

Identities, Ideologies & Institutions

2001-2011

A strip of land situated between the Mediterranean and the Black Seas, the post-Soviet Caucasus embarked on a painful identity quest at the turn of the third millennium. This – still ongoing – quest involves several daunting choices: between Moscow, Washington and Brussels, between oil and democratic values, and between feudal realities and revolutionary ideals. Throughout the last decade, the Yerevan-based Caucasus Institute has been conducting in-depth research of the conflicting and often subtle trends in the regions' politics. This volume contains a selection of research papers published by the Caucasus Institute since 2001 in Armenian, Russian and English, which best represent the challenges faced by this varied region at this crucial stage of development.

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A Decade of Insight
into the Caucasus

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INTO THE CAUCASUS
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PREFACE

The Caucasus Institute will be ten years old in spring 2012. Founded in 2002 in Yerevan as the Caucasus Media Institute, and renamed to simply the “Caucasus Institute” in 2008 to reflect its broadening scope of activity, it has invested a decade of effort into understanding the changing role of politics, society and media in the Caucasus. Among the many volumes and papers we have published over the years, a special place is held by our Caucasus Yearbooks – collections of research papers based on the Annual Caucasus Conference that we have held in Yerevan, Armenia every spring since 2004.

Although our contributors come from all over the former Soviet Union and throughout the West, we mostly publish in Russian in order to reach the chiefly post-Soviet community of experts on the Caucasus. For the benefit of English-speaking readers, we have decided to compile a collection of what we consider to be some of the most insightful and original research papers that we have previously published in various languages; some of them were written by our in-house scholars and some commissioned from local and international experts.

Many of the papers in this volume were written a few years back, and the fact that most of the assessments they contain still apply, and many of the predictions have come true, sometimes with a vengeance, is full testimony to their scholarly and practical value.

Apart from their quality, the papers have been selected in a way to offer readers who have only some basic knowledge about the Caucasus a holistic representation of the region’s challenges and trends. For experts on the Caucasus, this volume offers original visions, thoroughly collected and systematized facts, and new paradigms that can be used for analyzing this and other developing parts of the world.

We are most grateful to the authors of the papers included in this volume. We would also like to thank the book’s editors, translators and designers, and all of our staff who organized the translation and production. Special thanks go to Richard Giragosian for language editing and advice that helped us make the volume more reader-friendly.

We are extremely grateful to the Think Tank Fund of Open Society Foundations and the South Caucasus Bureau of the Heinrich Böll Foundation for the financial support that made this publication possible.

Alexander Iskandaryan
Director, Caucasus Institute
Yerevan, December 2011

THE SOUTH CAUCASUS: BECOMING A REGION OR TRYING NOT TO BE ONE?¹

By Alexander Iskandaryan²

The South Caucasus is a relatively small region situated between the Black and Caspian Seas, bordering on Russia, Turkey and Iran. The area of the South Caucasus is smaller than that of the United Kingdom, and its population is roughly that of the Netherlands. An isthmus connecting Russia to the Near East and Central Asia to Europe, it has strategic significance for the development of a large and important region lying on the intersection between South-Eastern Europe and the larger Near East.

To understand current developments in the South Caucasus, it is useful to look at the genesis of this region. The notion of the South Caucasus as a cohesive region with more or less clearly defined borders originated fairly recently. Up until the 19th century, parts of the region belonged to the Persian and Ottoman Empires, or to feudalized principalities and kingdoms located between the two empires. People living in the region did not realize they had anything in common, and there was no such thing as a “Caucasian identity.” Numerous religious, local and ethno-linguistic identities coexisted and overlapped. A person could identify as a Persian-speaking resident of Shemakha belonging to the Armenian Apostolic Church, or a Georgian-speaking Sunni Muslim resident in Adjara and subject of the Turkish Sultan. Even the educated people of the time had no idea about living in a common region.

In the early 19th century, the region was annexed by the Russian Empire as a result of several waves of Russian-Turkish and Russian-Persian wars. A name was needed to refer to the new lands in administrative papers. The new name, “Transcaucasia” or “Transcaucasus,” was a very natural coinage for parts of the Russian Empire lying on the other side of the Caucasus Mountain Range. After a while, the lands known as the Transcaucasus began to be perceived as a unified region by internal as well as external actors. By its very name, the new region had a natural boundary on the north: the Caucasus Mountains. In the beginning, it did not have a southern boundary. It was the border of the Russian Empire, and later that of the Soviet Union, that be-

1 This paper was originally published by the Caucasus Institute in 2008 as: Iskandaryan, Alexander. “South Caucasus between Isolation and Integration: Genesis and Prospects.” *The Caucasus Neighborhood: Turkey and the South Caucasus*. – Yerevan: CI, 2008. – Pp.7-13.

2 The author has been the director of the Yerevan-based Caucasus Institute since 2005.

came the southern border of the Transcaucasus. The border changed several times as a result of wars and political developments. Thus, from the 1870s until the 1920s, the Transcaucasus included three regions – Kars, Ardahan and Surmalu – that were at that time in the Russian Empire but have since been parts of Turkey. However, most of the territory of the Transcaucasus – the part of the Russian Empire south of the Caucasus Mountains – gradually merged into a whole by means of economy, transportation routes and cultural policies, and became a unified region.

A common education system, common legislation, increasingly widespread use of Russian as the regional *lingua franca* (interethnic communication language), a road network connecting the region to the centre of the Empire, the state borders on the south, and an emerging common market – all this made people living in the Transcaucasus gradually lose their connections to former parent countries such as Persia or Turkey, and identify themselves with the new region. Their obvious cultural and geographical dissimilarity to Central Russia led to the emergence of a super-ethnic cross-cultural identity of “Caucasians” who began to see themselves as a separate group within the Empire. After the USSR was established in the 1920s, this identity became even stronger because the southern borders were locked, and neighbouring Turkey became as inaccessible for people in the Transcaucasus as geographically distant countries like, say, Sweden, for example. The cultural world of the Soviets was contained within the Soviet borders, so that the cultural ties between, for example, the ethnic Georgians in Georgia and the Laz people in Turkey, or between ethnic Azerbaijanis living in Azerbaijan and Iran, were severed. Meanwhile, the difference between Caucasians and other groups living in the Soviet Union was becoming more significant.

In 1922, a short-lived attempt was made to establish proto-statehood in the region, called the Transcaucasian Federation. By the mid-1930s, the initiative was abolished in full accordance with the modernization paradigm of Soviet nation-building. The federation was dispersed, and the Soviet Republics of Armenia, Azerbaijan and Georgia were directly included in the Soviet Union. Some artefacts remained, though, including the Transcaucasian Economic Region and a variety of festivals, culture days and student exchange programs that survived until the disintegration of the USSR. The Transcaucasus had, thus, become a region inside the USSR, both in external and domestic perceptions. Breakup into regions was happening all over the USSR: Central Asia and the Baltic also became regions of their own, in many ways contrary to history and cultural heterogeneity. However, the differences or even contradictions that existed between Lithuania and Estonia, Tajikistan and Kyrgyzstan, Armenia and Azerbaijan, did not prevent the emergence

of a common identity, based on a number of markers by means of which the “Caucasians,” “Central Asians,” and “Baltic people” distinguished themselves from other people living in the USSR.

According to Benedict Anderson’s theory, imagined communities actually exist in public perception. By the mid-twentieth century, the Transcaucasus certainly began to exist as a meta-ethnic multicultural region; it was no longer just a geographical name. People identified with it; it had clearly defined borders and internal economic links (nowadays often overstated).

The administrative borders within the USSR were drawn using a *Matryoshka*, or nesting-doll, approach. There were three Soviet Socialist republics in the South Caucasus: Armenia, Azerbaijan and Georgia; each included autonomous formations of various levels (autonomous republics and autonomous districts). Some ethnic groups became the “title nations” of two administrative units at various levels in the taxonomy (for example, Armenians in the Armenian Soviet Socialist Republic and in the Autonomous District of Nagorno-Karabakh), and others, of only one (like the Abkhazians in the Autonomous Republic of Abkhazia). Some autonomous units were not based on an ethnic principle: for example, Adjara was a Georgian-populated autonomous republic inside Georgia, and Nakhichevan, an Azerbaijani-populated autonomous republic inside Azerbaijan. At the same time, there was no autonomy in many cases where numerous representatives of an ethnic group lived compactly in an administrative unit named after another ethnic group (e.g. hundreds of thousands of Azerbaijanis living in Soviet Georgia, about two hundred thousand Lezgins living in Soviet Azerbaijan etc.).

In Soviet legislation and practices, various levels of autonomy corresponded to various levels in the cultural and administrative hierarchy. For example, a Soviet Socialist republic would have its own Academy of Science, its Central Committee of the Communist Party, and an opera and ballet theatre. Autonomous republics had none of the above, but they could manage to get permission to open a university (Abkhazia did), something autonomous districts could not do, so that there were no universities in Nagorno-Karabakh or Southern Ossetia. Nevertheless, all autonomous formations were perceived as ethno-national structures, in a way, as embryos of national statehood. In the capitals of Soviet republics, autonomous republics and autonomous districts alike, elites were forming. Semi-undercover national discourses were born, mythologies emerged, and potential claims to the Centre and to neighbours gradually accumulated. This topic deserves focused research; it is worth mentioning here that in the entire multiethnic Transcaucasus with its numerous interethnic tensions, the only conflicts that lead to armed hostilities after the disin-

tegration of the USSR were the ones that existed in the “official” autonomous formations (Abkhazia, Nagorno-Karabakh and Southern Ossetia). Tensions in other areas densely populated by ethnic minorities did not lead to wars, although the size of the minority groups in some of them were even larger than in the official autonomous formations. For example, Georgia had more Armenians than Abkhazians and Ossetians put together, but armed controversies only happened in Abkhazia and Southern Ossetia. It is probably the formalization of ethnicity and the institutionalized emergence and concentration of elites that pave the way to politicization of ethnicity after external constraints are removed.

In any case, two trends were manifest during the Soviet era; the first was the creation of a meta-ethnic Transcaucasus region; the second, the emergence of a proto-nationalist paradigm amongst the “title nations” of ethno-national formations inside the region. Both trends were signs of modernization; the first, because a multicultural meta-ethnic community was formed whose basis was cultural identity not imperialism. People were not brought together as subjects of a Sultan or Shah but as a cultural entity differing from other subjects of the Tsar (or later of the Communist Party). The second trend consisted, in practice, in the emergence of diverse national identities within the borders of the USSR. It was quite similar to processes that unfolded in Eastern Europe in the 19th and early 20th centuries, when ethnic movements and ethnic identities born inside the Austro-Hungarian Empire became the foundations for new nation-states formed after the disintegration of the Habsburg Monarchy in 1918.

Ironically, the two trends coexisted and did not necessarily contradict one another. For example, in modern Europe, Latvian nationalism does not contradict the Latvians’ European identity and often serves to enhance it; likewise, Georgian nationalism coexisted with and was even fostered by the Caucasian identity of the Georgians back in the 1970s.

However, the formation of ethnopolitical identities follows a logic of its own, described in the work of Miroslav Hroch. The result was inevitable: with the weakening of communist ideology and of the legitimacy based on this ideology, new opportunities opened for free expression of opinions and claims. At this point, political activity began and ethnic issues soon became politicized. There was ample ground for politicizing ethnicity. Sufficient numbers of educated activists were prepared to produce ideologies, become political actors and organize various groups and parties, thus increasing opportunities for public participation and becoming the leaders of newly emerging movements. Marxist, or Soviet, ideological legitimacy was by that time too weak to glue the Empire together any more. The only way the Empire

could have been preserved was using its repressive machinery, also weakened by that time. Liberalization during Perestroika increased opportunities for free expression, thus further loosening the Empire and launching the process that led to disintegration of the USSR.

In many parts of the Soviet Empire, the disintegration took the shape of revolutions, requiring large-scale mobilization of the population. Mobilization required popularly comprehensible ideologies that would generate the required amounts of social energy. In all parts of the USSR, there were short-lived attempts in 1986-1987 to mobilize the masses based on social, democratic or even environmental ideologies. However, national or even nationalist ideologies began to emerge very soon, first coexisting with the rest and then engulfing them all. What is more, a nationalist component was present from the start even in environmental or social ideas, phrased as "THEY are destroying our environment and THEY are taking away our resources to the Center". Nationalism proved to be the most basic, comprehensible and universal basis for solidarity; the emerging political elites were well aware of this fact.

It was quite natural that ethnic nationalism was chosen above civil nationalism. The way to this was paved in the long history of pre-Soviet and Soviet modernization. People did not solidarize as potential citizens of independent Georgia or Armenia etc. but as ethnic Georgians, Armenians, Ossetians etc. Territories were perceived as ethnic domains, even in cases like Abkhazia, where the title ethnic group amounted to less than 20% of the population. What mattered that Abkhazia was for the Abkhazians and Armenia for the Armenians as ethnic groups. This approach was distilled in a widely quoted saying by Georgia's first President, former Soviet dissident Zviad Gamsakhurdia, "Georgia for the Georgians"; it was also Gamsakhurdia who invented the concept of Georgia's ethnic "hosts" and "guests." No kind of meta-cultural unity proved stronger than ethnic solidarity. Unlike the time when the Russian Empire was disintegrating in the early 20th century, this time no efforts were made to build a Transcaucasian state. Then again, the 1918 project of a Transcaucasian Seim (parliament) just survived a few months. In the 1990s' turmoil of nation building, Caucasian solidarity was marginalized; the mainstream ideology was the establishment of nation-states based on a European model dating back the Wilson era, and the transition from planned economies to free markets was also understood as a foundation for national prosperity.

Another reason why Caucasian solidarity was marginalized was that the chosen course of development inevitably led to ethnopolitical conflicts. Politicized ethnicity in a region where ethnic groups lived dispersedly and administrative divisions

were based on a nesting-doll principle could not lead to a situation where some territorial projects overlapped or competed against each other. For example, both Armenians and Azerbaijanis could claim the Armenian autonomy inside Azerbaijan as their own, and both Ossetians and Georgians laid claims to Southern Ossetia. Although simplistic explanations are often published in the press, the ethnic conflicts in the Caucasus were not isolated phenomena or random occurrences or evil doings of individuals. They were part of the region's nationbuilding process, similar to conflicts over Alsace and Lorraine in European history. Some of the conflicts were not purely secessionist but involved irredentist movements, similar to the Italian Unification, *Risorgimento*, and to the syndrome manifest during the disintegration of some parts of Austria-Hungary, when Transylvania did not become independent but joined Romania, and Polish Silesia joined Poland.

What is striking about the disintegration of the USSR is not that the building of ethno-national identities led to conflicts, but that the conflicts were so few. Controversies between various subjects of politics thus made ideas of a unified Transcaucasus increasingly unpopular. Perhaps the only successful project in this sphere was the change of the region's name from Transcaucasus to South Caucasus. The new name expressed conscious rejection of a Russian perspective and, thus, served to distance the South Caucasus from Russia. However, the name change was purely mechanical: no attempts were made to reinvent the region, and it continued to exist by inertia.

This inertia of unity continues to exist in various dimensions. The first dimension is cultural unity: common cultural codes, Russian as the language of interethnic communication, elements of Soviet culture (including both "high culture" and lifestyle), nostalgia and other consequences of having lived within the unified Soviet space that are better preserved in the older age groups but visibly diminishing in younger generations. The second is the pressing need for economic cooperation; based on geography, this need is often fulfilled by the construction of transit gas pipelines and the like. However, similar economies have little to offer each other; in reality, all countries aspire to integration with Europe and not with one another. The third dimension consists in the countries' profound lack of confidence in their own ability to build successful states and economies, which leads to the idea of combining efforts. All aspects of unity are further strengthened by external demand – this time coming from Brussels instead of St Petersburg or Moscow – to create a unified region that would be easier to integrate into Europe.

The region's understandably sincere urge to become part of Europe is thus strengthening all existing tendencies for the creation of a unified South Caucasus

region. However, it could happen that the very same reasons – wanting to join Europe, lack of self-confidence – may lead to a quest for a new regional identity (for example, as part of the Black Sea region) if there is hope that in this way the desired results could be achieved more quickly. The main obstacles to integration trends are still the conflicts. In the current political reality, it is impossible to imagine any sort of realistic integration project between Armenia and Azerbaijan, Abkhazia and Georgia etc. Inertia peters out, and nostalgia disappears together with the generations that felt it. Ethnically mixed populations disappear as a result of ethnically motivated migrations; as a result, people no longer speak the languages of other ethnic groups, and so on.

There are thus two trends manifest in the region: the trend for integration and another for mutual isolation. Theoretically, if it resolves its conflicts, the South Caucasus can remain a unified region. However, it can stop being a region, or fail to become one, and turn into several neighbouring countries. All of these countries can form part of a wider region, or several regions, for example, Azerbaijan can be part of the Caspian region, Georgia of the Black Sea region, and Armenia, of the Mediterranean region. One thing is clear: it is impossible to predict the fate of the South Caucasus solely on the basis of the inertia of the Russian Empire or of the Soviet Union. The inertia serves to mitigate the disintegration of the region, but it is not a foundation upon which one can build. The emergence of new national identities can go hand in hand with the emergence of a regional identity, but it cannot grow out of history alone. The region must become a project for the future.

In order for this to happen, the region needs to be understood as a current reality and not as historical legacy. It should not be “reconstructed” or “recreated”; for one, this is not feasible. The project of building the region needs to be designed and linked to a particular terrain. Such a project might succeed. It might also fail. Then we shall know for sure which of the trends wins: the one for integration, the one for isolation, or both.

BETWEEN THE SOUTH CAUCASUS AND THE BLACK SEA, OR BETWEEN MOSCOW, WASHINGTON AND BRUSSELS? GEORGIA'S CHOICES¹

By Ivlian Khaindrava²

I was puzzled by the title of this paper at the time it was suggested by the conference organizers. It sounded as if Georgia was located at the interface between the two regions, facing a choice: which one of them to prefer, or in which one of the two the Masters of Destiny will grant Georgia a place in geopolitics. It would be more logical to think that Georgia, being naturally a South Caucasus country, is just as naturally a Black Sea country. Peter Semneby, the Special Representative of the European Union (EU) in the South Caucasus, shared this vision with regard to Georgia, as well as with regard to Armenia and Azerbaijan; he qualified the EU as “a Black Sea power” and a part of the extended Black Sea coastal area, the region embracing the three states of South Caucasus.³

The influential Caucasus-Caspian Commission produced a report intended to stimulate the generation of common policies for the EU and other European institutions with regard to the future region. It suggested yet another global, or rather, globalistic, vision: Armenia, Azerbaijan and Georgia, located between the Black Sea and the Caspian, and forming what is commonly designated as the South Caucasus, constitute the core of the Caucasus-Caspian area enclosed in a “shell” (Russia, Turkey, Iran, Kazakhstan, Turkmenistan, Ukraine and the EU) which is in turn enclosed within the outside world, including the countries of the Near East, the United States, China and India.⁴

By no means questioning the appropriateness of this idea, and deliberately trespassing beyond the framework that has been set for me, I propose to regard herein

1 This paper was published by the CI as: Khaindrava, Ivlian. “Georgia: between the South Caucasus and the Black Sea (in the midst of Moscow, Washington and Brussels).” *Caucasus Neighborhood: Turkey and the South Caucasus*. Ed. Alexander Iskandaryan. – Yerevan: Caucasus Institute, 2008. – Pp.48-62.

2 The author directs South Caucasus programs at the Tbilisi-based Center for Development and Cooperation – Center for Pluralism.

3 Semneby, Peter. “European Union – South Caucasus: Prospects for Partnership and Some Challenges.” *South Caucasus – 2006. Main Tendencies, Threats and Risks*. Ed. Gayane Novikova. – Yerevan: Spectrum Center for Strategic Analysis, 2007. – Pp. 16-22.

4 www.caucascom.org.

the South Caucasus as a sub-region of the Extended Black Sea Coastal Area, with both these projects treated as mutually complementary. With respect to Georgia, however, those projects are not just complementary, but in a way, alternative, as will be shown below.

