

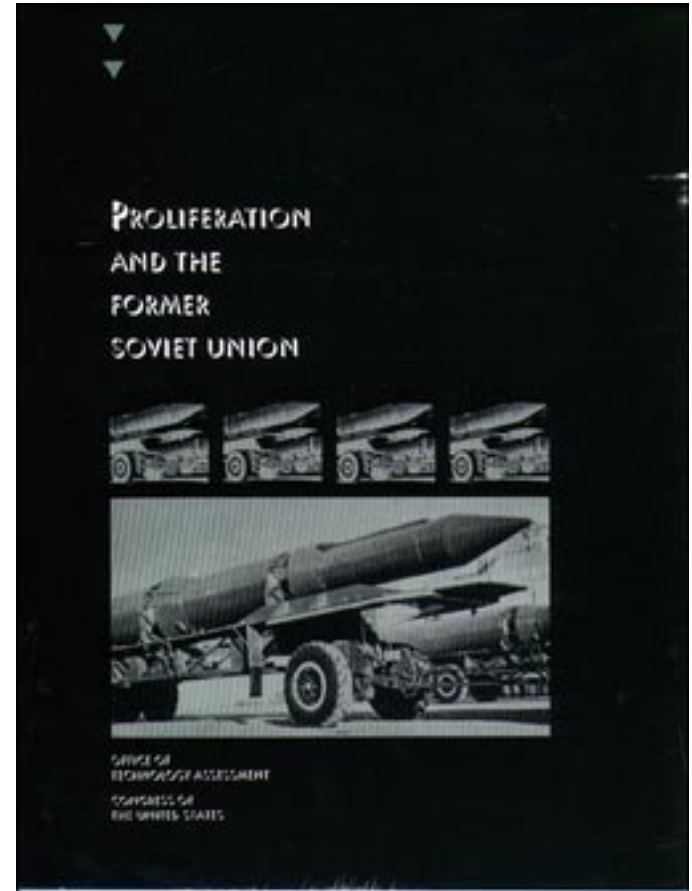
Proliferation and the Former Soviet Union

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Foreword

The end of the Cold War dramatically lowered the direct threat that the Soviet Union's nuclear and other weapons of mass destruction posed to the United States. As the Soviet Union has collapsed, however, fears have arisen concerning the spread of nuclear materials, technology, expertise, or actual weapons to other countries or to subnational groups.

This report, the fifth publication from OTA'S assessment on the proliferation of weapons of mass destruction, examines the whole range of consequences for proliferation of the Soviet Union's breakup. ¹One effect may be the erosion of international nonproliferation treaty regimes. In spite of the continuing desire of most of the newly independent states of the former Soviet Union to support nonproliferation goals, these states face severe internal challenges: social and economic disruption are rampant and the degree of central governmental control over activities nominally within their jurisdictions is often questionable. Of particular concern are economic hardship and low morale among many individuals with access to vital weapon information or sensitive facilities—a situation aggravated by as-yet inadequate national systems to account for and secure nuclear materials, to control exports, and to police borders.

Given the severity of the problems facing Russia and the other newly independent states, the United States and other Western powers may have only marginal ability to influence the overall course of events there. This study describes how U.S. assistance may reduce specific proliferation risks in the former Soviet Union. The consequences of failure to stem these risks provide a strong incentive for the United States to help the newly independent states address them.



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Director

¹Previous publications include: *Proliferation of Weapons of Mass Destruction: Assessing the Risks*, OTA-ISC-559 (Washington, DC: U.S. Government Printing Office, August 1993), *The Chemical Weapons Convention: Effects on the U.S. Chemical Industry*, OTA-BP-ISC-106 (Washington, DC: U.S. Government Printing Office, August 1993), *Technologies Underlying Weapons of Mass Destruction*, OTA-BP-ISC-115 (Washington, DC: U.S. Government Printing Office, December 1993), and *Export Controls and Nonproliferation Policy*, OTA-ISC-596 (Washington, DC: U.S. Government Printing Office, May 1994).

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Note: OTA appreciates and is grateful for the valuable assistance and thoughtful critiques provided by the advisory panel members. The panel does not, however, necessarily approve, disapprove, or endorse this report. OTA assumes full responsibility for the report and the accuracy of its contents.

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