

Will there ever be Peace in the Caucasus?

Part 2: More Turbulence on the Horizon

Dr. N. Gass

The recent events in the Caucasus cannot be analyzed in isolation since there are strong interactions between the many peoples in the region. The present article uses fuzzy combinatorics to track the multitude of problems in the Caucasus in order to forecast regional stability.

Introduction

In the present multipolar environment, international organizations may increasingly be engaged in regional crisis management, peacekeeping or peacemaking missions with applications of military force in one form or another. This is evident by the recent UN authorized operations, and the peacekeeping efforts by Russia in South Ossetia, Ingushetia, and Abkhazia.

To respond effectively, the causes of potential conflicts have to be examined. Most conflicts involve both rational and emotional components such as economics, resources, territory, politics, ideology, ethnicity, religion. Clearly, these causes have to be taken into account in peacemaking or peacekeeping missions in order to select the proper means and maximize their impact.

A cybernetic model has been developed to estimate the future conflict potentials of actors. The method is based upon combinatorics paired with fuzzy logic to account for numerical uncertainties of the input database. A mathematical description will appear in the Journal of the British Operational Research Society.

The present conditions of the 20 actors in the region are given in Part 1 of the article (CACOR Proceedings, Series 1 No. 13). The bilateral relations of the actors resulting from political, economic, and ethnic problems etc. are rated on the following scale.

- +F = very large stabilizing relations
- +E = large stabilizing relations
- +D = medium large stabilizing relations
- +C = medium stabilizing relations
- +B = medium small stabilizing relations
- +A = small stabilizing relations
- O = neutral
- A = small destabilizing relations
- B = medium small destabilizing relations
- C = medium destabilizing relations
- D = medium large destabilizing relations
- E = large destabilizing relations
- F = very large destabilizing relations

As a first step in the model, the present bilateral stabilities of the actors are combined to yield a stability index for the entire region which presently is -C.

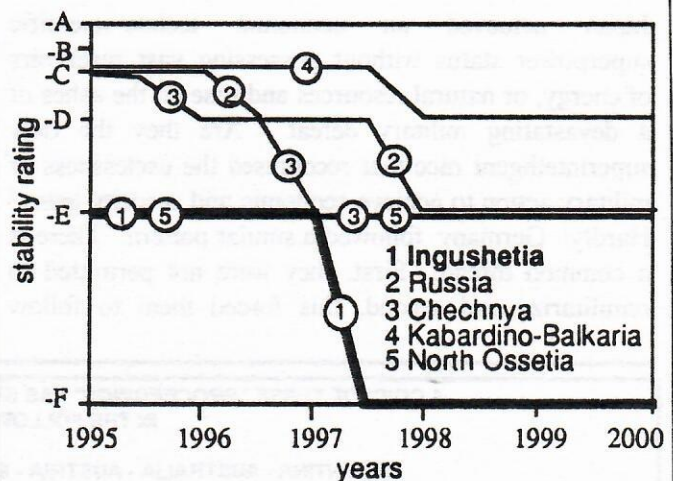
Future Stability of the Caucasus

As described in Part 1 of the article, the disintegration of the Soviet Union created a power vacuum in the Caucasus which nourishes demands by ethnic groups, nationalities and races for greater autonomy and, in several cases, independence. The territorial claims in conjunction with these demands fracture the artificial geopolitical structure forced upon the region by the Soviets. Consequently, numerous conflicts have already arisen which render the region volatile and unstable.

Future stabilities of the 20 actors were investigated and some of the actors contributing most to the regional volatility are discussed below.

Ingushetia has disputes with its neighbors over territories. The largest potential problem is the ill-defined border with Chechnya after separation from this republic. The Ingush claim of the Prigorodnyi region from Chechnya, for example, is challenged by North Ossetia with serious degree of fighting involving militia on all sides. Russia imposed an interim administration for this area but this hurt ethnic pride. Figure 1 indicates that the relationship with Chechnya is getting worse. The reason is that Ingushetia may take advantage of a Chechnya, weakened by the Russian invasion, to try to settle some border problems.