THE BLACK SEA AND THE SACRED CAUCASUS

The “South Caucasus Region” remains a rather volatile concept, a fact that has been frequently underscored.⁵ This sceptical, or rather, realistic, view is shared by many in Georgia, e.g., by Irakli Menagarishvili, the former minister for foreign affairs, who said “the region of the South Caucasus can actually be viewed as a geographic entity, rather than an economically or politically integrated body.”⁶

Indeed, the period following the collapse of the Soviet Union has proven to be a time of mutual estrangement for the three largest (and most of the smaller) nations of the South Caucasus, the time of searching for new identities in the new reality, as well as for new partners and allies, the time of laying the cornerstones of new statehoods, formulating and implementing national projects. And although the Georgians, the Armenians and the Azerbaijanis have retained certain similarities of their cultures and lifestyles, with a visible Soviet legacy still remaining in things big and small, with the old and medium generations still conversant in the Russian language, the divergences between the three nations are still largely underestimated.

Indeed, these nations:

- have differing historical experience, attaching to their own history a differing, mostly overestimated, significance;
- identify themselves with parts of diverse geographic and sub-cultural communities: some Armenians perceive themselves as related to the Greater Middle East, Azerbaijanis overwhelmingly gravitate to the Turkic world, while Georgians, although having no relational worlds outside the Caucasus, attribute themselves to the Europeans;
- each country has a dominant religion: the Gregorian Church in Armenia, the Orthodox Church in Georgia, Shiite and Sunni Islam in Azerbaijan;

5 Menagarishvili, Irakli. “Three Main Problems of the Region: the View from Georgia.” *South Caucasus – 2006. Main tendencies, threats and risks*. Ed. Gayane Novikova. – Yerevan: Spectrum Center for Strategic Analysis, 2007. – P.52.

6 *Ibid.*

- Armenia can actually be viewed as a mono-ethnic and mono-religious country, Georgia is quite heterogeneous in terms of ethnicities and religions, while Azerbaijan sits somewhere between the two.

No wonder that foundations that differ that much give rise to differing identities, leaving no room for a common South Caucasus identity. As to the dubious label of “persons of Caucasian nationality,” put into circulation in Russia, it conveys no more common identity than the phrase “persons of Slavic nationality.” With due respect for the linguistic community, I will venture the following parallel: the Georgians, Armenians and Azerbaijanis are only as similar as their languages are, which share some common words but pertain to diverse linguistic groups (Kartvelian, Indo-European and Turkic, respectively) and are completely different and mutually incomprehensible.

Naturally, the carriers of differing identities and differing or even conflicting national projects have divergent temporal and spatial orientations (let us call them “foreign policies”):

- In its quest for national security guarantees, Armenia has established strategic partnerships with Russia and Iran, and is a member of the Collective Security Treaty Organization (CSTO), although cooperating with EU and NATO within the framework of the Partnership for Peace (PfP) and the European Neighbourhood Policy (ENP), respectively. Armenia calls this its “Complementarity Policy.” Georgia and Azerbaijan have left the CSTO, the former seeking to join the NATO as soon as possible and not concealing its European ambitions, the latter remaining cautious towards both NATO and EU, and maintaining nothing more than stable relations with Russia.
- The Russian military presence is retained in all three countries of the South Caucasus, but to different extents and in different formats. The Russian military base and the presence of Russian border guards in Armenia are fully legitimate. Azerbaijan and Russia have agreed on using the Gabala Radar Station. From Georgia, the Russian bases have been almost withdrawn (“almost” because the one in Gudauta is still there). In Abkhazia and South Ossetia, Russian peacekeepers remain although Georgia refuses to regard them as such.
- Each of the South Caucasus states has had various complications with one of the region’s immediate neighbours: Armenia has no diplomatic relations with Turkey, relations between Georgia and the Russian Federation have gone to

pieces,⁷ while Azerbaijan-Iran relations fluctuate and for various reasons have not attained the level of trusting neighbourly relations.

Finally, relating to each other and to the rest of the world as independent states is a new experience for the young and relatively inexperienced political elites of these South Caucasus countries. This brings to mind the words of an Armenian politician who said that Armenia had only one border and the rest were front lines.

Consequently, prospects for trilateral cooperation or integration in the South Caucasus, with its stalemate in Nagorno-Karabakh, are not discernible, at any rate until a way out is found from that stalemate. Therefore, it is now difficult to attach any meaning, other than geographic, to the concept of the “South Caucasus Region.” The above-quoted Peter Semneby once called the South Caucasus a “broken region” which could only be put back together in a wider format.⁸

Despite its Black Sea-Western drive, Georgia is naturally developing relations with its closest neighbours in the South Caucasus. However, it is constrained to build them with Armenia on a de-facto bilateral basis. This asymmetrical situation (Georgia has more common interests with Azerbaijan), has emerged not through free choice or determined action, but by virtue of the objective reality.

It can be argued that “the Black Sea Region” or “the Extended Black Sea Coastal Area” is a concept at least as volatile as “the South Caucasus Region.” This is true to some extent, since various multilateral formats of Black Sea cooperation, whether economic, political, or military, cannot be regarded as altogether efficient. At the same time, three countries of the Black Sea coastal area - Turkey, Bulgaria and Romania – are NATO members, the latter two also EU members, and all maintain dynamic and good-neighbourly relations with Georgia. Mustafa Aydin, a Turkish researcher, has noted that with the EU accession of Bulgaria and Romania, the EU has become a regional player both in the Black Sea region and in the South Caucasus.⁹ As to the Black Sea basin, in the last few years it has started to enjoy increasing attention by the EU and US, having gained special importance due to the transit of energy carriers, and to other things as well. As stated by Judy Garber, Deputy Assistant Secretary of State, the US and EU have agreed to conduct coordinated policies in the region with regard to problems such as Iran, non-proliferation of weap-

7 The actual Georgia-Russia war happened after this article was written.

8 Semneby, Peter. “The Role of the EU in the Resolution of Conflicts in the South Caucasus.” *Turkish Policy Quarterly* Vol.5 No.2, summer 2006. – P.20. (www.turkishpolicy.com).

9 Aydin, Mustafa. “Europe’s New Region: The Black Sea in the Wider European Neighborhood.” *Journal of Southeast European and Black Sea Studies*. London, 2005, no 5. – P.257.

ons of mass destruction, counterterrorism and energy security.¹⁰ Put together, that amounts to an overall security policy. US Senator Richard Lugar was even more specific when he called for supporting Azerbaijan, Georgia and Turkey in their joint transportation and energy projects, as well as for supporting the Nabucco gas pipeline as an alternative to the South Stream pipeline.¹¹ Although officially, Washington has a markedly reserved position with regard to the Kars-Tbilisi-Baku railway line, the project is underway. The railway line is to start operating in 2010, and is particularly attractive in the light of plans to build a tunnel under the Bosphorus. There are some more common issues in the domains of tourism, environmental protection, etc. Considering the pro-Western policies of Georgia and Ukraine, the Black Sea has the prospect of becoming an inner European sea, like the Baltic; some refer to these developments as to the Black Sea transforming into a “NATO Lake.” Last but not least, Abkhazia is also located on the shores of the Black Sea, and under certain circumstances its path to Europe may coincide with that of the Georgians.

Clearly, if we regard the US and the EU as stakeholders in developments on the Black Sea coast, the factor of Russia should never be underestimated. Itself a Black Sea power, Russia has the most serious interests in the region, pursues them in every way, and never misses the slightest opportunity to extend the spheres and vary the instruments of its influence within the region, and also beyond the region as wide and deep as it can go. Here, too, the operational factors are communications and energy projects and issues. There is also the concept of border security inherent to the Russian mentality, as well as the search for a permanent abode for the Russian Black Sea navy and submarine force. With the approaching Winter Olympics in Sochi, tourism is also rising on the agenda. In light of the looming expiration in 2017 of the Russian-Ukrainian agreement on the Russian naval base in Sevastopol and the pro-NATO aspirations of official Kiev and Tbilisi, on one hand, and Russia’s ever-growing regional and Eurasian ambitions on the other hand, Moscow is keeping up tension around Crimea and the Straits of Kerch, suppressing all attempts at resolving the conflict in Abkhazia within the framework of Georgia’s territorial integrity, and acting most inventively in hindering the joint multilateral military exercises in the Black Sea under the auspices of NATO.¹² In a word, the Black Sea and the

10 Judy Garber: Keynote Address at the Woodrow Wilson Center Conference: “Trans-Atlantic Perspectives on the Wider Black Sea Region.” Washington, DC June 10, 2008 (<http://www.state.gov/p/eur/rls/rm/105827.htm>).

11 Senator Lugar’s speech to the U.S.–Ukraine Energy Dialogue Series, April 15, 2008 (<http://lugar.senate.gov/energy/press/speech/ukraine.cfm>).

12 See, e.g.: Blank, Stephen. “Russia as a Black Sea Power.” *Turkish Policy Quarterly*, Vol.6, No.2,

Black Sea coastal countries (Georgia, Ukraine, plus Moldova which is often viewed as such) that have not yet integrated into European structures today constitute an arena of direct competition between Russia and the West.

The time has come to comment upon the already mentioned alternative character of the “Black Sea” and the “South Caucasus” projects. The “Black Sea trends” are voiced more distinctly in Georgian politics than South Caucasus trends, for very clear reasons: on the one hand, the Black Sea is perceived as the road to the West, while the Euro- and the Euro-Atlantic vector of Georgian policy has overall priority; in fact, in Georgia this priority is a rare occasion of a solid public and political consensus on a specific issue. On the other hand, there are concerns that the South Caucasus may become a closed or semi-closed region, with Russia playing the dominant role, and the three regional countries bound to one another for no special reason. The cause for these concerns has been provided by both Russia and the European Union, initially quite indifferent to the South Caucasus, and subsequently showing a kind of “regionally symmetrical” approach to this sub-region, as if saying: very well, we shall give you some money, but it is up to you, the South Caucasus nations, to sort things out among yourselves and with your neighbours. Settle your conflicts, learn to integrate – in a word, learn to be good, and only then come together and knock on the doors of Europe. There is logic in this approach, but today’s logic does not always agree with a long-term strategy. Quite clearly, this approach caused legitimate discomfort in Georgia: the country felt doomed to either persuade Armenia and Azerbaijan to jointly move towards the EU and NATO, which would be unrealistic from any viewpoint, or else cast its Euro-Atlantic ambitions to the winds and stagnate, which would go against national interests.

Another reason why this “package approach” of the EU to the South Caucasus countries caused disappointment in Georgia was the fact that the EU approach to the Balkans had been just the opposite. There, the EU adopted a step-by-step strategy, and the countries which displayed the strongest drive and highest preparedness to join the united Europe were integrated into the EU one by one. It should, however, be mentioned that the required standards were not the same for everyone in the Balkans either.

Now the EU has made a shift from the “package approach” to the step-by-step strategy. This has been due, firstly, to the crystallization of European interests on the Black Sea, as noted above, and secondly, to the active pro-Western policies of the two Black Sea Coastal states – Ukraine and Georgia. Lithuanian analyst Audrius

Poviliūnas made a comparative study of the ENP Action Plans for Armenia, Azerbaijan and Georgia, and discovered that, apart from standard (or stereotypic) formulations, in some issues, the EU has adopted differentiated approaches to the countries of our sub-region.¹³

In the context of international politics with regard to the Black Sea region and Georgia in particular, it seems appropriate to speculate on the subject of “Georgia between Moscow, Washington and Brussels.” I have even put this phrase as the sub-headline of this paper, as I believe that this digression will still keep us on the right track.

THE GOOD, THE BAD AND THE UGLY (THE BIG, THE BAD AND THE BEAUTIFUL)

The name of a once popular film came to my mind as a sub-heading for the part of report dealing with the role of the US, EU and Russia in Georgia’s life today. However, when my eyes fell upon an article by Kęstutis Paulauskas entitled, “The Big, the Bad and the Beautiful: America, Russia and Europe’s Mellow Power,”¹⁴ I decided that what fits Lithuania can also be used to describe the roles of the three outside players in the fate of Georgia. In a nutshell, while still faithful to my two-way heading, I offer the reader a choice of whichever they prefer; they can also choose which of the attributes fits which actor. I will now share some fragmentary observations, not necessarily pretending at originality, which seem to be determinant within the current context, and will *pro tanto* make it easier to follow the author’s logic, if any.

Russia

Since the first day of Georgia’s independence, Russia has remained the principal external player directly involved in key events concerning Georgia. It would be unnecessary and impossible to account for every detail of Russian-Georgian relations: that subject has been thought over (mostly badly), spoken about (mostly out of place), described (mostly inadequately), and dealt with (badly, out of place and inadequately), so that sorting it all out is going to be a protracted and painful effort.

The thing that now infuriates Russia especially badly is Georgia’s strive to join

13 Poviliūnas, Audrius. “South Caucasus in the Context of European Neighbourhood Policy.” *Lithuanian Foreign Policy Review*, No. 17, 2006. www.lfpr.lt/uploads/File/2006/Poviliunas.pdf.

14 Paulauskas, Kęstutis. “The Big, the Bad and the Beautiful: America, Russia and Europe’s Mellow Power.” *Lithuanian Foreign Policy Review*, No. 20, 2008. http://www.lfpr.lt/uploads/File/2008-20/Paulauskas_ENG.pdf.

the NATO (implying Georgia's irreversible withdrawal from the Russian sphere of influence). Naturally, Russia would not like to relinquish control over the transportation and energy corridors running across Georgia; however, this is just a secondary reason for its attitude to Georgia. There is a third, fourth, fifth, etc. reason too, but I will not discuss them here.

Russia made use of the Kosovo situation to increase its pressure on Georgia; however, it had openly warned Georgia beforehand of its intentions to do so. Russia's main leverage over Georgia (or, if you will, the instruments it uses for blackmailing Georgia) are the unresolved conflicts over Abkhazia and South Ossetia. Without speculating on which of them is more difficult to resolve, I will only underscore that the Abkhazian coastal area of Georgia holds a special appeal for Russia in a whole range of domains: naval, transportation, tourism, Olympics, etc. However, with regard to "practical" military strategy, the breakaway South Ossetia presents even a greater threat to Georgia's security than Abkhazia.

Russia's long-term strategy with regard to Abkhazia went through two stages. The first one pertains to the late 19th century and can be called "Abkhazia without Abkhazians." At that time, most ethnic Abkhazians were deported to Turkey and countries of the Near East (where they are now known as Muhajirs). However, Abkhazia's depopulation did not last long. Incidentally, in contrast to the widely propagated idea that the Abkhazian component of the local population was replaced by Georgians, facts prove that between 1897 and 1939, the number of Abkhazians remained practically unchanged (56-58,000), the number of ethnic Georgians in Abkhazia grew by a factor of 3.5 (from 25,900 to 91,900 thousand), whereas the number of Russians grew by a factor of 12 (from 5,100 to 60,200), and of Armenians, by a factor of 8 (from 6,500 to 49,700).¹⁵

The second stage of Russia's strategy was implemented during the Abkhazian conflict in the late 20th century; it can be called "Abkhazia without Georgians." This time, the population of Abkhazia became over two and a half times smaller, and the number of ethnic Georgians decreased by a factor of four. No one knows how long the current depopulation will last, but I doubt that the expatriated Georgians, if disallowed to return, will be replaced by the Muhajirs' posterity. Russia needs Abkhazia for its territory and water area, and is little concerned about the fate of ethnic Abkhazians or Georgians. Incidentally, this is a case where the interests of Abkhazians and Georgians may coincide.

15 Lezhava, Georgiy P. *Izmeneniya klassovo-natsionalnoy sruktury naseleniya Abkhazii. (Changes in Class and Ethnic Structure of the Population of Abkhazia)*. – Sukhumi: 1989 (in Russian).

The United States

Sergey Markedonov identifies three phases of US policy with regard to the South Caucasus. According to him, prior to 1997, US diplomacy did not regard the South Caucasus as the sphere of its strategic interests, leaving Russia to play the leading role on the CIS territory. After 1997, the Americans enrolled the South Caucasus into the scope of their geopolitical priorities. 9/11 and the subsequent Iraqi campaign stepped up the American involvement in the region, boosting their influence upon the domestic policies of the South Caucasus countries. This was manifest, for instance, in US support for Georgia's Rose Revolution¹⁶.

The basic characteristic of American policy with regard to post-revolutionary Georgia has been keeping its eyes "wide shut" on many of the country's problems, primarily concerning its (under)developing democracy. As far back as May 2005, President Bush, while visiting Tbilisi, named Georgia a "Beacon of Democracy," and since then, the US administration has behaved as if that beacon had been shedding light on something else beside the Tbilisi street named after President Bush. The American glorification of Saakashvili is best exemplified by the words of Richard Holbrooke, former US Ambassador to the United Nations: "in fact, the 38-year-old Saakashvili represents almost everything the United States and the European Union should support."¹⁷ An alternative opinion was brewing in US analytical circles, and after the events of November 7, 2007 it saw light at last. "The U.S. policy of praising Georgian accomplishments in other areas but not criticizing the increasingly clear shortcomings in the democracy area led the Georgian government to believe that they could move further away from democracy without consequences. So they did," wrote Lincoln Mitchell, US expert in international politics who had worked in Tbilisi in 2002-2004.¹⁸ Even an analyst as loyal to Saakashvili as David Smith (Senior Fellow at the Potomac Institute for Policy Studies, Washington and Director of the Georgian Security Analysis Center in Tbilisi) suggested that "truncheons and tear gas in Tbilisi on November 7, and the shuttered Imedi television station have faded Georgia's prospects" for obtaining a NATO Membership Action Plan in Bucharest.¹⁹ However, governance methods demonstrated by Saakashvili

16 Markedonov, Sergey. "South Caucasus: Competition of Geopolitical Projects." *Aspects of Regional Security: 2007*. Ed. Gayane Novikova. – Yerevan: Spectrum Center for Strategic Analysis, 2007. – Pp.81-94.

17 Holbrooke, Richard. "David and Goliath." *The Washington Post*. November 27, 2006. – P.A19.

18 Mitchell, Lincoln. "Beacon of Democracy or Khachapuri Republic?" *The National Interest*, December 13, 2007. <http://www.nationalinterest.org/Article.aspx?id=16352>.

19 Smith, David J. "Georgia's Railway to NATO Passes through Turkey." *Turkish Policy Quarterly*, Vol.6, No.3, fall 2007. – P.68 (www.turkishpolicy.com).

on November 7, 2007, while shocking many of his supporters, did not affect US policies. No wonder: the “Beacon of Democracy” is one of the few international phenomena that the Bush administration lists as one of its assets. Admitting that the project turned out less successful than they had been telling everyone for four years would amount to undermining their own prestige on the eve of the US presidential election.

A propos: as a reward for keeping their eyes wide shut, the Americans received an increased Georgian presence in Iraq (2000 troops) at a time when most other countries were moving out.

Though a champion of Georgia’s territorial integrity, the United States had persistently promoted the Kosovo independence project in the centre of Europe all the way until it became reality. Some Americans seem to underestimate the background of the Abkhazian conflict and the existential significance that the problem has for both its parties, including the Abkhazians.

Sometimes one gets the impression that the Americans love Georgia more than the Georgians themselves can and, therefore, the Americans know better what the Georgians must think and how they must behave outside, and, interestingly, also inside their own country. With the help of Congressman Hastings who bore the burden of leading a short-term OSCE Election Observer Mission for a whole two days, the early presidential election of January 5, 2008 acquired “external legitimacy.”²⁰ As to Matthew Bryza, Deputy Assistant Secretary of State, he is very good at explaining, whenever the need arises, both to his European colleagues and to the citizens of Georgia, that the Georgians’ life is far better than it really is.²¹

The US lobbies for a MAP (NATO’s Membership Action Plan) for Georgia, patrons it in other international organizations, and supports direct financial infusions into the Georgia of Saakashvili at a very enticing level.

In other words, it appears that Georgia would hardly have survived without sizeable US support in the sphere of politics, finance, diplomacy, military expertise, etc. In any case, it would not have had the opportunities or capacities that it now has. At the same time, I believe part of those opportunities has been missed mostly as a result of the Americans’ abovementioned “eyes wide shut” and easy-giving approach.

