Economic Union (EAEU).

**Collective Security Treaty Organization (CSTO) and Eurasian Economic Union (EAEU)**

The CSTO and EAEU are regional organizations formed under the Commonwealth of Independent States (CIS) framework. Firstly, the CSTO is a mutual defense alliance with the aims of “strengthening of peace, international and regional security and sustainability, protection of independence on a collective basis, territorial integrity and sovereignty of member states.” The CSTO comprised six former republics of the USSR after its creation: Russia, Armenia, Belarus, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, and Tajikistan, respectively. In addition, this organization seeks cooperation with foreign multilateral institutions such as the United Nations, the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe, the Shanghai Cooperation Organization (SCO), and NATO. On the other hand, the EAEU involves the same member states as the CSTO except for Tajikistan but primarily focuses on economics, including the creation of a common market, border security standards, a customs union, standardized currency exchange, and joint programs on social and economic development. It aims to have a similar function to the European Union (EU) concerning a common market.

**Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (OCHA)**

In December 1991, the General Assembly established the United Nations Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (OCHA). OCHA aims to strengthen international coordination of emergency responses to humanitarian crises. This is accomplished through the Inter-Agency Standing Committee (IASC), whose members include the UN system entities most responsible for emergency relief. In terms of the Soviet Union’s dissolution, many former citizens would require the aid of non-government organizations such as the OCHA for basic needs.

**United States**

The United States (US) was a hegemonic superpower similar to the USSR. The Cold War between the Soviet Union and the United States from 1947 to 1991 resulted in a type of bipolar stability in which the two powers balanced each other. Thus, the collapse of the Soviet Union had profound implications for US foreign policy. Both US presidents, Reagan and Bush, tried to maintain good relations with the Soviet leader Gorbachev and, subsequently, Russian Federation president Yeltsin. In that sense, an important policy made by the US was not to interfere during the collapse of the Soviet Union but to take action in the aftermath. For example, the primary focus of the US government after the dissolution of the Soviet Union was to secure Soviet nuclear weapons distributed across the former socialist republics.

**Timeline of Events**

The timeline below details important events that led up to the dissolution of the Soviet Union in addition to events that happened shortly after.

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| Date | Description of event |
| **March 11, 1985** | Mikhail Gorbachev is nominated as the General Secretary of the Communist Party of the Soviet Union after the death of former General Secretary Konstantin Chernenko. Gorbachev believes that reforming the state into a democracy with a modernized economy is a priority and ratifies the policies of openness, or ‘glasnost’, and restructuring, or ‘perestroika.’ |
| **April 26, 1986** | A nuclear reactor explodes at the Chernobyl Nuclear Power Plant in Ukraine due to faulty reactor design and insufficiently trained personnel. The explosion showers a large portion of Europe with radioactive material and leads to an environmental disaster. The Soviet government violates Gorbachev’s policy of openness, “glasnost” by attempting to cover up the incident on the world stage. As a result, the Soviet populace suffered premature death and internal displacement. |
| **March, 1989** | The costly 9-year Soviet-Afghan war ends as Gorbachev commits to Soviet non-intervention in the affairs of foreign states; all Soviet troops depart Afghanistan. Similarly, peaceful anti-communist revolutions against governments in Eastern European countries (Poland, Hungary, East Germany, Bulgaria, Czechoslovakia and Romania) are met with Gorbachev’s disinterest and cause the Soviet Union to lose these previously hard-earned satellite states. Overall, these decisions accelerate the ending of the cold war.  Elections are held for the new parliament, the Congress of People's Deputies. The CPSU holds only one-third of the seats, making these the most democratic elections in Russia since 1917. This is an important step toward breaking the CPSU's power monopoly. Voters are gravitating toward more radical democrats like Boris Yeltsin, rather than Gorbachev. Many non-Russian republics are also won by the opposition. |
| **January, 1991** | Moscow's hostility toward the growing nationalism in the non-Russian constituent republics, particularly in the Baltics, led to military operations in Lithuania and Latvia. 14 civilians have been killed in Lithuania alone, with hundreds more injured. However, these events have the opposite effect of what was intended. Rather than intimidating nationalist movements, the violence only serves to strengthen them. |
| **June, 1991** | Boris Yeltsin is elected as the first President of the Russian Federation. |
| **August 19, 1991** | A coup d’état against Gorbachev and his ideals of democratization and liberalization takes place in Moscow. Gorbachev is placed under house arrest and replaced by Gennady Yanayev as Acting President of the Soviet Union. |
| **September 1991** | Dissolution of the USSR is final when voted by Congress of People's Deputies. |
| **December 8, 1991** | The Commonwealth of Independent States is created after the leaders of Russia, Ukraine and Belarus sign the Belovezha Accords. |
| **December 25, 1991** | Gorbachev resigns as Soviet president. The United Sates recognizes the independence of liberated Soviet Republics. |
| **December 26, 1991** | The Russian government replaces the Soviet government. |