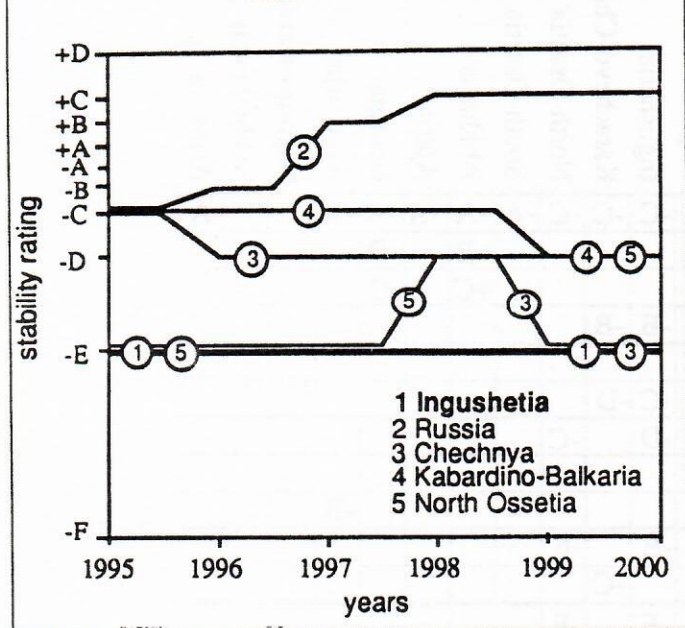
Figure 1: Stability of Ingushetia



From Figure 1, the question arises whether more positive Russian politics towards the region would lead to more stability.

Figure 2 depicts this hypothetical case where Russia is step-wise stabilizing its relations with Ingushetia to a level of +C (fairly stable relations).

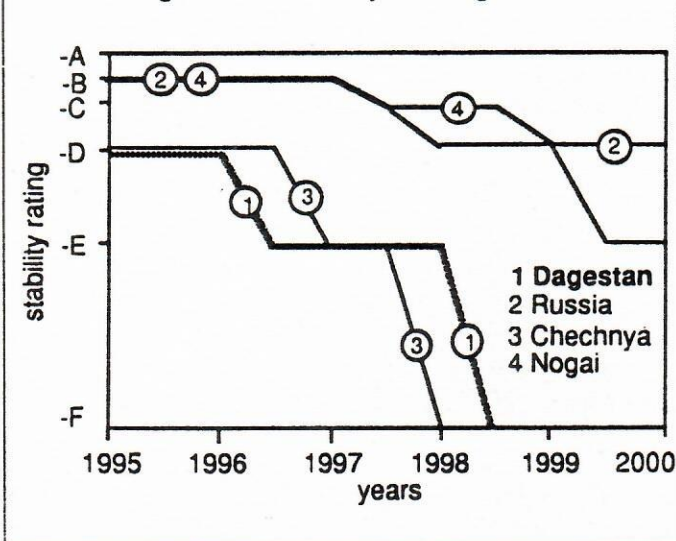
Figure 2: Stability of Ingushetia under Positive Russian Politics



However, the improvements in stability among the other four actors are not as dramatic as could be expected. The reason for this is that Russia can resolve some bilateral problems and also can initiate some economic revival in the region, but cannot eliminate all regional bilateral problems without offending one or the other actor. Thus, the relations between three of the regional actors remain largely unstable.

Dagestan suffers mostly from internal instability. Dagestan encompasses 13 ethnic groups and ethnic violence is commonplace. This has a negative effect on the economy and contributes to the instability. In addition there is a bitter dispute over some border territories with Chechnya. Some ethnic groups want to separate from Dagestan, amongst them the Nogai which were divided in 1957 between Stavropol, Chechnya and Dagestan.