20 At a press-conference on January 6, 2008, Alcee Hastings called this election “a triumphant step toward democracy.”

21 See, for example, the interview Matthew Bryza gave the Russian Service of the BBC on May 29, 2008: http://news.bbc.co.uk/1/hi/russian/international/newsid_7426000/7426403.stm.

The European Union

Although incapable of elaborating a consolidated approach to the Kosovo problem, the European Union has allowed this precedent to exist. The heavy dependence of some EU countries upon Russian energy carriers can impact those countries' policies with regard to Georgia (and not only Georgia).

The failure to have the European Constitution ratified, followed by Ireland's non-ratification of the Lisbon Agreement, prove that rank-and-file Europeans, whether consciously or unconsciously, would like the EU elite to implement policies that avoid creating new headaches on top of the ones Europe already has. It should be noted that the European political elite is somewhat more inclined to heed public opinion at home than do the political elites of the South Caucasus countries.

Since most new EU members are enthusiastic regarding to Georgia's Euro- and Euro-Atlantic aspirations, and Old Europe is mostly apathetic or even sceptical, this dualism enables external actors like the US and the Russian Federation to play their own game on the European political field.

European "soft power" is not always as much of a power as intended, particularly with regard to those who fail to or pretend not to understand the European diplomatic language. Indeed, Georgia has blatantly disregarded international recommendations, even the most adequate and unambiguous ones, for example, the November 29, 2007 resolution by the European Parliament on the situation in Georgia, wherein, among other things, Georgia's authorities were called upon "to carry out a thorough, impartial and independent investigation into the serious violations of human rights and freedom of the media, notably the allegations of excessive use of force by law enforcement officials, in order to identify all those responsible, bring them to trial and apply the penal and/or administrative sanctions provided for by law."²²

Nevertheless, the apparently growing EU involvement in Georgian affairs is certainly welcome. It is enough to mention Javier Solana's recent visit to Tbilisi and Sukhumi, the regular trips to Sukhumi and Tskhinvali made by European ambassadors to Georgia, and the German plan for settling the conflict in Abkhazia. All this is encouraging because it means that the future of Georgia on the world's political map is not that of the 51st state of the US, or of one more administrative region of the Russian Federation, but that of an EU member country. Another reason to welcome EU involvement is that European standards with regard to small nations

22 European Parliament Resolution of 29 November 2007 on the situation in Georgia.
<http://www.europarl.europa.eu/sides/getDoc.do?pubRef=-//EP//TEXT+TA+P6-TA-2007-0572+0+DOC+XML+V0//EN&language=EN>.

and ethnic minorities constitute a potentially solid (if hypothetical) foundation for normalizing Georgian-Abkhazian relations based upon a “together-to-Europe” approach.

Now the time is probably ripe to look at Georgia’s place inside the Moscow-Washington-Brussels triangle.

Under the leadership of Mikheil Saakashvili, Georgia’s anti-Russian orientation has been the cornerstone of Georgia’s foreign policy, and strangely enough, of its domestic policy too. Such a simplified vision of the challenges faced by the country is not appreciated in Europe, or at least, not appreciated by many Old Europe leaders. Georgian authorities do not merely ignore fundamental European values in their domestic politics, saying one thing and doing another; in fact, they have renounced the very idea of developing democracy or observing democratic procedures. As a result, Saakashvili’s Georgia is becoming more and more similar to Putin’s Russia, a fact that has already been noted by unbiased and knowledgeable analysts and independent international institutions.²³

In the post-revolutionary years, there was a clear misbalance in Georgia’s international policies, whereby all eggs were being put in a well-padded Washington basket in the hope that the Americans would help, drag, squeeze and push through. In fact, those hopes have for the most part come true. The European vector of Georgian external policy only started to gather the necessary momentum immediately prior to and following the Bucharest fiasco at the NATO summit at which the vigorous onslaught by the Americans and their allies on the Eastern EU borders failed to overcome the resistance of the old Europeans, led by the Germans, to giving Georgia a NATO MAP.

A Stopover in Bucharest

I now suggest we stop over briefly in Bucharest during the month of the April, because the story of the MAP for Georgia (and Ukraine) has highlighted many interesting aspects in relations that are now under our scrutiny. Despite the predictably negative position of Germany, the Americans, along with the Poles, the Lithuanians, the Estonians and some other Central and Eastern Europeans, spared no efforts to get MAPs for Georgia and Ukraine. The main argument of the German leadership against granting MAP to Georgia was the existence of unresolved conflicts and the

23 See: de Waal, Tom. “Putin’s Copycats.” *New Statesman*, November 29, 2007. <http://www.newstatesman.com/200711290030>; “Georgia: Sliding towards Authoritarianism?” International Crisis Group, December 19, 2007. <http://www.crisisgroup.org/home/index.cfm?id=5233&l=1>.

absence of any positive developments in them. A few hints were also made at domestic troubles, particularly, at repressive measures against the opposition.²⁴

For the good of the business, it would be better to reverse the order of these two arguments, for the way to the peaceful solution and prevention of conflicts lies through dynamic and irreversible democratization and liberalization of Georgia in all directions, rather than otherwise. Presenting or accepting conflicts as a justification of the authorities' anti-democratic behaviour is a disservice to the Georgian nation, and serves to delay conflict resolution. It was however no great secret that lingering behind the German obstinacy was the oil-and-gas shadow of Russia; in fact Russia made several harsh pre-emptive statements (coupled with equally harsh steps) targeted against the Georgian (and Ukrainian) integration to the NATO. The position of France, also negative, was more straightforward: France made it clear that strained relations with Russia were too high a price to pay for the support of Georgia.²⁵ In fact, this issue, which had to be decided by consensus, drew a clear line between New and Old Europe. Statements made by Saakashvili right before and after the summit were quite typical of this orator. In an interview to *The Financial Times*, he said that any decision made in Bucharest short of awarding Georgia a MAP would be "a great Russian victory."²⁶ However, when the MAP was predictably refused, and all the summit document contained was a "consolation prize," i.e. a statement that Georgia and Ukraine would be admitted to NATO at some undefined later date, Georgia's president proclaimed (at least, for domestic consumption) another great victory of Georgian diplomacy. In a spectacular word-juggling act, the president and his team told the nation that Georgia got even more than it had hoped for, i.e. a definitive promise of NATO membership instead of just an ordinary MAP. What they preferred not to mention was that the final stretch on the way to NATO always lies through a MAP, and that as a result of the Bucharest Summit, Georgia's MAP will be postponed until the NATO Ministerial in December in the best case scenario, and indefinitely, in the worst.

Incidentally, the German three-stage plan of the Abkhazian settlement (the Steinmeier Plan) can be seen as a preventive measure against the American insistence on awarding a MAP to Georgia: we have developed this very comprehensive plan, why don't you try to achieve some progress in its realization so that we can wholeheart-

24 Williamson, Hugh. "Germany Blocks Ex-Soviets' NATO Entry." *Financial Times*, 31 March 2008.

25 "France won't back Ukraine and Georgia NATO bids." *Reuters*, April 1, 2008.
<http://www.reuters.com/article/2008/04/01/us-nato-france-ukraine-idUSL0115117020080401>

26 Williamson, Hugh, *op.cit.*

edly vote for a MAP for Georgia? However, the target of this message it is not quite clearly set: is it aimed at Georgia, or the US, or Russia after all, or at all three?

In any case, the very fact that the central country of the EU has come up with a plan for settling one of the conflicts in the South Caucasus raises the level of EU involvement in the sub-region and the degree of European responsibility for developments in this part of the world.

It can't be (a time of paradoxes)

Summing up this cursory and fragmentary review of recent years' developments around Georgia, I would like to propose a thesis that might sound paradoxical: although Russia is playing the role of Georgia's worst enemy, and the United States, of Georgia's best friend, Moscow and Washington are in fact working together to consolidate antidemocratic tendencies in Saakashvili's Georgia. Washington strengthens these tendencies by giving Saakashvili *carte blanche*, by excusing or encouraging his actions regardless of their overall efficiency. Moscow is strengthening the same tendencies by hostile steps which almost inevitably cause the nation to consolidate around the authorities in the face of an external threat, regardless of the policies implemented by those authorities (the same was happening under Edward Shevardnadze). In the international arena, Russia's pressure on Georgia makes many countries wish to support the weak in its struggle against the strong. This response is especially typical of those European nations which had suffered under Russia's yoke for decades and even centuries, and have first-hand experience of how hard and how important it is to shed it. Saakashvili is very good at understanding current trends and using them to his advantage, although the political stakes are sometimes too high.

As it is, Washington and Moscow have willingly or unwillingly nurtured Saakashvili and allowed him to become an *enfant terrible* for the EU, in particular, for the Old Europe governments. One should, however, bear in mind that the stake Saakashvili is gambling is the fate of Georgia and not just his own.

In conclusion, I shall cite data from opinion polls conducted in March 2008 by the Konrad Adenauer Foundation.²⁷ I am quite sceptical about public opinion polls carried out in my country, particularly in the post-election period. In this case, however, I believe that neither the sponsors nor the implementing agencies had any political bias. Another reason to take the results of this poll seriously is its timing: the

27 Religion und Politik in Georgien. Eine Umfrage unter der Stadtbevölkerung. – Tbilisi, Konrad-Adenauer-Stiftung, 1 Juli 2008. <http://www.kas.de/suedkaukasus/de/publications/14254/>

poll was done at a time when the presidential election passions had already subsided and the date of the parliamentary elections had not yet been set.

A total of 1000 respondents in three Georgian cities (500 in Tbilisi, 200 in Gori, and 300 in Kutaisi) were asked to assess the influences that foreign countries have upon the public and religious developments in Georgia. Their answers are shown in the table below:

Countries	Positive	Rather + than –	Rather – than +	Negative	Don't know	Sum +	Sum –
US	5.0	29.3	35.4	23.0	7.3	34.3	58.4
Germany	9.7	51.3	16.4	5.7	16.9	61.0	22.1
Ukraine	25.0	60.4	5.8	1.4	7.4	85.4	7.2
Armenia	3.7	37.2	32.3	7.1	19.7	40.9	39.4
Azerbaijan	5.8	26.1	25.0	6.2	16.9	31.9	31.2

When asked how they would like those influences to change (to increase, remain the same or decrease), the respondents answered as follows:

Countries	Increase	Status quo	Decrease	Don't know
US	9.1	22.1	65.4	3.4
EU	48.1	24.0	22.4	5.5

There is no need to comment on this data, they are self-explanatory. One should just note that the polling questionnaire contained questions about attitudes to religion, so that an especially positive attitude to Ukraine could have been determined, amongst other things, by the fact that Georgians and Ukrainians share the same faith, Orthodox Christianity. Meanwhile, the figures for Germany (in this case standing for the entire EU) and for the US in the first table, and those for the EU and the US in the second table, clearly show that anti-American feeling is gaining momentum in Georgia's domestic discourse. These figures will not just surprise the people who glide along the surface of Georgian political reality and limit their experiences of Georgia to visiting government offices and leaving them as optimists, enthusiasts or altruists. Those figures are apparently a complete surprise for the officials sitting

in those offices, who also glide on the surface of reality and are now heading in the direction of the nearest abyss.

The EU remains quite popular in Georgia, although the poll was conducted prior to the NATO Summit in Bucharest; indeed, the position held by Germany (and “Old Europe” as a whole) at that summit could have had a negative impact upon the Georgians’ attitudes to the EU.

In a word, US policy, perceived in Georgia today as one more incidence of the our-son-of-a-bitch doctrine, is now less attractive to the Georgians than Europe’s offer of its values, which one can either accept or reject without risking to lose respect as an individual or as a community.

Conclusion

I believe all the parties would do well by drawing appropriate inferences from the above.

FEUDAL DEMOCRACY OR DEMOCRATIC FEUDALISM: ARMENIA IN 2008¹

By Suren Zolyan²

This analysis in no way purports to address the full breadth of events that took place in Armenia in 2008. Nor does it aim to reproduce any sequence of events. Moreover, we do not touch upon such important topics as foreign policy and socio-economic life. When discussing the country's domestic political situation, we - conscious of various contradictions and the possibility of different interpretations - try to justify and conceptualize our vision of domestic political developments.

Beyond doubt, 2008 was not only one of the most controversial, but also one of the most "unlucky" years in the history of modern Armenia. The year began with a domestic political upheaval and ended with Armenia experiencing the effects of the global economic recession. We have divided the event calendar into four major segments:

1. *December 2007 - February 20, 2008*: This period spanned the conflict-ridden start of the election campaign (although its official launch was January 20) and concluded with the announcement of the election results.
2. *February 21 - March 1, 2008*: This was the shortest and most dramatic period that included the challenge that the supporters of Levon Ter-Petrosyan mounted against the election results and the dispersal of the opposition sit-in by the authorities, eventually leading to mass riots and loss of human life.
3. *March 1 - April 9, 2008*: This period included the imposition of a state of emergency, arrests of opposition supporters on charges of organizing mass unrest and attempting to seize power. This was the last month in the presidency of Robert Kocharyan, culminating in the transfer of power to Serzh Sargsyan.
4. *April 9, 2008 - January 27, 2009*: The period includes Serzh Sargsyan's inauguration; the collapse of the Kocharyan-Sargsyan tandem; the struggle for the "right" interpretation of the "events of March 1" and its official "evaluation" by the Par-

1 This paper was published by the Caucasus Institute in Russian as: "Armeniya v 2008 g.: feodalnaya demokratiya ili demokraticheskiy feudalizm?" *Kavkaz – 2008. Yezhegodnik Instituta Kavkaza*. ("Armenia in 2008: Feudal Democracy or Democratic Feudalism?" *Caucasus 2008. CI Yearbook*). Ed. by Alexander Iskandaryan. – Yerevan: CI, 2010 (in Russian). – Pp.24-42.

2 The author has been the Rector of the Brusov State Linguistic University, Yerevan since 1997.

liamentary Assembly of the Council of Europe (PACE) that put an end to the hopes of the opposition for early presidential and parliamentary elections and established a regime of “semi-archy.” This date may be considered the end of the protracted election campaign.

As we can see, 2008 consisted of various stages of the presidential election that began much earlier and ended much later than their official dates. We believe that this process was of defining importance, and we, therefore, focus on clarifying its logic.

Comparing how different post-Soviet countries address the key issue typical for the Commonwealth of Independent States (CIS) - the transfer of power from one **person** to another **person** - can help understand the political process that unfolded in Armenia in 2008. In fact, party, ideological and corporate factors, even if present, clearly play a secondary if not a decorative role. From this standpoint, post-Soviet states may be divided into two groups, depending on whether presidential powers are limited to two terms, or whether there are no restrictions on the possibility for re-election. The first group includes Georgia, Moldova, Ukraine, and Kyrgyzstan, and the second consists of Belarus, Turkmenistan, Azerbaijan, Uzbekistan, and Kazakhstan (the latter two are included in this group with minor reservations). As one can see, this categorization is similar to another one, the division of the CIS into zones of possible “color revolutions” and zones of so-called “stability.” Russia, as usual, holds a special place. Although presidential powers in that country are limited to two terms, in fact, these two terms are not exhausting. The established practice is that the incumbent president appoints a successor at the end of his second term.³

To be sure, there is a certain difference between the current situation in Russia and the preceding one; before, the acting president retired, entrusting his “family” to his young protégé, while the present situation gives political scientists grounds to talk about a senior czar-prime minister and a junior czar-president, or, to put it in more neutral terms, about “tandemocracy.”

This, no doubt, is due to the authoritarian nature of the system in which the continuity of power inevitably becomes personalized because personal factors determine that very power. Under authoritarian rule, the person in charge of the system becomes so important that the system merges with the individual and the population identifies the system with the person. Thus, Yeltsin’s Russia, Putin’s Russia or Gorbachev’s Soviet Union and Brezhnev’s Soviet Union are not only completely

3 See for example: Kholodkovsky, Kirill G. “O politicheskoy sisteme sovremennoy Rossii.” (“On the political system of modern Russia”) *Polis*, № 2, 2009 (in Russian). – P.16.

different symbols, but also different systems and even epochs. As for the current situation in Russia, the personal factor today is not so strong as to make it impossible to change the government by means of elections, similar to the second group of countries, but it is significant enough for the so-called *succession* to be determined **personally** by the current president and to consist in selecting a certain **individual** – a candidate who for one reason or another is believed to be the most acceptable to head the political elite. Afterwards, the party elections followed by the popular election essentially boil down to a plebiscite (as in a referendum to extend presidential powers or to remove restrictions on their terms), giving birth to a sophisticated term, *plebiscitary Caesarism*.

The situation that unfolded by 2008 hinted that in all probability, Armenia was destined to repeat the Russian scenario, given the great similarity of the two countries' political and legal systems and the political culture. Already in 2007, it became evident that Armenia, at least at that stage, would not opt for the re-election of its incumbent president for a third term. It is worth recalling that the main debates between the government and the opposition at the time when the constitution was being amended centered not on the amendments themselves, but on whether the constitution was to be considered a new one or a "renewed" one. The bottom line was whether the amended constitution would open up a legal option for the nomination of the incumbent president for another term.

The opponents' favorite topic were not the amendments themselves, but the fact that by initiating a referendum on amendments to the constitution, President Robert Kocharyan was ostensibly preparing for himself a legal foothold to be nominated for a third term. This happened both before and after the amendments, despite repeated statements by Kocharyan and his entourage that the amended constitution could not be considered a new constitution. On top of this, both the old and the new "editions" of the constitution limited presidential powers to two terms only. It is also worth noting that before this debate surfaced, some sort of precedent had been set by the then Nagorno-Karabakh Republic (NKR) President Arkady Ghukasyan; as the NKR Constitution was adopted only in 2006, the question of the presidency was a subject of some legal ambiguity there.⁴ There were a series of proposals on

4 Compare: "... the transitional provisions of the 2006 Constitution of the Nagorno-Karabakh did not hold him back from running for a third and a fourth term. But Ghukasyan preferred to act in line with the old legislation, under which he was elected to the presidency, and which limited his stay in office to ten years". Petrosyan, David. "Nepriznanye gosudarstva Yuzhnogo Kavkaza." *Kavkaz – 2007. Yezhegodnik Instituta Kavkaza* ("The unrecognized states of the South Caucasus." *Caucasus 2007: CI Yearbook*). Ed. by Alexander Iskandaryan. – Yerevan: Caucasus Institute, 2009 (in Russian). – P. 54.

the nomination of Arkady Ghukasyan for a new term, given especially the constant threat from Azerbaijan to the existence of Karabakh that could be considered quite a strong argument in favor of authoritarianism. However, Ghukasyan said that his nomination for a second term would be a departure from democracy building in Nagorno-Karabakh, and would be against the principles of rule of law.

In this respect, 2007 was defining for Armenia; if not permanently, then at least for the foreseeable future, the possibility for the re-election of the president for more than two terms is ruled out in Armenia. At the same time, the constitutional amendments adopted by the referendum called for a fairly significant redistribution of power, primarily transmission of a substantial part of the powers of the president to the prime minister. This gave grounds to the argument that Armenia was going for the “Russian option”: Robert Kocharyan was going to be a “strong” prime minister under the new president. Already since 2003, i.e. since the previous presidential elections, the main question of the political discourse had been: “Who comes *after* Kocharyan?” The question was formulated in both “pro-government” and “opposition” terms: “Who, if not Kocharyan?” and “Anyone but Kocharyan!” The confrontation of these two slogans defined the logic of the 2003 presidential elections, but their momentum spread to subsequent years. Surprisingly, the seemingly simple question of “Who *instead of* Kocharyan” was not raised. Until the end of 2008, however, this question seemed to be just a rhetorical one.⁵

In fact, unlike Russia where by the end of their second terms, both Yeltsin and Putin chose young and little-known politicians to succeed them, in Armenia the name of the successor was not a secret. The choice was only made by the incumbent president to some extent; it was, rather, predetermined - if not imposed - by the successor and the system at large. The successor was Serzh Sargsyan. At that time, he was holding the post of prime minister and was the chairman of the Republican

5 For details see my paper: Zolyan, Suren. “Eto sladkoe slovo – stabilnost. Armenia v 2004 g.” *Kavkaz – 2004. Yezhegodnik Kavkazskogo Instituta SMI* (“That sweet word – stability. Armenia in 2004.” *Caucasus – 2004: CMI Yearbook*). Ed. by Alexander Iskandaryan. – Yerevan: Caucasus Media Institute, 2006 (in Russian). – Pp. 87-103. In this paper, I wrote that “this is noticeable even in the language they use – for example, they debate intensely the question of who will succeed Kocharyan and who will replace Kocharyan. The question of “Who instead of Kocharyan?” is under taboo, because pro-government forces believe that the new president will be from their camp and, therefore, by virtue of his loyalty, will enjoy the support of this president; as for the opposition, they do not discuss any specific answer to the question “Who instead of Kocharyan?” in order not to cause a split in the opposition camp. The only question they discuss – and that they do at best in passing – is the question of which party will get a majority in the parliament in 2007. When the media focuses on the parliamentary elections in 2007, it does only in relation to how those elections will impact the 2008 presidential race”. – Op. cit., p.93.