**Previous Attempts to Resolve the Issue**

**Washington Consensus**

The Washington Consensus, a set of ten economic policy prescriptions considered to constitute the "standard" reform package promoted for crisis-wracked developing countries by institutions based in Washington D.C. such as the International Monetary Fund (IMF), World Bank and United States Department of the Treasury,  was implemented in order to revamp the economy in all post-soviet republics. This set of policies was based upon "shock therapy," which primarily lowers the government's budget deficit by ending government price controls and subsidies while privatizing state-owned industries and increasing the tax rates via a fiscal policy. Ultimately, the Washington Consensus was effective in increasing the GDP of the former Soviet republics and turning around the economic situation in the long term. However, these changes had a devastating effect on the people; there was an influx in excess mortality, decreasing life expectancy, in addition to rising economic inequality, corruption, and poverty. Due to the increased tax rate, necessity goods such as food were no longer affordable for the majority of citizens. Furthermore, the privatizing of state-owned industries led to corruption, as many of these assets were seized by the Russian mafia. These assets included telecommunications, energy networks, and factories. In order to enforce illegitimate laws in the absence of the Russian government, the mafia extorted the public by vowing to provide security. In addition, the disappearance of government payroll services, such as the KGB, police, and army, led to an influx of ex-officers joining the mafia for employment. Using the Washington Consensus was a double-edged sword in terms of solving the issue at hand. While humanitarian needs could be better addressed in the long term with the new economy, the implementation of these policies led to an excess of regrettable humanitarian consequences.

**United States Interference and Nunn-Lugar Act**

Bush administration officials prioritized the prevention of nuclear disasters, ethnic violence reduction, and a smooth transition in political reform. On September 4, 1991, Secretary of State James Baker articulated five basic principles that would guide US policy toward the emerging republics: self-determination consistent with democratic principles, recognition of existing borders, support for democracy and the rule of law, protection of human rights and national minorities' rights, and adherence to international law and obligations. In other words, if the new republics followed these principles, they could expect US cooperation and assistance in transition. As a result, Baker collaborated with Russian leaders to develop economic cooperation formulas and facilitate peaceful political reforms. Subsequently, Russia formed the Commonwealth of Independent States (CIS) with the leaders of Ukraine and Belarus. In order to secure nuclear and biological weapons in the former Soviet Union, the United States and the North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO) 's Nunn-Lugar Act established the Cooperative Threat Reduction Program in November 1991 to fund the dismantling of weapons in the former Soviet Union, in accordance with the START and INF Treaties and other agreements. Overall, these decisions would prevent large-scale humanitarian crises such as nuclear disasters and provide a basis for the economic and political reform of former Soviet Republics. However, there were difficulties in enforcing the five basic principles. Citizens suffered due to a lack of government interference; corruption, ethnic violence, and poverty ensued.

* S.313 - Nunn-Lugar Cooperative Threat Reduction Act of 2005: <https://www.congress.gov/109/bills/s313/BILLS-109s313is.pdf>

**Possible Solutions**

* Citizens of the former Soviet Republics must have access to basic needs such as food, water, and toiletries. In order to prevent the overall life expectancy from further deteriorating, some form of health care service needs to be accessible to the majority of citizens. Health care services can be branches of organizations directly controlled by the UN or funded by states neighboring a republic.
* Since the ownership of industries is no longer controlled by the government, it would not be possible to implement policies that collectively dictate the actions of these industries. However, in order to prevent human rights abuses in these industries, organizations such as the United Nations Human Rights Council (UNHRC) can inspect facilities and owners for the legitimacy of ethics.
* Conflicts that arise due to border disputes can be addressed temporarily by UN peacekeeping forces. In the long term, however, former Soviet republics must come to a consensus on the recognition of existing borders. This could be achieved by considering foreign policies as the Russian leaders have done with the US Secretary of State James Baker.
* Internally displaced persons (IDPs), refugees, and exiles must be provided with temporary shelter until they acquire permanent residency. This could be done through neighboring states providing asylum or assistance by UN organizations such as the United Nations Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (OCHA).

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