Figure 3: Stability of Dagestan



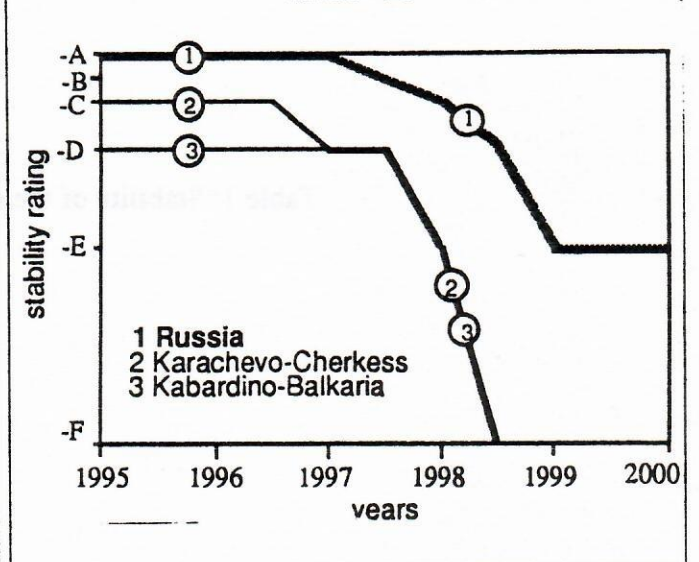
The result of a stability analysis is given in Figure 3 which shows the destabilization of Dagestan brought upon by all these factors. Russia, has a negative influence on the Dagestan since it is unwilling to give economic support and also cannot, for the moment, interfere in Dagestan's internal affairs without upsetting several ethnic groups with contradictory views. For example, Russia cannot resolve the Nogai problem since Stavropol, Chechnya and Dagestan are unwilling to yield Nogai territory. Dagestan will remain critically unstable as long as its internal problems are unresolved.

The creation of the republic of Karachevo-Cherkess in 1957 is a good example of Stalinist policy towards ethnic groups.

There is no linguistic relation between the Karachai and the Cherkess and the former demand an independent state. Complications arise because the Karachai are related to the Balkars of the neighboring republic of Kabardino-Balkaria and seek ethnic unification. This would translate into a split of Kabardino-Balkaria as well.

More complexity is added by the ethnic relations of the Cherkess with the Kabardino. This would seem to be a stabilizing move since the two republics could be regrouped into a Karachai-Balkar republic and a Cherkess-Kabardino republic. However, there is a large Russian population in both states which may suffer by the division. Thus, Russia will certainly be involved in this conflict if it arises. Figure 4 shows the result of a pessimistic scenario in which Russia is not taking any positive steps to prevent Karachevo-Cherkess and Kabardino-Balkaria from reaching the catastrophic level F of instability.

Figure 4: Stability of Karachevo-Cherkess and Kabardino-Balkaria under Negative Russian Influence



In Figure 4, Russia reacts negatively to the regrouping attempts of the two republics. The main reason is that Russia does not want a precedence case for others to follow. Also, Russia fears a possible drive for independence after regrouping which will raise problems with the large Russian ethnic group in these two republics. Thus, Figure 4 shows that Russia's relation towards

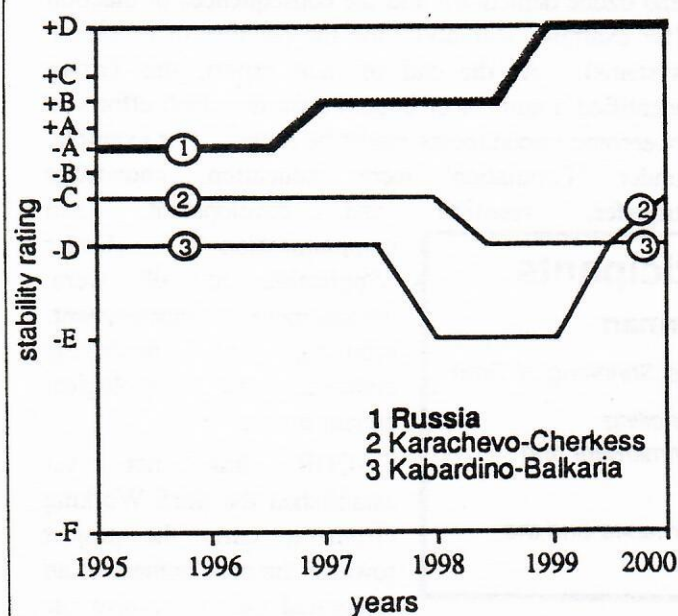
	Russia	Krasnodar	Adygeia	Stavropol	Nogai	Kabardino-Balkaria	Chechnya	Kalmykia	Dagestan	Ingushetia	Karachevo-Cherkess	North-Ossetia	South-Ossetia	Abkhazia	Ajaria	Georgia	Azerbaijan	Nagorno-Karabakh	Nakhichevan	Armenia
Russia	-D	-A	-A	-A	-A	-C	-C	-A	-C	-C	-C	-C	-A	-A	-A	-A	-A			-A
Krasnodar	-B	-E	-E											+B		-B				
Adygeia	-B	-C	-D											+C		-C				
Stavropol	+C			-C	-C	-B			-B	-B	-B									
Nogai	-B			-C	-C		-C		-C											
Kabardino-Balkaria	-C			-B		-D				-C	-D									
Chechnya	-E			-B	-D		-D		-D	-D		-C								
Kalmykia	-C							-E	-A											
Dagestan	-D			-B	-E		-F		-F								-B			
Ingushetia	-E					-D	-E			-E	-E									
Karachevo-Cherkess	-C			-B		-C					-C									
North-Ossetia	-D					-D	-C			-E		-F								
South-Ossetia	-B												-F			-F				
Abkhazia	-B	+B	+C			+B								-F		-F				
Ajaria	-A													+C	-C	-D				
Georgia	+B	-C	-C			-B							-E	-E	-E	-E				-B
Azerbaijan	-C								-C									-D	-F	-F
Nagorno-Karabakh	-C																	-E	-F	
Nakhichevan	-B																	-D	-E	-D
Armenia	-B												-B	-B		-C	-E	-C	-F	