Party of Armenia. The results of the 2007 parliamentary elections left no alternatives to the pro-government camp. Serzh Sargsyan, who became the chairman of the Republican Party only on the eve of the elections, ensured the party's dominance in the parliament. Another factor - very important for the authoritarian system - was at play in favor of Serzh Sargsyan. I am referring to the personality factor. From their very first steps in politics, as informal leaders of the Karabakh movement in Nagorno-Karabakh, Robert Kocharyan and Serzh Sargsyan - both well known politicians of roughly equal stature - acted together all the while. Formed back in 1988, the "tandem" had ever since functioned coherently and effectively in widely varying, sometimes difficult situations.

In this tandem, Kocharyan had always played the role of the forward, but now it was presumed that Sargsyan was going to take the lead. Meanwhile, the government would, in essence, remain the same both system-wise and staff-wise. Of course, it is extremely difficult to produce quantitative data, but, obviously, many of those who voted for Serzh Sargsyan voted for this "bunch," viewing it as continuation of slow but steady development. It is also clear that many voted against it, believing Serzh Sargsyan to be a pledge of the continued strengthening of the authoritarian system, and seeing in his defeat an opportunity for bringing out the democratic elements in Armenia's political system.⁶

However, neither one nor the other, and not even the third happened. For several reasons, an altogether different model worked: due to the inability of the new team to retain the structure built by Kocharyan, the centralized authoritarian system gave way to fragmentation of power reminiscent of feudal atomism.

Back in his time, Karl Marx insightfully observed, "Hegel says somewhere that all great world-historical events and personalities appear, so to speak, twice. He for-

6 Note that there is another point of view stressing that the analogy with the situation in Russia is valid only at a superficial level, whereas, in fact, it does not exist. According to Alexander Iskandaryan, "...the difference here is a fundamental one: till the end of his second term Putin was in full control of the parliamentary coalition, the business elites, and the executive structures. Had he wished so, he could have appointed anyone ... Kocharyan did not have any possibility to appoint. Sargsyan won the status of a "successor" by means of a political struggle, succeeding in leading the party of power and winning a majority in the parliament". See: Iskandaryan, Alexander. "Armenia v 2007 g.: publichnost protiv elitnosti." *Kavkaz – 2007. Yezhegodnik Instituta Kavkaza* ("Armenia – 2007: Publicity vs. elitism." *Caucasus – 2007. CI Yearbook*). Ed. by Alexander Iskandaryan. – Yerevan: Caucasus Institute, 2009 (in Russian). – P. 29. But even with this interpretation, one has to cite an important clarification, mentioned by Iskandaryan, that "the society did not apprehend Kocharyan and Sargsyan as competitors, but only as members of the same nomenclature, who were passing on the baton from one to the other in order to preserve the power of this nomenclature ..." – Ibid.

got to add: the first time as tragedy, the second time as farce” (*The Eighteenth of Brumaire of Louis Bonaparte*).

The imposition of a state of emergency after the “events of March 1” created parallels with 1996, when Levon Ter-Petrosyan introduced a state of emergency after his declared victory. Neither the events that occurred in 1995-1996 and 2008 nor their participants qualify as “world-historical.” Of course, given the loss of life and the great harm done to the society and the country, they cannot be considered a farce. Still, one cannot help seeing, if not a comic element, then at least irony in that the politician who created the system of electoral fraud, political repression and suppression of popular discontent, himself became a victim of that system. The punishment did not come in the form of a legal sentence: the Armenian state turned out to be incapable of that. More adequately to the extent of social development in Armenia, it took the shape of the famous parable, “what goes around, comes around.”

However, the mirror image of the 1996 situation is more serious and more tragic than a confirmation of a proverbial wisdom. Unfortunately, the parallels extend much deeper. What matters is not the external resemblance between the events (the same faces, the state of emergency, military in the streets), but the return to the archaic paradigm that condemns the society and the state to regress to a certain political regime peculiar to Armenia. I am referring to the form of *loose authoritarianism* that has become typical for the Armenian political culture and that kind of *rolls into feudalism and is accompanied by fragmentation of the government and the privatization of its institutions, deliberate demoralization of the society, cynicism and phrase-mongering instead of political programs, and the provincialization of public policy institutions.*

On the surface, this may look like decentralization and delegation of authority (and is sometimes interpreted that way by international experts). However, whereas in democratic systems this assumes delegation of responsibility, in Armenia this turns into refusal to accept responsibility. Of course, one could argue at length about the adequacy of the power hierarchy on which the authoritarian political system relies, and whether any other models could be proposed. In any case, the feudal fragmentation of power with its underlying principle of *my lord's lord in not my lord*, that emerged in the mid-1990s and is reproduced today, cannot be considered a viable and reasonable alternative. When it comes to the enforcement of state policies, this leads to interruptions in the chain between decision-makers and performers, to inconsistencies, and, in some cases, to irresponsibility and self-will in middle and lower ranks of the administrative system (due to lack of data, we refrain from discussing the functioning of shadow structures that can become the true govern-

ment once official structures fail to act. They usually have a system of unquestioned centralized power typical for security bodies and the mafia).

The regime of Levon Ter-Petrosyan never recovered from its 1996 “victory.” Whereas before that, in 1993-1996, Ter-Petrosyan was able to control the situation and maintain his personal power using security institutions and, more importantly, paramilitary units, in 1997, that regime collapsed and Ter-Petrosyan lost control over his environment. A system of feudal princelings emerged, neither of whom succumbed to their patron, and each of whom believed that the president owed his presidency to him. Thus, the president became a hostage, dependent on the whims of his courtiers. Soon thereafter, this resulted in a systemic crisis and an early exit of Levon Ter-Petrosyan from the presidency (in January 1998). Thus, Ter-Petrosyan’s victory resulted in the defeat of the regime that he had created.

In February 2009, Levon Ter-Petrosyan lost, but, paradoxically, within a year, the political paradigm that he had “planted” years ago won again (which made Ter-Petrosyan’s return to power unnecessary). The paradigm did not make it overnight, nor did it win without a struggle, however short-lived. Meanwhile, at the end of February 2008, immediately after the elections, there was an attempt to chart an alternative way. The elections highlighted the fact that the tightening of the authoritarian “vertical of power” does not release the tension in the society; on the contrary, it exacerbates the crisis of social justice and solidarity. Socio-economic problems do not receive proper solutions, and even the economic growth does not reduce the tension; what is more, it increases the gap between the rich minority and the deprived majority.

Without doubt, the awareness of this situation pre-determined the change in the program of the newly elected president. The period of Serzh Sargsyan’s ascent to the office was a period of attempts to transform the existing regime through democratic means. In this regard, his policy speech of February 26 is particularly revealing.⁷ Two major themes stand out in that speech:

1. *the idea of unity and of overcoming the existing differences;*
2. *respect for rights and freedoms, and in the first place the right of people to form their government through elections.*

These points were reiterated four times in different contexts as the basic principle of the state and the society. The practical step aiming at ensuring the consolidation of the public was rather effective: the president invited all his competitors, i.e. all presidential candidates, to enter into a coalition and develop a joint program of

⁷ *Hayastani Hanrapetutyun*, 27.02.2008.

action. He also made a gesture towards the opposition electorate, promising them to get rid of the established oligarchic system and the “*khmbapets*” (literally “chieftains”), i.e. the various princelings, usually walking around with their armed bodyguards, causing great public outrage, if not hate.

The government’s program of unification was in strong contrast to Ter-Petrosyan’s confrontational narratives. However, Sargsyan’s speech did not produce the calculated effect. A particularly bad framework was chosen for voicing those serious ideas: a nationwide meeting with attendees brought in from the regions on the orders of regional authorities. Sargsyan’s short and very “un-rally” style speech, combined with the lack of entertainment, singing or dancing that have, alas, become typical for Armenian rallies, caused a significant number of participants to move over immediately to a neighboring area where Levon Ter-Petrosyan was holding his permanent rally, giving it new impetus. Instead of unity, the confrontation only intensified. It was a harsh lesson: social solidarity is achieved by deeds, not clumsy bureaucratic moves.

Following the “events of March 1” (see below), the authorities made another attempt at formulating a policy for reforming the system and resolving the crisis. The policy envisaged overcoming the polarization of society by addressing economic and social problems. The government’s program was voiced by newly appointed Prime Minister Tigran Sargsyan in parliament at the time of the government’s confirmation hearings.⁸ Tigran Sargsyan was quite accurate in pinpointing the problems inherited by the new authorities: *an unhealthy moral and psychological situation, a divided society, a significant share of shadow economy, corruption, arbitrariness of officials, unequal conditions of competition, poverty, etc.*

Tigran Sargsyan suggested responding to these challenges systematically and identifying solutions based on the following principles:

1. *In a rapidly changing world, it is necessary to respond to changes rapidly;*
2. *Protect Armenia against negative external influences and, at the same time, create conditions for the kind of co-operation that is desirable for us;*
3. *Knowledge-based society and economy;*
4. *Safeguarding the rights and freedoms of people.*

Had this program been fulfilled, it would have led to a fundamental change in the political regime in Armenia and laid the foundation of social consensus. However, it required entering into conflict with the existing system at a very awkward time of confrontation with the proponents of regime change who rejected the very possibil-

8 *Hayastani Hanrapetutyun*, 30.04. 2008.

ity of dialogue. After all, authorities did not dare take that step. The prime minister's slogan, "Strong universities, strong state," remained just a slogan. The slogan that became reality was "Strong local lords, weak state". Having failed to find support within the society, which was itself so weakened by the crisis as to be in need of long-term rehabilitation, the central government made a tacit deal with the local lords, including both formal and informal ones. Those were precisely the people whom the president earlier called *khmbapets* and who stood to benefit from the confrontation between the government and the opposition. The very first clashes between the central government and the local lords (including the strained relations between the prime minister and the governor of Syunik region, as well as the high-profile case of the brutal murder at the "Odnoklassniki" café, implicating the bodyguards of one of the oligarchs), planned as demonstrative steps towards restoring order, turned into their opposite, i.e. a show of the impunity of local lords.

We can see the underlying similarity between the events of 1996 and 2008 in that in both cases authoritarianism was dealt a powerful blow, but its weakening under these circumstances does not lead to its transformation into a democratic mechanism, and creates a feudal mosaic; the legislation on local self-government, adjusted to the requirements of the Council of Europe, contributed to this situation, together with the existing parochial and clan relationships.⁹ The loose authoritarianism established at the center was perfectly complemented by electoral feudalism in the field, when the nation itself chooses its feudal lord.¹⁰ The elections to local self-government bodies, held in the late summer and early autumn of 2008, clearly demonstrated who actually wields power in the regions. In the current system, the most important feature of democracy - the formation of government through elections - becomes a ritual legitimizing the already established formal and informal hierarchy. The timid attempts of the central government to somehow make a difference by supporting candidates who competed against the most compromised of

9 The implementation of the European Charter of Local Self-Government is a rather good example of how a formally honored postmodern project can lead to deep archaization. In this case, the meaningful idea of the "Europe of the Regions," resembling a complex medieval system, is based on the delegation of powers and responsibility to local authorities and communities. The Charter's formal implementation in Armenia yields the opposite results, i.e. break-up of links, suppression of people's rights by their elected leader, disregard towards the public interest and restoration of the clan organization of the commune.

10 For details on "electoral feudalism," see Zolyan, Suren. "Instituty zapadnoi demokratii i armyanskie realii." *Sravnitelnoe konstitutsionnoe obozrenie* ("Institutes of Western democracy and the Armenian reality." *Comparative Constitutional Review*). – Moscow: Institute of Law and Public Policy. – № 2 (59), 2007 (in Russian). – P.132

local lords were a failure. It is significant that people from the criminal world were put forward as alternatives to the existing lords: others could achieve little under those circumstances. Of course, the idea of recruiting an “enlightened” bandit to sort things out is too exotic to be successful, but it is revealing nonetheless. Needless to say, the local elections and the post-electoral processes led to skirmishes, beatings, bribes and blackmail. Whereas the previous authoritarian regime avoided direct clashes with criminalized local elites, yet somehow managed to keep them in check, under the new conditions this control was lost. The news that *khmbapets* and warlords would no longer enjoy power in Armenia turned out to be mere wishful thinking.

The attempts to attack the financial and economic power of the new feudal lords - the shadow economy - were similarly unsuccessful. The prime minister’s fight against the “shadow” very soon came to resemble the same kind of fight in boxing - that is, a training simulation of a fight without an opponent. But unlike boxing, in which such a fight is harmless, real losses surfaced soon. The government’s purpose was to establish control over trade fairs/markets - the “black holes” controlled by a group of oligarchs engaged in the business of wholesale trade. But the latter managed to divert the fight to a different direction; in fact, the government tightened control over medium and small businesses that had been in a rather sorry state even before that.

Even though the political activities of Ter-Petrosyan and his Armenian National Congress (ANC) were gradually eroding, his political agenda was in demand, replacing the declared but never implemented policy of systemic reforms of the political and economic paradigm. The symptoms of this can be picked up in the fact that the authorities were going along with the information/PR and foreign policy agenda, dictated by the supporters of the Congress. Above all, this related to the assessment of the election results and the events of March 1, 2008. Levon Ter-Petrosyan and his propaganda machine managed to turn his defeat in the election into a PR victory; having abandoned arguing his case properly before the Armenian Constitutional Court, he emphasized statements about the illegitimacy of the existing government, which was also a way of justifying his claims to victory in the presidential elections. The logic of the paradox is that in 1996 he was unable to convince even his closest associates of his declared victory. At present, the further away from the 2008 elections, the higher results are attributed to Ter-Petrosyan (his closest associate Levon Zurabyan even went so far as to suggest that Ter-Petrosyan won 75 percent of the poll). This is logical: the greater the progress of the regime once formed by him, the higher the percentages that he is entitled to lay claims to.

The interpretation of the “events of March 1” should be considered another important PR and, also, political and legal victory for Ter-Petrosyan supporters. In this matter, a kind of coalition has formed that blocks any information which does not fit into the script of “good rebels” and “evil punishers.” The taboo on unbiased coverage of the events is quite explicable: none of the actors determining the present information policy would benefit from admitting that for several hours, power was up for grabs; that the police lost control of the situation and even of their own units; and that the opposition lost control over its “extras,” especially ones mobilized from suburbs and villages near Yerevan. Police brutality coupled with misinformation, actively disseminated by Ter-Petrosyan’s associates, about hundreds of casualties including children, generated a mass psychosis, later deliberately pumped up, leading to riots and (possibly spontaneous) pogroms. Levon Ter-Petrosyan who had earlier declared a “national liberation struggle to a victorious end” preferred to sit and wait at his residence, while his emissaries apparently did not have any meaningful program of action, except for a constant whip-up of tension, which ultimately resulted in the pogroms. The police, who in the morning of March 1, 2008 exacerbated the situation by their unjustified cruelty (including towards random passers-by), fled towards the evening, showing that under extreme circumstances the police are unable even to ensure their own safety to say nothing of “law and order.” Back in his time, Garegin Nzhdeh said that looters can be daring thieves but never brave soldiers. For those police officers who are accustomed to beating the defenseless and engaging in extortion, there is a more suitable [Russian] proverb: “A bully is always a coward.” The army had to assume atypical functions, i.e. maintaining public order. And unlike 1996, the army did its job without “plainclothes Commissars” or any interference in the life of the city. By virtue of its symbolic presence, the army helped bring life back to normal. The army was perhaps the only institution that acted in a dignified and adequate manner.

The question of who is to blame for the “events of March 1” was constantly discussed throughout the subsequent months of 2008, and there is still no clear answer. The opposition demanded that perpetrators be named, while the authorities either kept mum or gave rather obscure explanations, never voiced by any of the people at the top. It is noteworthy that another, equally important, question, “who saved Yerevan, and possibly even Armenia on that tragic night, who prevented developments fraught with more serious consequences?” has not been answered either. Until now that person has not been named... Strange as it may seem, it is quite possible that there was no such actor: the crowd, devoid of a leader, exhausted its energies in meaningless riots. The shock that dawned next morning brought to

naught the calculations of those radicals who had hoped that the bloodshed of the previous night would raise a new wave of protests, which the authorities would not be able to control.

As for the authorities, they, in turn, failed to substantiate their original version of planned mass riots and the attempts to seize power. One can only speculate that either as a result of the taboo on a significant portion of information, or due to the clumsy work of investigators, the charges brought against the arrested collapsed in the courts, and the story of peaceful thugs brutally attacked by the police was the only one left. From the very beginning, Levon Ter-Petrossyan's supporters managed to impose their version of events on international organizations and the mass media, and had it return to Armenia, but this time not as their own interpretation, but as the opinion of the international community. As for the authorities, their position turned out to be extremely inconsistent: inside the country, the authorities issued criminal accusations against the opposition, making dialogue impossible despite a number of symbolic steps (such as the prime minister's participation in the congress of anti-government forces). At the same time, the authorities were on the defensive in the international arena and acted as advocates of negotiation and compromise. This duality could not last long: soon the authorities had to move from attack to defense in the domestic arena too and had to go from charges to excuses or repentance, Dostoevsky style (in the vein that we are all guilty, each of us bears our share of responsibility).

As we can see, Levon Ter-Petrossyan's defeat at the elections did not prevent the political paradigm that he had once created from winning, through the imposition of its value system, and thus, also from establishing a mechanism (and ideology) of control. The rather modest results received by Ter-Petrossyan and the Armenian National Congress (ANC) under his leadership in the next year's (2009) elections to the city council of Yerevan should be ascribed to his personal account but should not obscure the fact that his stated agenda and its main features remained in demand and have been becoming reality.

Nevertheless, it would be wrong to limit the analysis of the situation in 2008 to a description of the confrontation between forces that won or lost the elections on February 20, 2008. Let us ask ourselves a seditious question: are there any forces in the society today able to resist this paradigm? And furthermore, is it maybe the form of organization that is most suited to the condition of the Armenian society today, a condition that emerged after the forced emigration (in large part, of well-educated and energetic people of a creatively active age) after years of decline in education, culture, the establishment of a conglomerate of political cynicism and oligarchic

economy? Sadly, the vicious circle that emerged back in the 1990s is increasingly gaining more inertial force and resistance: *the electoral feudalism breeds the feudal electorate*, and, at the same time, *the feudal electorate regularly reproduces the electoral feudalism (the rule of elected feudal lords)*. This is manifested most clearly in institutions of local self-government, but the process of feudalization does not only possess a spatial-temporal dimension. Less visible, but more dangerous is its spread within the society at large. It is generally accepted that the antidote to ineffective government is the civil society.

Can we consider the society that has taken shape in Armenia a civil one?¹¹ From a formal point of view, it exists, of course. We can point to thousands of NGOs, dozens of parties, hundreds of formally independent media, etc. But in reality, only the trappings of a civil society are present, and they serve exactly the opposite purpose: even greater fragmentation and feudalism.

Of course, there is a significant difference between feudalization of the government and fragmentation of the society. With regard to the organization of the society, one should not be talking about the fragmentation of government but rather about the fragmentation of interests, which may be even more dangerous: it leads to a state of “war of all against all,” and that is precisely what Hobbes referred to as the “natural state.” “Civil society,” according to the British philosopher, forms in the process of emerging from this “natural” state, through the introduction of mechanisms for the harmonization of interests. Unfortunately, Armenia is undergoing quite the opposite process: the formal civil society is increasingly taking on the features of the natural one. Privatization came first. It was followed by feudalization and (in some cases - for instance, party building) by criminalization of what the supposed civil society institutions. A characteristic feature of this system is that inter- and intra-clan struggles come to replace political processes, often spilling into outright intriguing, but sometimes going over into the criminal field. Therefore, when interests clash, they rarely lead to reconciliation; confrontational solutions are the norm (“might is right”). Parties and nongovernmental organizations, too, in large part, function as big or small fiefdoms serving their leader; they are amenable not to the society, but to their grantor, irrespective of whether it is a public authority, a domestic tycoon or an international cash-cow. This dependency is naturally complemented by their omnipotence in their feud.

11 A Ph.D. thesis on the Armenian parliament as an institution of civil society was once defended at Yerevan State University. This is not just an indicator of qualifications of Armenian political scientists, but also an indication that the concept of civil society – in terms of content – though often used, remains unclear even to experts, not to speak of citizens.

The failure of the non-governmental sector, or what is referred to as civil society institutions, is particularly evident in the case of the media (not because of higher extent of degeneracy, but because of greater visibility). It is quite symbolic that all the supposedly independent TV channels are running soap operas that depict with great empathy the everyday life of gangsters, their toils and worries (their *Bitter Happiness*, as one of the most popular shows is called). This is symbolic because journalism has become part of the criminal world, a kind of petty racketeering, a weapon of extortion and blackmail. Various press clubs and committees protecting the rights of journalists have over time turned into lobbyists for the right to extortion and irresponsibility. In any case, recent discussions of possible amendments to the existing law were restricted only to this topic, leaving aside (as, supposedly, something contradicting the freedom of speech) such serious issues as objectivity, media independence, professionalism, quality of journalistic products, and journalists' ethics.

What is the way out of this situation? Describing the situation in Armenia in 2004, we offered two scenarios: "in sum, we can identify contrasting scenarios for future developments. The pessimistic scenario assumes the exacerbation of the crisis phenomena that have not been properly addressed; as a result of mass protests, these could lead to dictatorship, or disintegration of state power and its handover to regional or departmental "princelings." An optimistic approach, in contrast, assumes that the stability will allow taking steps to lower socio-economic tensions and strengthen the civil society and social cohesion. This is crucial for solving Armenia's foreign policy issues, particularly the Karabakh problem."¹²

Unfortunately, we see that the pessimistic scenario was the one that came true - thank God, not fully - and that the grounds for optimism have diminished. Moreover, while earlier it was possible to somehow continue in the spirit of the past, the situation has now changed dramatically. The push for innovation induced by the global economic recession, on one hand, and the changing global and regional political layout (of which Barack Obama's election was a symptom), on the other, require a system for the organization and functioning of the state and society that is much more flexible than the existing one.

Shall we wait, then, for the situation to reach a critical point, as it did in 1996 - 1997?

Clearly, measures must be taken, and there is no point in inventing anything new

12 Zolyan, Suren. "Eto sladkoe slovo – stabilnost. Armenia v 2004 g." *Kavkaz – 2004. Yezhegodnik Kavkazskogo Instituta SMI* ("That Sweet Word – "Stability." Armenia in 2004." *Caucasus 2004. CI Yearbook*). Ed. by Alexander Iskandaryan. – Yerevan: CI, 2006 (in Russian). – P.102

here: it is enough to recall the previously quoted policy statements by the president and the prime minister. Notably, these provisions were laid out with great foresight even before the onset of the global economic recession, so they have now become even timelier. So, the only thing that remains to be done is to implement them. There is no reason to doubt a sincere desire to do so, the question is, what forces (if any) are ready to support them...

As for the eradication of the electoral feudalism and the change of regime in general, there is no need to invent anything original in this realm either. The history of mankind has - long ago - answered the question of which political and legal mechanisms are needed to overcome the feudal system. These mechanisms are laid down not only in history books but also in both the Constitution and the Penal Code of the Republic of Armenia. They consist in strict adherence to the following constitutional principles:

1. Branches of the government (executive, legislative and judicial) must be separated and must not be involved, either directly or indirectly, in business;
2. Politics and business must not be associated with the criminal world; as business is closely linked with crime, it would seem that the separation of politics from business can help solve this problem relatively easily.

Unfortunately, these two provisions are not as simple as they may appear at first glance. They contain a contradiction: the system can only be changed by a strong government, in cooperation with a consolidated and socially conscious society. But today's reality is such that people ask: what good is a government which is not associated with either business or criminals? In the opinion of most Armenians, a government like that would be useless when it comes to politics; all it may be good for is entertaining people with televised speeches or greeting foreign visitors at the airport.

Solutions may appear simple and obvious, but no matter how good they sound in conferences or television debates, hardly anyone in their right mind would insist that their implementation is simple and feasible in the near future. During one of his travels, Jonathan Swift's famous character, Gulliver, visits an academy where he meets, among others, political scientists. That meeting makes a depressing impression on Gulliver:

"In the school of political projectors, I was but ill entertained; the professors appearing, in my judgment, wholly out of their senses, which is a scene that never fails to make me melancholy. These unhappy people were proposing schemes for persuading monarchs to choose favourites upon the score of their wisdom, capacity, and virtue; of teaching ministers to consult the public good; of rewarding merit, great abilities, eminent services; of

instructing princes to know their true interest, by placing it on the same foundation with that of their people; of choosing for employments persons qualified to exercise them, with many other wild, impossible chimeras, that never entered before into the heart of man to conceive; and confirmed in me the old observation, "that there is nothing so extravagant and irrational, which some philosophers have not maintained for truth."¹³

13 Jonathan Swift. *Gulliver's Travels*. Part III, Chapter VI.

THE LIKELIHOOD OF THE UNLIKELY: DEMOCRACY IN AZERBAIJAN AT THE TURN OF THE 21ST CENTURY¹

By Rahman Badalov²

'Would you tell me, please, which way I ought to go from here?'
"That depends a good deal on where you want to get to," said the Cat.
'I don't much care where –' said Alice.
'Then it doesn't matter which way you go,' said the Cat.
L. Carroll, "Alice in Wonderland"

INTRODUCTION

Democracy in developing countries is always a challenge. From the outside, it seems a universal technology and, therefore, *possible* for all countries, regardless of their historical and cultural experiences. From the inside, it seems *impossible* because of the persistence of the totalitarian mindset, the habit of paternalistic patronage, the fear of routine work, impatience, and so on. The problem of democracy in developing countries is the problem of *the possibility of the impossible*.

At one instant, democracy in Azerbaijan runs ahead, at another, it rolls far back, sometimes it falls into illusions, at other times, it passes into a state of indifference and apathy. At some point, the nation imagines itself to be in transition to democracy, but later becomes disillusioned with democracy and with the whole civilized community into the bargain. In response to challenges from the outside, the Azerbaijani mentality discovers new internal barriers from the inside which must be overcome to make serious democratic reforms possible. Time will tell what the number of these internal barriers is, if there will be enough will to overcome them, and for how long these processes will draw out.

And if the truth is on the side of those who believe that democracy can only sur-

1 This paper was published by the CI in Russian as: Badalov, Rahman. "Demokratiya v Azerbajane: nachalo XXI veka." *Diaspora, neft i rosy: chem. zhivut strany Yuzhnogo Kavkaza* ("Democracy in Azerbaijan: the Start of the 21st Century." *Diaspora, Oil and Roses: What Makes the Countries of the South Caucasus Tick*). Ed. by Ivlian Khaindrava and Alexander Iskandaryan. – Yerevan: Heinrich Böll Foundation and Caucasus Media Institute, 2005 (in Russian). – Pp.10-32.

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vive if it becomes introspective – i.e. describing and analyzing its own actions, then the necessity for introspection remains a serious challenge for democracy in Azerbaijan. Democracy in Azerbaijan, as in any country of the world, must recognize and adjust itself at every step of the way, rather than trying to feed its future with age-old illusions, false promises and blatant myth-making. That, in turn, requires openness and publicity in the interaction between institutionalized or spontaneous centers of thought and the society, which should be able to understand the information supplied by these centers and respond to it by adjusting political and social structures accordingly. Only then will we be able to talk about the genuine results of post-communist transformation in Azerbaijan.

THE REALITIES OF HISTORY IN THE MINDS OF AZERBAIJANIS

Both from the outside and the inside, Azerbaijan is usually seen to be at the intersection of the East-West and North-South axes, with an asymmetrical focus on the East and the South. This conditional geography has largely defined the history and culture of Azerbaijan, and in modern times, it has defined the geopolitical position of Azerbaijan in the world. From the inside, this geography and geopolitics defined a cultural conflict where national traditions (mainly Turkic and Islamic) interacted with the European cultural experience at various stages of Azerbaijani history; from the outside, they often turned Azerbaijan into an instrument of geopolitical manipulation.

Within this historical and cultural matrix - a sort of crossroads of cultures and religions - the people of Azerbaijan had to overhaul their political and ideological systems at least three times in the course of the past 150 years. The first time it happened was in the second half of the 19th century, as a result of the industrial boom associated with oil mining, the growth of national mentality, a new search for national identity, and a deeper perception of European culture. The political outcome of this stage was the founding of the Azerbaijani Democratic Republic (ADR), a parliamentary republic that existed in 1918-1920. Its parliament may be considered the pinnacle of Azerbaijani parliamentarism (and for the beginning of the 20th century, perhaps, the peak of all parliamentarism in both the Near East and the Middle East). Alongside other factions, ethnic minorities were represented in that parliament, including the “Slavonic-Russian alliance” faction, two Armenian factions – the Dashnaktsutyun and the Armenian Faction, and a few others. The Armenian factions were present despite the then strained relationship with Armenia.

The second overhaul took place after the advance of the Red Army and Azer-

baijan's incorporation into the Soviet Union. Soviet political rhetoric declared the USSR to be a union of independent national republics, several of which were even *de jure* subjects of international law. But *de facto*, the national republics were the satellites of the center, a fact clearly expressed in the formula of "*Moscow. The Kremlin*" as a symbol of the whole country.

The third overhaul followed the collapse of the Soviet Union and the declaration of independence, when we had to master the paradigm of civilized life: democracy, rule of law, liberal economy, human rights, etc.

Such a drastic and profound change of "historical epochs" (almost historical upheavals) in such a short historical period could not fail to affect the mentality of modern Azerbaijanis. First, they started perceiving the world beyond their thresholds as an "alien realm" to which one must adapt without setting any goals that go beyond family wellbeing. The history of the country (state, nation) became "alien" and in no way related to real life. Second, because the "historical epochs" (that were so close in time) were perceived as quite discrete, the very notion of "history" eroded, and the concept of transition transformed into the usual extra-historical stereotypes, like "nothing can change," and "things will stay the same forever." Third, it led to a split in the society where some groups of people could not relate their interests to those of other groups of people. Social and cultural differences were no longer natural but painful, because they were no longer sanctioned either by tradition or by history. The crack inside the "us" spawned newer versions of the conflict between "us and them" ("nationalist-cosmopolitan," "townsman-villager," "Azeri-speaking-Russian-speaking," "native Baku resident - newcomer Baku resident," "Turkic - non-Turkic," plus a variety of derogatory slang names for migrants, plus impenetrable barriers between the elite and the masses, plus a painful reaction to the one-sided regional representation of the authorities, etc.) and produced a dramatic conflict. Fourth, the majority of the population began to take its complete dependence on the state for granted. Political and civic mimicry became the norm of behavior, while such civil and political institutions as "a court," "a party," "the parliament," "elections," "human rights," etc., were perceived as pure phantoms.

How shall one treat this historical experience in terms of the prospects of building a democratic society? Is this experience the same for all post-colonial countries? Is it always negative? I can only say that introspective Azerbaijani democracy (which is what it should be) will have to start by focusing its attention on democracy vs. Azerbaijani Enlightenment, democracy vs. the quest for national identity, democracy vs. nationalism, democracy vs. authoritarianism (both top-down and bottom-up), democracy vs. Islamic values. Importantly, all these issues must be considered in a

systemic unity. The Azerbaijani Enlightenment, which was intense and impatient, realistic and naive (perhaps every Enlightenment involves overestimating the possibility of revamping the world with the help of reason), attempted to formulate a national idea. The national idea gave impetus to the quest for national identity; the quest for national identity, in turn, provoked nationalism of various stripes. Nationalism transformed the nation into a political actor and, at the same time, provoked renewed interest in Islamic values. In the end, nationalism both gave impetus to democratic changes and reined them in, because, as a rule, nationalism can only operate with simplistic models, including a simplistic model of democracy.³

All these historical upheavals gave rise to such features of modern Azerbaijani mentality as submissiveness to circumstances, inclination to mimicry, the habit of being constantly manipulated, a weak sense of inner freedom and independence, fear of openness and transparency, rejection of self-discovery. It was with such a mindset that we began democratic transformations following the declaration of independence.

AZERBAIJAN IN THE YEARS OF INDEPENDENCE

The ten years of Azerbaijan's independence can be divided into two asymmetric periods, both in terms of time and essence (it is too soon to talk about the third period, which began with the 2003 presidential election).

It would be fair to brand the first period as spontaneously democratic due to the fact that it was marked by anti-imperialistic and anti-totalitarian protest. In terms of social action, though, it never went beyond the "revolt of the masses" and democracy of rallies, and ended with the short-lived (under 12 months) rule of the National Front of Azerbaijan (NFA). The *perestroika* and related developments in the Soviet Union gave impetus to this movement but its immediate catalyst was the conflict in Nagorno-Karabakh (i.e. challenges from outside and inside).⁴ The movement had to wrestle not only with the resistance of the pro-Soviet political nomenclature, but also - and that was very typical - with the resistance of the mass mentality, accustomed to "no participation" and "no presence."

3 See Nodia, Ghia. "Nationalism and Democracy." *Journal of Democracy*, Volume 3, Number 4, October 1992. – Pp. 3-22; see also Francis Fukuyama's comments on Nodia's paper, *ibid.* – Pp. 23-28.

4 For details, see: Abbasov, Ali and Dmitri Furman. "Azerbaijanskaya revolyutsiya." *Azerbaijan i Rossiya: obshchestva i gosudarstva*. ("The Azerbaijani Revolution." *Azerbaijan and Russia. Societies and States*). – Moscow: 2001 (in Russian). – Pp.118-176.

In general, democracy in Azerbaijan during the reign of the NFA can be defined as non-institutionalized democracy.

First, the country's civil society was in its infancy (the number of non-governmental organizations was minuscule; local self-government was absent altogether, the multi-party system was only emerging, etc.).

Second, the organizing body of the NFA did not have sufficient administrative personnel (it has been estimated that the representatives of the NFA held only about 267 of the approximately 5000 administrative positions).

Third, the "face" of that government (not only in the social, but even in the physiognomic sense) was so unusual that it scared the average citizen, who was always fearful of change, especially because there were a lot of angry losers with excessive ambitions among the administrators appointed by that government. The NFA lacked the usual aura of power and that affected the attitude of the society (parodies, jokes, derogatory labels etc. were widespread).

At the same time, during the NFA's rule, there was an outburst of people's energy, though largely chaotic and not properly contained.

The main slogan of the new Azerbaijani president Heydar Aliyev and his team was the replacement of "incompetent" people from the street with "competent" statesmen (mainly former Communist party and nomenclature). The views of these new-old officials, however, were far removed from democratic values. Just beginning to learn democratic phraseology, these people were still accustomed to authoritarian methods of government and a rigid power hierarchy.

As in many post-Soviet states, in Azerbaijan, the presidency filled the existing political vacuum at a time when political parties, political elites and the civil society had not yet properly stabilized. The publicly expressed concerns that the president may eventually concentrate the whole power in his hands, thereby creating an authoritarian regime, were not perceived as a serious threat by the population, because only the absolute power of a strong personality (i.e. the "strong hand") could guarantee stability and order.

Beginning with the first presidency of Heydar Aliyev (1993-1998), the government officially declared its commitment to democratic values, and opposition parties were represented in the parliament, but democracy in Azerbaijan was increasingly controlled from the top, responding to external challenges primarily with an imitation of democratic transformations. As for domestic ideology, it focused on the role of the political leader as a historic "savior" of the nation, whose return provided for social stability and the creation of the Azerbaijani "state."

The post-Heydar Aliyev era has just began; it is beginning as if nothing has

changed in our society: dirty political technologies at presidential elections, and, where that is not sufficient, extreme violence, police batons, arrests, torture, direct neglect of the views of the international community. The Azerbaijani authorities, it seems, were able to adapt to new conditions (learning the lessons of Heydar Aliyev), ignoring the opinion of the domestic opposition and sluggishly reacting to criticism from international organizations. The world, both from inside and outside, turned to be completely safe for the new-old Azerbaijani authorities, and for now, nothing can shake that confidence of theirs.

HEYDAR ALIYEV AND “HEYDARALIYEVS”

One cannot talk about both the political and non-political history of Azerbaijan of the late 20th - early 21st century without referring to the figure of Heydar Aliyev. Democracy in Azerbaijan in the past ten years is certainly a controlled democracy, and it was controlled primarily by one person, Heydar Aliyev. Democracy in Azerbaijan in the past ten years is not only a manifestation of the underlying processes stirring the society, but also the result of Heydar Aliyev's political maneuvers, or, in other words, his ability to influence people and circumstances so that they would not leave his control, would always be subject to his will, and would not endanger Heydar Aliyev, his family and his close associates. The ability to totally control the situation was perhaps Heydar Aliyev's key quality.

Heydar Aliyev worked for the NKVD-KGB system for about 30 years, becoming a Soviet KGB general, and never abandoned the methods employed by the KGB (the same total control over the situation and human beings). Unlike the overwhelming majority of Azerbaijanis, he managed to enter the highest ranks of the Soviet political establishment and was for the rest of his life proud of this career achievement (to Heydar Aliyev, his political career was a confirmation of his superiority over all other Azerbaijanis). Both when his office was called the First Secretary of the Communist Party of Azerbaijan, and when it was called the President of the Azerbaijani Republic, Heydar Aliyev created and maintained a regime of personal authoritarian power, and thereby largely emasculated the Azerbaijani society. But how can an almost 33-year rule by one person in a country go without a corresponding response of the society to this rule, and also, perhaps in this sense, does not the portrait of that one man become the collective portrait of his fellow countrymen? How did it happen that the post-communist euphoria in Azerbaijan was so quickly replaced by the return of a former Communist leader to power? Who can argue that Heydar Aliyev's political actions were not dictated by the demands of the time, in

Azerbaijan and beyond? What is the reason that Heydar Aliyev was not perceived as an odious figure by the global community, unlike, say, the post-Soviet leaders of Belarus or Turkmenistan? Perhaps a figure of Heydar Aliyev's scale should not be considered only from a political perspective; is it not hard to imagine a future writer for whom Heydar Aliyev will be interesting simply as a man with a strong will and an incredible strength of spirit that conquered the most adverse circumstances and created his own destiny with his own hands. Although the official mourning for the death of Heydar Aliyev has ended in the country, sophisticated intellectuals from the government camp are on Azerbaijani television almost every day, trying to invent new rationales in the vein that that we, the Azerbaijanis, have lost a genius never equaled in our history, a man who created the "modern Azerbaijan," and who was almost a dissident in Soviet times. Referring to sacred religious texts, a well-known theologian and academician of the National Academy explains to viewers that Heydar Aliyev was chosen by God. A commission is working to perpetuate the memory of the president, and it is putting forth the most extravagant proposals, for example, erecting a huge statue of Heydar Aliyev in the sea (perhaps to compete with the American Statue of Liberty). But at the same time, the most radical opposition newspapers in Azerbaijan describe Heydar Aliyev as a typical twentieth century dictator; they extensively quote "The Autumn of the Patriarch" by Gabriel Garcia Marquez, finding direct parallels in the novel with the final stage of Heydar Aliyev's life and with his death.