Table 1: Stability of the Caucasus in the Year 2000

Karachevo-Cherkess and Kabardino-Balkaria are largely destabilizing (threat of military actions or introduction of pro-Russian administrations).

The introduction of a Russian administration into these two republics (similar to those in the disputed regions of Ingushetia and North Ossetia) would not resolve the instabilities but enforces the status quo with the result of guerrilla warfare. Ideally, the Stalinist division can be reversed for the promise to stay within the Russian Federation. This could appease the Russian ethnic group. Figure 5 shows this positive scenario.

Figure 5: Stability of Karachevo-Cherkess and Kabardino-Balkaria under Positive Russian Influence



In this scenario, Kabardino-Balkaria still is considerably unstable because of the problems with Ingushetia. Perhaps, in the wake of regrouping the two republics, Kabardino-Balkaria could relinquish the hot disputed claim on the town of Malgobek which now lies within Ingushetia.

Finally, the case of Georgia is studied which lies outside the Russian Federation. South Ossetia and Abkhazia demand independence from Georgia while Ajaria may do so in future. Figure 6 depicts a possible scenario.

Because of the peacekeeping involving Russia, the situation in South Ossetia remains more or less under control (except for terrorist and guerrilla activities) but there is no improvement since Georgia vowed never to allow separation. The situation in Abkhazia seems to destabilize further. The reason is that the Abkhaz Muslims receive support from the Adygei but also from the Cherkess and Kabardinos perhaps to advance their own demands for a regrouping of the two republics described above.

Russia is forced to large peace-keeping operations which has a stabilizing effect from -F to -E without resolving the problem.

Ajaria, in the mean time, takes advantage of a weak and pre-occupied Georgia to advance its drive for independence. The involvement of Turkey as an ally is unclear but could agitate Russia. Figure 6 suggests that there is no easy solution to Georgia's problems if Georgia wants to keep the three areas.

Figure 6: Stability of Georgia



After investigating the stability trend of the rest of the actors, Table 1 shows the status of the bilateral stabilities of the actors in the year 2000. The overall regional stability index drops from a present -C to -E.

Conclusions

As an overall conclusion, the Caucasus is destabilizing. The multi-lateral problems, pitting small ethnic groups against each other, are intractable and often contradictory claims (mostly on territories) are made by different actors. It has been found that Russia cannot do much for one actor and not to offend another at the same time. Russia would resolve nothing if it enforces the present status quo by military force. Terrorism and guerrilla warfare would be the norm for many years to come.

Stability of the region can only improve if, in a first step, the borders of the regional actors are rearranged along ethnic lines or accepted historical divisions. In a second step, more autonomy and self-government must be given to the actors, perhaps forming a North-Caucasian Confederation within the Russian Federation. This could translate in economic prosperity for both since Russia needs the resources of the Caucasus while a Causcasian Federation would have more economic bargaining power. A more far-reaching conflict resolution for this region is proposed by F. Németh (see Global Conflict Resolution, CACOR proceedings, Series 1, No. 14, 1995). Presently, however, there are no signs that the regional stability will improve over the next 5 years.