In contrast to other myths, political myths are usually short-lived and quickly destroyed by the first serious challenge that time mounts. One can easily suppose that this will sooner or later (rather sooner) happen to the political myth about Heydar Aliyev. But what will happen with the real legacy of Aliyev in the minds and souls of Azerbaijanis, including the minds and souls of the political and intellectual elite? How will this affect our future? Is serious introspection possible in present-day Azerbaijan on what has happened to us over the past decade? If that turns out to be possible (for now it is hard to believe that), then the first thing that will have to undergo an in-depth analysis will be the widely publicized idea that Heydar Aliyev saved the country from chaos, built our statehood, raised our prestige on the international arena, etc. One will have to answer whether there are any national interests in the name of which the state can resort to sophisticated and, if necessary, rough methods of destroying any serious opposition opinion; besides, there are reasons to expect the current government to stick to Heydar Aliyev's "successful" policies. Is it a virtue when one man is able to successfully rule not only the state but also the society, ignoring the constitution? Should we admire the fact that one man person-

ally supervises all major financial flows within the country? Can we have a strong state with a weak civil society, and what is the good of such a state for its ordinary citizens? Why does disappointment with our government make us apathetic, and why does disappointment in one man result in a loss of faith in the society of normal people, in which everyone's fate is not decided by the Father-Savior but by us, the ones who vote, monitor, elect and reelect? How shall we reconcile the paternalistic tendencies so typical of Azerbaijani mentality with the establishment of democratic institutions that rule out any "fatherly" care?

Adam Michnik, the famous Polish dissident, used to tell his version of Plato's Allegory of the Cave. According to Michnik, for decades we have tried to break through into the cave, the entrance to which was guarded by the seemingly indestructible idol of communism. Finally, we managed to crush it, break into the cave, and there, to our horror, we found a huge number of no less powerful idols, whose existence we had never suspected. Similarly, we have been trying for many years to destroy the idol of "Heydar Aliyev", and when we finally succeed and we break into the cave, we will find a lot of idols, "heydaraliyevs," whose existence we have not suspected. Only then, with the fight against these idols, the struggle for genuine democracy in Azerbaijan will begin.

AZERBAIJAN'S OPPOSITION BETWEEN "YESTERDAY" AND "TOMORROW"

Both on the eve of presidential elections and afterwards, the topic of the opposition occupied the front pages of Azerbaijani newspapers. We hear faint calls for dialogue from the authorities' side, although these calls can hardly have a constructive basis, because for more than ten years the opposition has been declared the main cause of almost all ills and society's number one enemy. After the elections, the opposition was criticized not only by government newspapers, but by "centrist" and radical publications as well.⁵ Everybody wants to stone the opposition losers (even if *de facto* they have not lost), as if retaliating for unfulfilled expectations, or simply as a symptom of general disappointment and frustration.

In my opinion, many of those who are trying to distance themselves from the Azerbaijani opposition do not realize that the existence of that opposition allows them to at least preserve some degree of independence, even in private, non-polit-

⁵ See, for example, "The opposition is confused. One can even assume that it is prostrate." *Zerkalo*, December 11, 2003. The first sentence in the heading is in large type and spread over the whole page, so that readers can appreciate its social significance.

ical issues, like having less reason to fear the bosses and less need to pretend, and being able to freely buy and openly read the most radical publications. We can admit that the Azerbaijani opposition has done little to help us become a civilized society, with properly functioning rule-of-law institutions, but at the same time, we must acknowledge that the Azerbaijani opposition has been helping us overcome the totalitarian Soviet past rooted in the minds of people.

However, all this happened *yesterday*. We have passed a milestone in the history of our democracy; it had begun with massive rallies at the “Azadlyg” (“Liberty”) square in the late 1980s and the early 1990s, continued for a year under the NFA government, passed through many other states and ended with the October events in Azerbaijan. One has to admit that this stage is gone forever (relapses can only be pathetic and comical). Something is over. It ended in defeat, if one does not perceive defeat as death; sometimes, though, defeat equals victory, if one has the courage to honestly interpret it. A hundred thousand people rallying for the opposition just days before the elections of October 15, 2003, speeches by opposition candidates on television (outside the campaign, they have never had that opportunity), which stirred the public, a premonition of a possible victory of the opposition (the premonition was part gamble and part over-excitement but also a true spiritual uplift), the presidential elections that triggered unprecedented engagement of Azerbaijani society, and then a decline and disappointment with the reaction of the international community to the events in Azerbaijan.⁶ Azerbaijanis will remember the demeanor of the Norwegian Ambassador to Azerbaijan, Steinar Gil, who clearly and unequivocally declared that democracy, freedom and humanism have no alternative and cannot be a bargaining chip, even for a high-ranking diplomat.⁷ However, that was all *yesterday*, even though some of those trends persist.

Despite disagreeing with much of what is being written about the Azerbaijani opposition, I am inclined to think that the past presidential elections in Azerbaijan must become some sort of a borderline for the opposition, a borderline to be followed by new ideas and new actions.

The ability to prolong the future (the *tomorrow*) is an important ability of living systems; if, of course, they are still *living systems*.

⁶ In this sense, the question posed by well-known human rights activist Arzu Abdullayeva is illustrative. “Have international institutions betrayed us?” One newspaper chose to run this as the heading for her interview (*Obozrevatel*, November 26, 2003). From disappointment with the world to frustration with oneself there is only one step.

⁷ *Echo*, December 13, 2003.

CIVIL SOCIETY IN AZERBAIJAN

A. *The myth of stability and the civil society*

Debates over civil society mention a problem that relates directly to the social and political realities of Azerbaijan. The problem may be described with the following formula: “stability versus democracy” (an important modification of it is “force versus dialogue”). For the past nearly ten years, the Azerbaijani authorities have built virtually all of their political rhetoric around the myth of stability: stability = the doing of the president, stability = end of chaos and amateurism in politics, stability = successful nationbuilding, etc. Everyone who dares to criticize the equation of *Stability = President = State = Nation = Azerbaijani people* is destructive and plainly hostile. These include those parties, NGOs, media and other civil society organizations that are not subject to control from the top.

Arguing with the myth is pointless and hopeless. But the problem of “stability versus democracy” is a very serious one; it has many aspects (political, psychological, and perhaps even mental), and correlates with the establishment of civil society in Azerbaijan in the form of the following three questions: How is the establishment of civil society possible in post-Soviet, post-totalitarian societies? What modifications may civil society undergo in these societies? How can civil society function in a place where cultural and mental traditions do not contain prerequisites for democracy? Or, perhaps, in this case we should rather speak about prerequisites for an anthropogenic civilization?

All post-Soviet countries (the Baltic countries to a lesser extent) have emerged from the Soviet totalitarian system. Several decades of existence in the Soviet Union accustomed us to the fact that our whole life - from the state-run maternity ward to the state-run cemetery - happens within the state and under its constant supervision. The social structure of post-Soviet societies in the early years after independence was about the same. It included presidential authority with almost unlimited powers (in Azerbaijan, political rhetoric has presented Heydar Aliyev as absolutely synonymous with the notion of “President”). Public officials became super-monopolists in the economy (in Azerbaijan, the bureaucracy itself is under the full subordination of the President and his family). Meanwhile, most people in the society are dispossessed, especially in terms of their mentality.

A thin stratum of so-called “oligarchs” has formed in several post-Soviet countries, but almost everywhere (Azerbaijan is no exception), these people cater to the demands of the ruling clan (“the Family”) not to the requirements of the market.

We can therefore state that political power in Azerbaijan is used as a tool to obtain huge profits, thus consolidating the authoritarian, bureaucratic and corrupt system of government. Add to this the amalgamation of power and property, and you inevitably get a judicial system dependent on the authorities, and the substitution of human and civil rights with privileges (their extent depends on one's place in the vertical hierarchy). Given all this, it is not surprising that such "societies" have been nicknamed "neo-feudal."

Can institutions of civil society operate under such conditions? After all, the first shoots of civil society in Azerbaijan had to find social lifts in that kind of a "society" (to be more precise, in that kind of a "state"). Those shoots could only grow due to external challenges, primarily thanks to international funds and the global information space in which post-Soviet countries found themselves once the Soviet information barriers finally went down. The institutions proto-civil society, or rather, the proto-institutions of civil society of proto-civil society, recruited into their ranks many active and enterprising citizens (both honest and dishonest, unscrupulous and moral) who, depending on the public mood, got involved in political parties, the non-governmental sector (NGOs), and the media. However, the social space of the civil society was under pressure from all sides, mostly on the part of the state that tried to keep this sector under its control, but also on the part of the "society" (the dispossessed population), which was afraid of independent existence without state support. It is unlikely (at least in the transition period) that an atmosphere of publicity, competitiveness and free "pulsation" (all that Jürgen Habermas ties with the concept of "the public sphere") can emerge in Azerbaijan and in most other former Soviet countries. Similarly, it is hard to expect in the near future that we will build institutions of civil society that are, first, public and open; second, capable of establishing multi-dimensional, communicative links; third, able to defend themselves from the power of the bureaucratic, corporate-authoritarian state; fourth, preserving their spontaneity but able to avoid the excessive greed and selfishness of personal, family and group interests (the latter is particularly relevant for Azerbaijan); fifth; sixth, tenth ... One should hope that domestic challenges will remain and challenges from the outside will not weaken. Also, one should hope people will eventually realize that democracy is impossible without at least some separation of the society from the state.

Finally, we need to look at the cultural matrix and popular mindset that can either prevent or encourage the establishment of democracy (or of an anthropogenic civilization) in general and institutions of civil society in particular. Did Azerbaijan possess historical-cultural and mental preconditions for such a leap? To answer this

question, one must go beyond the scope of this article and perhaps beyond democracy studies in general. One will need to see post-communist transformations in the context of either a dialogue or a clash of civilizations, and view the possibility of democracy in post-Soviet countries from the perspective of mastering the cultural-genetic code of an anthropogenic civilization.

B. Institutions of civil society in Azerbaijan

The establishment of nongovernmental organizations (NGOs) should be recognized as the most significant achievement of civil society in Azerbaijan. The NGO movement in Azerbaijan began in 1991, immediately after the independence and at a time when many international organizations opened their offices in Azerbaijan and the South Caucasus. As of November 2003, there were approximately 2000 registered NGOs in Azerbaijan, of which approximately 25 percent were active. Their activities chiefly lie in the realm of human rights, environment, health, education, people with disabilities, children, youth, gender and migration.

The NGO movement in Azerbaijan remains vulnerable for the following reasons:

- The state has monopolized the social sector, does not view NGOs as social partners, and is potentially ready for direct or covert repressive measures to prevent NGOs from becoming an autonomous and independent force;
- Among the majority of the population, accustomed to paternalism in the social sphere, there is distrust, and sometimes even outright aggression with regard to NGOs (one of the negative labels, “grant-eaters,” is essentially a reaction of dispossessed consciousness);
- State and public distrust towards NGOs prevents them from overcoming the open or latent tendencies of state tutelage and moving into the open public space, with a strong reliance on communication, social and legal technologies;
- In the absence of funding from the government, NGOs largely remain the clients of Western donors, which forces them to adapt to the donors’ priorities;
- There is a persistent gap between actual projects and the real concerns and needs of the society (the population); and
- Financial sustainability of NGOs remains elusive, because NGOs are not actually involved in the real market.

Any innovation program presupposes the involvement of active agents of the society, but if the initiative of these agents, united in voluntary organizations, continues to be restrained, then the NGO sector in Azerbaijan will forever remain dependent on Western funds and at best engage in charitable activities.

Under new conditions, social investments by the government should not be about distributing privileges; rather, they must aim to create a legal space which is essential for the self-fulfillment of citizens. In Azerbaijan, however, even the simple issue of the legal registration of NGOs becomes a lever of pressure on NGOs in the hands of the authorities (another manifestation of the so-called “controlled democracy”). Nevertheless, the recent struggle against the abolition of the amendments to the Law on Grants adopted by the parliament in June 2002, which was aimed at the subordination of NGOs to local executive bodies, demonstrated that Azerbaijani NGOs have become a real social force, and are able to consolidate, when and if necessary.

Local self-government bodies (municipalities) could become another important sector of civil society in Azerbaijan. The laws on local self-government in Azerbaijan were drafted back in 1997, but were not approved by the parliament. The amended legislation was adopted only in 1999, right before the first and so far the only elections to municipalities. They generated an unprecedented electoral situation in the country: overall, 27,000 municipalities were established throughout Azerbaijan. However, both the elections and the first results of the operation of municipalities have demonstrated, first, that the very existence of municipalities, as a form of plurality in the field of public administration, remains alien to the philosophy of the government in power in Azerbaijan. Second, they put on display the complete unpreparedness of the population to the ideas and practices of local self-government. Scant and confused views on local self-government were held not just by voters but also by the first wave of elected municipal officials.

By creating municipalities (above all, under pressure from the international community), the government allowed a rather large number of opposition representatives access to the social stage, but had no wish to share power with the newly organized bodies. For instance, according to Article 7 of the Law on Land Reform, part of the land was transferred to municipalities to ensure that they would be able to finance their activities from the income from these lands. However, the subsequently adopted Land Code (Article 46) took the land away from municipalities. Thanks to this Code, the legislative and executive branches (no need to repeat that under Azerbaijani “neo-feudalism,” both branches are components of a single power hierarchy) substantially limited the financial resources of local “self-government” bodies. In Baku, the executive took control of those areas of activity that by law must have been transferred to municipalities (advertising, etc.) Data which is both funny and sad was published by *Qanun* (“Law”) magazine that put together a comparative table of the division of powers between the executive and municipal authorities. In

almost all areas (agriculture, transport, communications, trade, etc.) powers intersect, and the powers of the executive greatly exceed the opportunities of municipalities. The only sphere exclusively controlled by municipalities is “the organization of funeral services and the protection of cemeteries”; however, it is hard to believe that a potentially income-generating activity - and funeral services are one - can actually stay in the hands of municipalities.

We have to admit that most municipalities are virtually dormant. Only a few of the most enterprising mayors manage to find scarce funds to implement minuscule activities. There is, meanwhile, no doubt that both local self-government and the restoration of the historic and cultural diversity of Azerbaijan depends on the future of municipalities. “Controlled democracy” is essentially a euphemism for the lack of civil society. That is why one can easily surmise that the problem of “civil society vs. controllability” will remain the major challenge for the Democracy Project in Azerbaijan. Anyway, civil society in Azerbaijan remains the main area where the individual has an opportunity for self-determination, and therefore also freedom, or, in other words, becoming conscious of one’s presence in this world. That consciousness, once it emerges, becomes ineradicable, even if it appears suppressed, stifled, and totally controlled. It is just waiting for its time.

BAKU: A CITY AND A STATE

In this article, we refer to the capital city to an extent to which its history and modernity impact democratic changes in Azerbaijan. The paradox is that industrial and postindustrial Baku encourages democratic change while also preventing it by being an apparent substitute for the rest of Azerbaijan and an epitome of authoritarianism.

In the early 19th century, it was impossible to identify Baku with the country whose capital it would later become. Therefore, we have reason to believe that the chronotopes (the co-ordinates in which time intersects with space, thereby creating a particular cultural and historical phenomenon) of Baku and Azerbaijan only began to converge, overlap, coincide and, subsequently, mutually identify only in recent times, reaching an extreme when one chronotope threatens to destroy the other.

Beyond doubt, conquest by the Russian Empire stimulated Baku’s urban development, manifest in the gradual reduction of agricultural activity, population growth and changes in its composition, and in various trends of economic development, education, etc. In many ways, however, the city remained an agricultural one,

though with differentiation of crafts (possibly, a legacy of a developed medieval town) servicing in part the needs of agriculture.

The situation changed dramatically with the advent of the oil boom. It started with rapid industrial development of the city, typical of the so-called “mushroom towns” that grow in close proximity to sources of commodities: the construction of a port and a railway, an intensive influx of people and the emergence of a large metropolitan area and of a commercial and administrative city center, and the construction of luxurious private houses, many of which later became architectural monuments. Various forms of municipal government developed gradually, though the divide between civilian and military rule remained intact (an empire is an empire) until the establishment of the Azerbaijani Democratic Republic.

In Soviet times, Baku became the capital of the Soviet Socialist Republic, with all ensuing symbols and rituals. The city’s industry developed, and a satellite town was established. Baku turned into an educational and cultural center with many research and education institutions, libraries, theaters, and cinemas.

Since independence (especially in the past 5-7 years), a huge number of new buildings have been erected. Embassies, banks, offices of international companies, supermarkets, night clubs etc. have opened in Baku.

The picture seems very rosy, suggesting a smooth transition from a “city of commodities” to a multifunctional modern industrial city. Apparently, the costs of such rapid development can be considered natural and some of them even inevitable: many large industrial cities have “shanty towns,” and some countries have become hinterland of their new-born capitals. But today many things suggest a crisis in the development of Baku, which to a greater or lesser extent affects democratic reform in Azerbaijan. A rather regrettable “functional transmission” is underway: having started its urban development from a commodity function, Baku is gradually returning to it. On one hand, the “commodity base” makes Baku an instrument of geopolitical manipulations (in which we, Azeris, do not seem to be present), on the other hand, in the absence of proper democratic institutions, it aggravates corruption. It is well known that many cities have disappeared from the historical arena due to overexploitation of natural resources and failure to ensure a “functional transmission”; we cannot exclude such a scenario in the case of Baku.

However, it is possible that in the historical cataclysm like the one Baku has experienced, mutational phenomena emerge that are hard to pin down. They lead to the emergence of a new active type of person with a new lifestyle (or, so far, without one), whom most other people reject on aesthetic or ethical grounds. Neverthe-

less, time may eliminate many of the concerns and perhaps harmonize the “old” and “new” worldviews.

Below I cite two factors in the development of Baku that, in my opinion, have become major obstacles to democracy in Azerbaijan.

A) The extremes of centralization

Baku, with its concentration of political and administrative power, has for some time been suppressing political, social, intellectual and even artistic life in the regions. In political terms, such centralization is an extension and expression of the hierarchy of power in Azerbaijan. It is not just about the “emasculatation” of the regions, but about Baku not being able to cope with the flow of refugees, displaced persons and migrants moving in the search of jobs. In the absence of an organic “functional transmission,” various ways of behavior in the city become mutually hostile, and it is difficult to predict how this pot may behave. On the other hand, there is nothing unusual about metropolitan areas that suck energy out of provinces and then crumble under the pressure of those same energies.

B) The non-reflective principle of urban life

For normal life, a city (even if it is not democratic) needs adequate information about itself, ranging from data on economic activity to the variety of opinions that citizens hold on various issues. Therefore, a city must constantly engage in *self-description* and *self-reflection*, which must ensure the self-regulation of its fragile social coexistence (in this case, fragility is a virtue of the city, like the fragility of democracy is its virtue). Without the reflective exercises, the city will slip into the traditional rural lifestyle (which always exists on the city’s margins and in its “subconscious”), giving preference to the past “non-reflective” experiences of the ancestors over self-reflection through a constant flow of information. In this event, the past, as something more stable and more deeply rooted in the mind, will constantly return, but it will do so in perverse forms.

In Baku’s everyday life, in its administration and in its, so to speak, philosophy, information and self-discovery have not become truly functional. There is still no clarity on such key issues as the changes in the proportion between urban and rural areas, incomes of the city dwellers, migration trends within the city, demographics of the city center, the number of migrants, the dynamics of their settlement, detailed medical statistics, etc. Of course, newspapers and magazines are mushrooming, and to some extent they reflect public opinion. In recent years, many think tanks have opened; there are also quite a few research institutes and research departments at

universities. But none of them, irrespective of whether or not they work well, are *institutionally embedded* in urban life. They are not weaved into the city's multifunctional fabric, fulfilling the information and adaptation functions needed for the development of the city, and thereby of the country. This results in the rebirth of a traditional patriarchal mentality, which, in turn, is quietly transformed into tribalist and clan mentality. Baku, in this sense, is not a guarantor of political stability but a permanent breeding ground for social discontent, both within the city and beyond.

Typically for a large industrial city, Baku is surrounded with uncontrollably growing satellite towns that strive to break through to the center and impose their aesthetics of life, the aesthetics of "time-servers," on it. The democratic rhetoric becomes a way of disguising the tribalist and clan-based organization of social life. What is more, the residents of the capital city become increasingly disconnected - both politically and culturally - from the rest of the population of Azerbaijan. According to the 1997 population census data, more than 60 percent of the Azerbaijani population dwells in cities and towns, and Baku's population makes up for over 40 percent of the population of Azerbaijan (in reality, the figure is higher, since many migrants reside in Baku illegally).

Azerbaijanis are certainly no longer a rural nation, but who can guarantee that we will not eventually turn into a nation of "eternal migrants" in our own capital?

AZERBAIJANI DEMOCRACY: PRELIMINARY RESULTS

How should one assess democracy in Azerbaijan? Can the present political regime in Azerbaijan be considered democratic?

It is difficult to answer such a question in concrete terms. First, there is no "standard" of democracy against which the processes currently underway in Azerbaijan could be "measured." Of course, implicitly there is the Western "standard" of democracy, which Western missionaries of democracy refer to, and which the government in Azerbaijan attempts to simulate (from time to time, it hypocritically justifies its actions by saying that we, in contrast to Western democracies, are only at the beginning of the road, and that explains our errors of judgment). But it is practically impossible to describe this "standard," and political scientists have to recognize the vagueness of the concept of "democracy." Second, the question gets even more confusing when it comes to "democratic transition" in different countries and different regions, including "democratic transition" in post-authoritarian countries. There are more questions than answers here: is it possible to detect trends in democratic

transition in post-authoritarian countries, and will we not find major differences in the outcomes of these transitions? Should we perhaps speak about the emergence of new types of democracy but also about the “growing diversity of incompleteness” and a wide grey area of “incomplete democracies”? Is it a legitimate concern that democratic transformation is impossible without a special culture of “legal norms and moral imperatives”? To what extent do cultural and psychological characteristics impede the advancement of democracy? Are post-authoritarian countries actually undergoing a democratic transition involving dramatic restructuring of political institutions, or should we speak of the “freezing” of post-communist states and the “procrastination of transit”? Or, maybe even of the “standstill” of democracy, which came to replace the “tidal wave” of democracy (the “third wave” defined by Samuel Huntington)? Or, perhaps, we should simply speak of the stability of certain features that have already been acquired by the “new democracies.” In any event, we need to abandon unnecessary illusions and unjustified expectations.

These questions are directly linked to democracy in Azerbaijan, and we will have to answer them for years to come. But even for a preliminary assessment of democratic changes in Azerbaijan, we cannot avoid relying on minimal democratic standards. We can even select just one standard from this list: elections (some researchers believe one must apply at least two standards: elections and tax payment). If we agree with Huntington that “democracy does not mean that problems will be solved; it means that rulers can be removed,” we must acknowledge that this parameter of democracy in Azerbaijan has not yet been fulfilled.

There is another criterion of democracy in Azerbaijan which cannot be ignored: *freedom*, though admittedly “freedom” is hard to measure. In its *Nations in Transit* ratings, Freedom House lists Azerbaijan as a “not free” country, a fact that irritates the pro-government circles of Azerbaijan who are apparently dissatisfied with the “uncontrolled world.”

In this context, if one tries to diagnose the democratic development of Azerbaijan at the turn of the decade, one has to first of all note a sharp divergence between the dominant political rhetoric and the reality. According to the Constitution of Azerbaijan and the public statements of the ruling political elites, Azerbaijan is a democracy, in which democratic principles are applied to all spheres of life, from economy to culture, and where priority is given to the protection of the fundamental rights and freedoms of citizens. But in reality, we see stable authoritarianism, going far beyond the requirements of the “transition period”; virtual absence of separation of powers and, as a consequence, total dependence of the legislative and judicial branches of government on the executive; omnipotence of security struc-

tures; widespread violation of basic civil rights; arbitrariness of the bureaucracy; dominance of the informal sector, which by itself, is an indication of the permanent failure in the implementation of laws; weakness of civil society institutions; corporate and clan trends (in Azerbaijan these trends are manifest in the regional clan version) that disrupt the unity of the Azerbaijani society, etc.

This said, it would be simplistic, on one hand, to demonize the political power, and on the other, to exaggerate the need for the “protection of the oppressed.” One has to admit that the hypocrisy of the authorities (someone accurately described it as “systemic insincerity”) is the reverse side of the simplified perception of democracy as a linear-progressive process, a perception shared by the public and the elite. Moreover, in mass mentality, there is an old and recurring belief that democracy must immediately meet everyone’s material needs and ensure “social justice.” The painful reaction to material hardships became a breeding ground for both authoritarian rhetoric and various manifestations of populist demagoguery.

As a rule, the transition from authoritarianism to democracy does not happen overnight and involves two stages which are different but not necessarily separate in time: the demise of the authoritarian regime and the actual creation of democratic institutions. In Azerbaijan, the first stage is not over; it may even have achieved some stability (i.e. lost the quality of transition), and we may have to witness its various transformations and modifications for a long time to come. Of course, we live in a global world and can expect stronger pressure from the international democratic community. Yet, unfortunately, many Azerbaijani illusions associated with that pressure have so far not materialized. One can only hope that new political actors will enter the Azerbaijani political arena and launch the process of democratic change consciously and without hypocrisy. Perhaps the transition in Azerbaijan will then start in earnest, with all the difficulties and problems inherent to any transition.

AFTERWORD

While working on this paper, I kept thinking of the traditional opening line of Azerbaijani fairy tales: *biri var idi, biri yokh idi*. It can be translated in various ways, e.g. “one was and one wasn’t”, “there was and there wasn’t” and “it either happened or it didn’t.” Even a seemingly simple phrase like this has so much ambiguity. No wonder then that it is so difficult to agree on the meaning of a complex phenomenon like democracy.

Democracy has long ceased to be an idea; it has become a geopolitical reality. It is clear that is universal and can be reproduced, at least on the level of democratic

procedures. However, in the context of national cultures, it can only be unique. This uniqueness is manifest in both the discussion and the implementation of democratic change. There is also the “unspoken” of each democracy, not always discussed and not always implemented, but still unique.

The main thing is that the “unspoken” of a democracy must not contain hidden threats, whether internal or external.

ELITES AND KICK-BACKS: A SKETCH FROM THE NORTHERN CAUCASUS IN 2008¹

By Sergey Arutyunov²

I would like to start by pointing out that for 25 years, I have led the Caucasus Department at the Institute of Ethnology and Anthropology of the Russian Academy of Sciences. Before 1990, our work mainly consisted of research into ethnological, ethnographical and academic issues, but for the past 20 years, we have had to pay more attention to monitoring ethno-political relations. This is unpleasant, but true. One can use various methods for monitoring but for an ethnographer, the key methods are observation, participant observation and interviewing. Those are the methods we rely on in our work, but I have to admit that it is getting harder to conduct research, as there are obstacles to participant observation, and just observation is only yielding superficial data. You cannot go in-depth as long as you are just an observer, plus, it is becoming more difficult to find respondents: people are unwilling to speak, to be interviewed, and so on. We will do our best to overcome these obstacles, but so far they are there, and getting worse.

The North Caucasus holds a special place in the socio-political and economic systems of the Russian Federation. The Russian Federation is ruled by neither Prime Minister Putin nor President Medvedev, who may have good intentions which they sometimes think they fulfil, but in reality, most of the time these intentions lose momentum while descending the power vertical, and get reduced to zero by the time they reach its bottom.

The Russian Federation is governed by what is incorrectly called “the elite.” In fact, the elite of the Russian Federation consists of people like me. This is also true for Georgia, Armenia and other small countries where the elites are first and foremost the artists, scholars, painters, writers, etc. Some experts use the term “anti-elites,” there is also a more neutral term, “the establishment.” The Russian Federation is,

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therefore, ruled by its corporate establishment. I will not look at the components of this establishment here; they are evident to most people. The central government takes advantage of the North Caucasus, relying on the local establishments in its regions and republics.

I will not look at Stavropolsky kray, a bleak region that has its own interests and distinguishing features but it is of little significance. I will not look at Krasnodarsky Kray either. Krasnodarsky Kray is an enormous region, quite fascinating in terms of its ethnic composition, and in terms of its social groups and orientations which are now gaining particular importance. I believe the recent elections of the Mayor of Sochi to have been of key importance. The inefficient and ill-thought out plan to conduct the winter Olympic Games in a city with a subtropical climate never looked very realistic, and became totally absurd with the unfolding global financial crisis which no one could have predicted at the time when the decision was being made in Guatemala. Nevertheless, the preparation process is clearly underway, and while its result is not really important, the process *per se* is. The process grants special standing to Krasnodarsky Kray, the Sochi regions and all neighbouring territories including Abkhazia; it also dictates specific economic and social developments and changes.

That is why this paper will only focus on the republics of the North Caucasus. Each of them has a powerful shadow economy. All of these regions have their own natural economies; though they could produce more if they tried harder, at least they provide local populations with food, and even sell some agricultural goods to the wider market. The Russian establishment does not care about this food production; what matters is that the North Caucasus is overall a subsidized region, and that suits both local and central establishments. The mechanism is quite simple: the bulk of the tax money collected in the region (according to guidelines, it should not be over 50 percent but now it amounts to between 60-70 percent) goes to the central government. This is not important, because the actual amount of taxes collected is meagre, the regions cannot collect any more. The central government's subsidies are much larger; some of the money is stolen on the way but this is not crucial. The key procedure is as follows: once the subsidy gets to the region, part of it goes back to the central government in the form of kickbacks, and the rest is split between local actors. Some of the smaller cuts eventually reach deprived social groups that include relatives and clientele of the people from the establishment. The situation suits everyone, even those who are below the lowest level of the middle class.

There is certainly an immense gap between the officially registered income of various social groups, according to which the North Caucasus is one of the poor-

est regions of Russia, and the reality. In reality, it is one of the wealthiest Russian regions, because the standard of living of an average villager in the North Caucasus is much higher than that of any villager in Central Russia, definitely higher than that of a villager in Yakutia or Buryatia. The key question is thus the *modus operandi* of the local establishment functions. To what degree is the local establishment consolidated or the opposite, dispersed?

Let us move from west to east, as usual. In Adygeya, the overall situation is positive. Tkhakushinov is the president, the power is mainly in the hands of ethnic Adygs; the same applies to the police. There are many reasons behind the desire of Krasnodarsky Kray to annex Adygeya; one is to expand the territory of Krasnodar across the bridge. They have built a wonderful bridge, but on one side, there is a big city, and on the other, there is Adygeya, a different republic and it is impossible to sail there. In 1985, the question was raised about annexing parts of Adygeya to Krasnodarsky kray, as an expert, I managed to convince the authorities to renounce the idea, and it has not been discussed since. The relationship between the Krasnodarsky Kray and the Adygeya establishments is more or less normal. The fact that the establishment of Adygeya consists of ethnic Adygs does not invoke protest among the Russian part of the population, which is at the lower level of the social ladder but gets on with Adygs, although those are a minority, comprising 25 percent of the republic's population.

The situation is much worse in Karachay-Cherkessia. The local establishment is not consolidated. Karachay have their own ethnic interests which they manifest through exercising *Karachay power*, Cherkess used to exercise *Cherekess power* which they have lost, and though they still retain influence in economy, they feel deprived. There is a Russian minority balancing among these two power centres, the weakening Cherkess one and burgeoning Karachay. The Russian minority is trying to get its share of the pie. There are also Abazin and Nogay minorities which are few in numbers (23,000 Abazins and 12,000 Nogays), attempting to get some "crumbs" of the pie. There is a competition between different ethnic groups trying to acquire as much as possible; the establishment is not consolidated. The quality and quantity of the "crumbs" from budget subsidies and transfers from the centre which reach the general public are decreasing due to the competition within the establishment, and it distresses the general public. Disapproval is voiced differently by different groups. The central government or Russia's top establishment is also unhappy, because, due to poor consolidation of the local elite, kickbacks are decreasing. The central establishment would like the local elite to be consolidated, because in this

case, kickbacks will increase, the doling out of the money will be done more neatly, and everyone will be happier.

In neighbouring Kabardino-Balkaria, the situation is close to ideal. Kabardins exercise full *Kabardin power*. Arsen Kanokov, a powerful and intelligent leader, has managed to consolidate the Kabardin elite. Initially, Balkarians complained that they had been expelled to Siberia and Kazakhstan, later they complained that they were returned to the wrong place, then they complained about the distribution of official posts. Now they complain that they are made redundant earlier and employed later. There are many complaints coming from Balkarians, some of them are substantiated and some of them not, but the top of Balkarian establishment does get some decent posts in the local government agencies. I am not aware of the situation below that level. I believe some of their complaints are justified and some are not, and their complaining may well be out of proportion with reality; however, it does not cause much trouble. In Kabardino-Balkaria, as everywhere in the North Caucasus, the Russian population gets gradually driven out; representatives of Russian traditions and interests in the establishment are leaving. Arsen Kanokov normalised relations with the remaining Russian minority in the republic. Muslims are treated better than under Kokov, when policemen kicked pregnant devout Muslim women in the abdomen “so she doesn’t give birth to a Wahhabi.” This does not happen anymore. Islam has never had deep roots there. Overall, Kanokov quite successfully rules the republic.

North Ossetia is next on the map. North Ossetia is special and we won’t look at it in great detail. North Ossetia has to deal with a territorial dispute with Ingushetia regarding the Prigorodny region, which has been occupied by Ossetians; it also ambivalent and very complicated relations with South Ossetia. In fact, the Ossetian-Ingush conflict, alongside the memory of Beslan and some other things, is what consolidates the society here. There are no significant contradictions between Ossetians and the Russian minority; rather, there are misunderstandings between two sub-ethnic groups of Ossetians, the *Irons* (pronounced ee-rons) autochthonous to North Ossetia and the *Kudars* who have migrated from South Ossetia in large numbers. There are not many people left in South Ossetia now, and as to the Ossetian population of the rest of Georgia, including on the right coast of Kura in the Gori region, in the Pankisi Gorge and Kakhetiya, all of them migrated to North Ossetia a long time ago, and this upsets the North Ossetians. However, it does not affect the establishment.

Ingushetiya comes next. President Zyazikov has entirely failed to execute the central government’s orders. He has let Ingushetia fall into neglect. He is not a bad

person and was a capable policeman, but he lacks managerial skills. He allowed blood feuds to develop, and under his rule, many nasty occurrences happened including the shootings of several Russian teachers; given that Ingushetia only had a handful of Russian teachers to start with, this was a shame. Since it has become more difficult for insurgents to operate in Chechnya, Ingushetia is like a holiday resort for them. Yunus-bek Yevkurov, the new governor of Ingushetia, does not have a background in law enforcement, but he is a smart army officer, like all army officers from the Caucasus: it runs in their blood. At the moment, he does not have many supporters in the republic, and the situation is chaotic, with many clans fighting against each other, constant shootings and massacres. The clans are ethnic Ingush: there are practically no non-Ingush people left in the republic. Yevkurov summons the clan leaders and says, like a Soviet cartoon character, Leopold the Cat, “guys, let us all be friends.” The “guys” are reluctant to become friends, but nevertheless, Yevkurov somehow manages to persuade them. He has facilitated the reconciliation of 70 family clans: they stopped their blood feuds, paid some of the damages, apologized and showed their repentance. There are 200 more clans left to be reconciled. Yevkurov will eventually succeed in reconciling them, if he has enough time. So his appeal, “guys, let’s be friends,” does work somehow.

Now to Chechnya; it is a perfect example. Ramzan Kadyrov has managed to turn the ruling establishment into a monolith, with his own clan at the top, and the rest of the clans marching in line. Those whom he has failed to reign in, were either murdered, as the Yamadaev brothers (some of them were killed in St Petersburg, others in the United Arab Emirates, and Baysarov was shot on Leninsky prospect right under the windows of my daughter’s flat) or expelled from Chechnya. Thus, everything is settled in Chechnya: the federal centre provides the republic with considerable subsidies, which are duly kicked back or split locally in a very organised manner. What matters most is that some of the money is doled out for the building new houses, schools and hospitals, and some reaches individuals and families. Before Ramzan Kadyrov came to power, the general public got nothing, all was absorbed in the splitting; now people get their cuts of the cake.

Dagestan is the last republic on our route. Not long ago, under Magomedali Magomedov, some form of a consensus was built in the republic. The local establishment consists not only of Avars, Dargins, Lakhs, Kumyks, Lezgins but also several groups within the Avar establishment, where each group has its own interests. This means that a group’s flag does not always match an ethnic group’s one, they match within a jamaat. Every individual can count on the support of the jamaat they belong to. Members of the jamaat are somewhere in the mountains, and the

businessman stays in Makhachkala making a living running petrol stations, tobacco shops or any other businesses. He is supported by his jamaat, which, should the need arise, will protect him, including by beating somebody up with a truncheon. Truncheons are widely used, and not only truncheons, explosives are used as well. Every businessman has his own small army, or brigade, squadron or at least a platoon, so they are assessed on how many rifles they have. Guria Murklinskaya, an excellent journalist from Dagestan, has described it perfectly: "in territorial subjects with complicated multiethnic composition such as Dagestan, distribution of public funds increasingly boils down to criminal-political ethnic clans sorting things out between themselves." She reports about Islamic and pseudo-Islamic segments of the networks existing in Dagestan. For example, large funds in the form of donations or even budgetary aid are channelled to Islamic institutions, mosques and schools. But only a share of the funds is allocated to the promotion of religious practices, the largest share goes to the development of shadow elements of these structures, including Wahhabis and Murids. There are also bodies that organize combat training and recruitment. The existence of these mini-armies is explained by the Wahabbi threat, although they do not take part in the real fight against armed extremists. However, most businessmen and leaders of ethnic clans financially support and help sustain an illegal armed group of their ethnic nationality. Various ethnic groups are incapable of setting up functioning opposition parties, due to the absence of either charismatic leaders or a unifying idea. Instead, on the political arena, double-faced politicians pretend to be Murids or almost-Wahabbi from a particular ethnic background. The so-called war on Wahabbism and terror resembles a puppet show, in which the puppets on the two hands of one actor fight each other in public. The difference is that the weapons and the bloodshed are real; besides, most of the players, including rank and file law enforcement officers and Wahhabis, are unaware in which show they are playing and who is using them. Magomedali Magomedov was able to somehow cope but Mukhu Aliev will not. Mukhu Aliev also says "guys, let's be friends!", but as opposed to Ingushetia, in Dagestan no one pays attention to his words, and everything stays the same. Consequently, the situation is the worst in Dagestan, and continues to deteriorate in comparison to other North Caucasian republics.

The trends described above developed in 2008 and are still unfolding. The year 2008 was marked by the following two events: the Five-Day Russian-Georgian War and the outbreak of the global financial crisis. The majority of the population in the North Caucasus sympathized with the Ossetians during the Five-day war. Adygs, Kabardins and Cherkess have traditionally supported the Abkhaz due to shared

ethnic origin and sympathy with their struggle for independence against “Georgian imperial power,” in quotes or without quotes, as one prefers. Only the Ingush sympathised with Georgia, because they view Ossetians as the most evil abusers, invaders and oppressors in the North Caucasus. This was the difference. The war did not affect Chechnya or Daghestan; they barely noticed it. Some Chechen army officers, including Yamadaev, a decorated Hero of Russia, fought in Ossetia against Georgia very well. Yamadaev was awarded the title of hero a while ago, and later he was awarded with a bullet, unless of course he is in hiding and a dummy is lying in his grave. And finally, the global crisis: generally speaking, if you are at the bottom, there is nowhere to fall. The crisis merely enhanced, exacerbated and complicated the already complex trends that prevailed in the North Caucasus in 2008.

OIL AND DEMOCRATIC VALUES: AZERBAIJAN'S EXPERIENCE¹

By Togrul Jubarly²

The history of oil in Azerbaijan in modern times has been one of an uninterrupted story of the people, the state and political leaders trying to “barter” oil for other values: political, economic and social ones.

Following Azerbaijan's declaration of independence in 1991, oil and independence were the most popular catchphrase in the country. Oil appeared to be a guarantee of a solid, wealthy and independent future. Though the conflict with Armenia over Nagorno-Karabakh dampened the total euphoria, it seemed to be an easily surmountable problem against the background of the future painted in people's imagination. The oil that did not yet exist already induced a sense of self-worth among the public. The negotiations that foreign companies were holding with the government of Ayaz Mutalibov (1990-1992) and the statements of various political and economic voodoos contributed to all this.

The impending democratic wave swept away Mutalibov's government, but the Popular Front government successfully continued negotiations with foreign oil companies (1992-1993). A contract was close to being signed, and it seemed that it could become a cover for the continuation of the democratic reforms that had begun in the country. Meanwhile, never and nowhere has oil acted as support for democratization; the Popular Front government was soon gone. The signing of the first contract with foreign companies happened at the start of Heydar Aliyev's era.

This veteran politician, who came to power in the summer of 1993, immediately set himself the task of bringing order to the country, using heavy-handed methods that narrowed the field for the development of democracy.

Between 1994 and 1998, he was trying to make the participation of companies from different countries in oil contracts conditional on the political support of

1 This paper was published in Russian as: Jubarly, Toghrol. “Nefi i demokraticheskie tsennosti: opyt Azerbaidzhana.” *Diaspora, nefi i rosy: chem. zhivut strany Yuzhnogo Kavkaza* (“Oil and Democratic Values: Azerbaijan's Experience.” *Diaspora, Oil and Roses: What Makes the Countries of the South Caucasus Tick*). Ed. by Ivlian Khaindrava and Alexander Iskandaryan. – Yerevan: Heinrich Böll Foundation and Caucasus Media Institute, 2005 (in Russian). – Pp. 43-47.

2 At the time of writing, the author was on the expert team of the *Turan* news agency in Baku, and edited their monthly economics review.

Azerbaijan by their governments. This was an open barter (on top of the one that happened backstage), although one could say that by then many decisions, such as the construction of the two routes for early oil, had already been predetermined by more powerful countries. Nevertheless, Aliyev's artful politics of exploiting the geopolitical ambitions of major powers cannot be denied. Caspian countries have no access to the open seas or the world oil market, and the construction of pipeline infrastructure determined the growth of oil production on the Caspian shelf. The guarantees of the independence of these countries also hinge on this. For this reason, Heydar Aliyev was the most consistent defender of the Baku-Tbilisi-Ceyhan (BTC) oil pipeline, although at the time, there were also other projects on the table. His own personal gain, too, turned out to be enormous. The political barter went through.

The country was increasingly recognized in the outside world, and Aliyev's international reputation was growing. Against this background, it was rather easy for him to cope with the armed opposition, subjugate his surroundings, and put the strong democratic opposition into a decorative democratic framework that he designed himself for external consumption. Any attempt to go beyond this framework was swiftly nipped in the bud. The solution of national issues was gradually replaced by the solution of personal ones.

Aliyev isolated everyone, including individual members of his own clan, from oil. He knew that the new tycoons associated with the oil business may sooner or later lay claims to power. At the same time, he was not in a hurry to develop small and medium-sized business. That always causes social activity and fermentation which usually have a detrimental effect on authoritarianism. Total corruption became a systemic phenomenon and came to replace everything else.

The big names in world oil production that were inching closer to Baku back then were by no means missionaries of democracy importing democratic ideas to the country. Indeed, they brought along advanced technologies and new forms of work organization, but over the years, it became increasingly clear that all those things were intended primarily for the internal use of oil companies. By and large, they were totally indifferent to what country - an authoritarian, a monarchical or a democratic one - they were doing their business in. In addition, the participants of the first oil consortium were hidden behind a high palisade, known as a production sharing agreement.

The main benefit of such agreements to foreign investors is that even if the country owning the mineral wealth faces a most severe economic crisis, this can in no way affect the activities and revenues of oil companies. In this context, it would be

appropriate to recall that, whereas at the beginning of the oil epic, companies were still looking for contacts with the public, later - when Heydar Aliyev was at the helm - they came to appreciate all the advantages of working with a single partner.

The attempts to “swap” oil for a speedy resolution of the Karabakh conflict turned out to be less promising, though. In the summer of 1994, on the eve of the signing of the “Contract of the Century,” Azerbaijani President Heydar Aliyev met with US Secretary of State Warren Christopher on the sidelines of the OSCE summit in Turkey. Aliyev tried to condition the conclusion of oil contracts on US political support in the conflict with Armenia. Christopher’s response was unequivocal: oil was one thing, and the Karabakh problem was quite another. The exchange of oil for support in the conflict failed in subsequent years too, although Heydar Aliyev kept raising this issue in contacts with the concerned countries. The history of oil and the Karabakh settlement continued to develop on different levels. The option of building the Baku-Ceyhan pipeline via Armenia looked like the only possible direct “barter” (it was one of the options). However, Armenia categorically refused to link this issue to the resolution of the conflict, and the oil consortium was apparently not very happy about the route through mountainous Armenia.

There are many reasons why the existence of oil makes democratic reforms in a country very difficult. Oil is always associated with a dangerous “expectation syndrome” that regularly weakens the society. Often, oil significantly skews the structure of the economy. In recent years, oil and petroleum products have accounted for 90 percent of Azerbaijan’s exports. The “Dutch Disease” has already hit the country. It is very difficult to build democracy in an unbalanced economy. It seems fair to suppose that Azerbaijan’s noticeable lag in the development of information technologies is not accidental, because active engagement with the information space will inevitably push democratic processes forward.

From the very beginning, nations that have oil become objects of interest for large countries, which often clash with each other. Political risks grow. Oil provokes external threats that seriously hinder the democratic development of a nation. Against the background of external threats, the question of building a democratic society becomes premature. The Azerbaijani government skilfully used this argument.

Oil is also a well-known trap for the democratic opposition. Predominantly Western-oriented, it could not vociferously oppose the projects of Western oil companies. Aware of this, the latter, in turn, openly supported the existing regime right up to the latest presidential elections in Azerbaijan. Foreign oil companies did not hide their jubilation about the ascent of Ilham Aliyev to presidency. For oil compa-

nies, working with democratic governments is not an easy task, because they need to seek consensus among many parties and work in a more open manner.

Of course, for a while, oil may allow any government to treat democratic values with ill-concealed contempt. The external world and the government establish clientelist relations that allow ignoring one's own society.

Nevertheless, maintaining authoritarian rule by means of oil will become harder over time. The appetites of the corruption machine are excessive, and it is unlikely that it will be able to conclude a social contract with the society.

For society, though, this seems to be the best time for reasonably exchanging oil for its own future. The key objectives of the oil strategy have been fulfilled: mining has begun and is underway, and the oil pipelines are almost ready. Oil companies have already turned into an isolated island and nothing seems to threaten their interests.

The society can now deal with its own issues. The infinite number of models that oil-oriented Azerbaijan keeps trying on (for example, the Norwegian model), always turn out to be ill-fitting, like second-hand clothes, because the introduction of a ready model requires a clearly developed political system, democratic institutions, and experience with the free market.

The internal signals coming from the economy suggest that the country's one-sided oil-oriented development is no longer viable. It is destructive, and the government seems to be persistently pushed to accelerate the privatization process and the development of small- and medium-sized business. The first will increase the number of rich people, and the second can foster the emergence of a fairly wide middle class, the 'objective' basis for democracy.

It is well known that the Dutch disease that often accompanies oil is fairly easy to overcome both in democracies and in genuinely authoritarian regimes, for instance, in monarchies. In "half-way" countries like Azerbaijan that have lost their traditional values and have not yet become full-fledged democracies, the Dutch disease poses a bigger social and economic problem.

Both the danger of lopsided development of the country and the possibility to use the oil factor for the consolidation of authoritarian ambitions will disappear only with the establishment of a mature political system. On this difficult and long road, the final say belongs to the Azerbaijani society, which throughout its history, has been destined for liberal democracy.

IMPORTED POLITICS: DIASPORA POLITICAL PARTIES IN ARMENIA'S DOMESTIC LANDSCAPE¹

By Eduard Melkonian²

Despite the similarities that the processes of democratization in the post-Soviet space display, their specificities in each of the newly independent states are no less evident. Several factors, both internal and external, account for this. For Armenia, the diaspora is one of those factors. In terms of numbers, the Armenian diaspora – called *Spyurk* in Armenian – is larger than the population of Armenia. By the time of the collapse of the Soviet Union, the majority of diaspora Armenians lived in the countries of the West (the US, France, Canada, etc.) and the Middle East (Syria, Iran, Lebanon, etc.).

One of the most popular chants at the rallies of 1988-1990 was the slogan of “Together with the *Spyurk*.” These words reflected a natural desire for restoring relations and contacts with compatriots residing abroad, something the inhabitants of Armenia were denied during communist rule. But there was something more to that. Bidding farewell to the Soviet period of its history and resolved to follow the development path of Western countries, the people of Armenia, on the whole, were counting on the full support of Armenians from the diaspora to facilitate the speedy reform of the whole system of Armenian society and to bring it in line with Western standards. Those expectations – most of them divorced from reality and emotionally coloured – were the result of ignorance of the existing significant differences, ranging from lifestyle to ethnic self-consciousness, between Armenians of the *Spyurk* and those of Armenia, differences that had developed (as they should have!) over the seven decades in which the two had been separate and independent of each other. Moreover, the two branches of Armenians lived – and this cannot be overemphasized – in the two diametrically different worlds of Soviet socialism and Western capitalism.

1 This paper was published by the CI as: Melkonian, Eduard. “Politicheskie partii diaspori i protsessy demokratizatsii v Armenii.” *Diaspora, neft i rozy. Chem zhivut strany Yuzhnogo Kavkaza* (“Political Parties of the Diaspora and Democratization Processes in Armenia.” *Diaspora, Oil and Roses. What Makes the Countries of the South Caucasus Tick*). Ed. by Alexander Iskandaryan. – Yerevan: Heinrich Böll Foundation and Caucasus Media Institute, 2005 (in Russian). – Pp.103-113.

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Above all, the Armenians of Armenia pinned great hopes on the political organizations of the *Spyurk*: the *Dashnaktsutyun* (Armenian Revolutionary Federation/ARF), *Ramkavar-Azatakan* (Liberal Democratic Party) and *Hunchakian* (Social Democratic Party, also spelled *Hunchakian*). When Communists seized the power in Armenia in 1920, all three continued their activities in the diaspora, and turned into the core structures of the Armenian community institutions. Since in the public consciousness of the Armenian people, they had become the bearers and custodians of national political ideals, their return to the homeland was seen as the triumph of historic justice. Henceforth, they were able to not only continue their mission in the homeland, but to also take it to a higher – state – level.

However, their mission in the new environment was perceived in other ways, too. People thought that the years of operation in Western countries had allowed these organizations to also become carriers of certain political values and traditions that they now could and should plant in the new Armenia. Such expectations, however, failed to take into account the fact that the functions of those parties had undergone a fundamental transformation over the years of their existence in the diaspora. Even though they were nominally called political parties, they, for objective reasons, ceased to be parties, in the classical sense of the word, i.e. they stopped being organizations that aim to come to power in a country and implement their party programs.

In the *Spyurk*, the political, or more precisely, the ethno-political content of their activities was limited to two areas. One of them was the attitude toward the Soviet Union in general and Soviet Armenia, in particular.

Forced to emigrate from Armenia after the establishment there of the Soviet regime, the *Dashnaktsutyun* Party (the ruling party of the first Republic of Armenia in 1918-1920), the chief political opponent of the Communists, became a force that not only maintained its inherent anti-communist and anti-Soviet orientation, but also managed – in a short space of time – to make this orientation organized and widespread, this time in the diaspora.

Ironic as it may seem at first, the second most influential party, the *Ramkavar Azatakan*, became the main opponent of the *Dashnaktsutyun* in the Armenian diaspora. That was ironic because the ideology and practice of communism was alien to the former to a much greater extent than to the latter, given *Dashnaktsutyun's* socialist orientation. However, the *Ramkavar Azatakan*, together with the *Hunchakian* party, offered an alternative to anti-Soviet attitudes in the *Spyurk*. Refusing to recognize, and moreover, essentially rejecting the ideology and practice of communism, the *Ramkavar*, at the same time, were taking account of the fact that

Soviet Armenia was the only remaining part of their homeland, where Armenians continued to live as part of the Soviet Union, with highly truncated, but nonetheless some form of statehood. In light of the recent past, it was especially important that the lack of full sovereignty was offset by external security and the opportunity for the peaceful development of the people. Assuming that the Soviet regime was the lesser of evils in terms of national interests, the Ramkavar limited their activities to the role of “soft opposition,” and sought to establish ties with Soviet Armenia.

These differences in relation to Soviet Armenia led to the political disengagement in the Spyurk, which, in turn, determined the path of its development not only in the ethno-political sphere, but in almost all other areas.³

The second component of the ethno-political activities of all three parties emerged in the 1960s. It was the relentless and varied - in form and content - action for the recognition and condemnation by the international community and individual states of the Armenian Genocide in the Ottoman Empire in 1915. Largely through the efforts of the parties and organizations established specifically for this purpose, some international organizations and parliaments of a number of countries adopted relevant resolutions.

Along with this, the most important task of these parties has been the preservation of the ethnic and cultural identity of diaspora Armenians under conditions of rather powerful and constant exposure to host cultures. With this purpose in mind, they created in the Armenian communities in various countries a vast network of cultural, youth, women's, charity and other institutions which, to some extent, allowed counteracting the ongoing assimilation, particularly intense in the countries of the West.

Clearly, however, the above mentioned activities could not promote the formation among diaspora-based Armenian political parties of skills and traditions characteristic to proper political activity.

Meanwhile, in their expectations, the people of Armenia consciously or unconsciously projected onto those parties their views of classical political parties of Western countries. And even with the understanding that the parties of the Spyurk were in no way real players in the political arena of host countries, for many people, the very name of these organizations, as “parties,” was associated with their ability to fulfil themselves as such in Armenia.

These expectations had another explanation too. Despite the absolute popularity

3 For more details, see: Melkonian, Eduard. «Mezhdu dvumya mirami. Puti politicheskoy adaptatsii armyanskoy diaspori.» *Vertikal istorii* (“Between Two Worlds. The Paths of Political Adaptation of the Armenian Diaspora.” *Vertical History*). – Tbilisi, № 5, 2003 (in Russian). – Pp.74-85.

in Armenia at that time of the Armenian National Movement (ANM, the party that led the mass movement first for the self-determination of Nagorno-Karabakh and then for the independence of Armenia), part of the country's population tied – as a matter of principle or for personal reasons - the possibility of alternative political activity to the return of the political parties from the Spyurk. The history of those parties, their active role in the diaspora, and, finally, the effect of the “forbidden fruit,” caused by the prohibition imposed by the Soviet authorities on their activities in the homeland, explained these attitudes.

The political parties of the Spyurk were aware of these sentiments in Armenian society and were fully responsive to the popular desire that they should re-establish themselves in their native land. Notably, however, the dramatic changes in the Soviet Union and the very speed of their occurrence, took these parties by surprise. However, in this they were not alone: these processes turned out to be unpredictable for both Western politicians and for experts on the Soviet Union. After a brief period of hesitation caused by the radical actions of the Armenian opposition toward local and central authorities, the parties of the Spyurk, cognizant of the irreversibility of the collapse of the Soviet Union, took – even more readily - the opportunity to resume their activities in Armenia. Their return in 1990 coincided with the troubled period of dual power, when all the structures and units of the Soviet state and party authorities were in fact paralyzed, while the new government was at an early stage of formation, still full of uncertainties.

Having returned to Armenia (while preserving all of their structures in the Spyurk), these parties were forced to begin their operations virtually from zero; they did not have either party members or any proper party structures in the country. In an effort to promptly establish their operations, they began with feverish activity, above all with a wide campaign to attract the largest possible numbers of new members into their ranks. In the absence of local personnel, party functionaries sent on a mission from the diaspora were in charge of all their activities at this initial stage. Compared to the ignorance of the people of Armenia about the realities of the Spyurk, the arriving emissaries' understanding of the Armenian reality was just as superficial. It is noteworthy that regardless of their citizenship, almost all of those emissaries came from the Middle East which was a kind of hotbed of diaspora activism, with characteristic radicalism combined with a simplistic perception of reality. For the sake of rapid growth in party numbers, they ignored and often turned a blind eye to the true motives of newcomers.

Meanwhile, the vast majority of the latter had rather vague ideas about the parties themselves, their histories, ideologies, etc. There were many former communists

among them who viewed membership in the new parties as a way to recover the lost guarantees of the fulfilment of their personal, often very pragmatic (not to mention selfish) expectations. Having many members of this type would very soon have negative impact on the activities of the host parties, leading in some cases to their split. Yet, in 1990 and 1991, thanks to the efforts aimed at the speedy development of the returning parties, they ended up being among the leading – after the ANM – political forces of the country. In this context it is significant that the very degree of their influence in Armenia reflected very precisely their weight in the Spyurk, with the ARF doing much better than the Ramkavar, not to mention the Hunchakian.

The steep growth in the popularity of both the ARF and the Ramkavar party was apparently unexpected for the parties themselves, or, to be more precise, for their functionaries from the diaspora. Misguided by the sympathies of a certain segment of the public, they lost the ability to soberly assess the reality on the ground and neglected their duty to teach, gradually but constantly, at least to their own party members, the basics of political culture and democratic governance, i.e. the things that they knew so well and had used so successfully in the diaspora. Instead, in its ambitions, the Dashnaksutyun party decided to take steps that had important ramifications for the political development of the country as a whole.

I am referring to the first presidential election in Armenia held in late 1991. The victory of one of the ANM's leaders, Levon Ter-Petrossyan, was expected and obvious to everybody, from laymen to the political elite. Despite this, the ARF nominated its own candidate, popular and respected stage and movie actor Sos Sargsyan, and launched a wide election campaign. This fact alone indicated that at that time the ARF did not have a strong and relatively popular party leader of its own in Armenia, able to compete with the ANM candidate.

Had this happened in a country with longstanding democratic traditions, the consequences of the ARF's actions would have been limited to defeat in the election (less than 5 percent of the popular vote went to their candidate) and a drop in its ratings. But in the Armenia of those days, the ramifications were far more extensive and profound. They were caused by the ensuing reaction of the ANM.

Back in 1988, when the Karabakh movement was facing stiff opposition from the central authorities of the Soviet Union, the ANM, as well as other forces opposing the Soviet regime, counted on the full support of the Spyurk. However, the initial response from the diaspora, and first of all from its political parties, was totally unanticipated. Already in November 1988, all three parties of the diaspora made a joint statement (something they hardly ever did), supporting the unification of Nagorno-Karabakh with Soviet Armenia, but at the same time urging Armenians to

demonstrate restraint and calm, and to abstain from actions that could undermine the trust of the leadership of the Soviet Union. This position of the political parties, another result of their total ignorance of the Armenian reality, led not only to disappointment but also to distrust on the part of the Karabakh movement in general and the ANM, in particular.⁴

These sentiments further intensified after the return of the diaspora political parties to Armenia, as a result of their indefatigable activity aimed at the early establishment of their own party structures. Against this background, the ANM perceived the nomination of the ARF's own candidate in the presidential election of 1991 as a direct challenge to itself. The challenge was posed by a party that had only just settled in Armenia, had not in any way participated in the struggle for independence, and, besides, was led and financed from abroad. At that time, the ANM was at the peak of its popularity (83 percent of the voters voted for Levon Ter-Petrossyan). It met the challenge with a rigid rejection of all opposition movements.

In the ARF's case, there were two landmark events. The first of those took place in June 1992, when one of its leaders, Greek citizen Hrair Marukhyan, was expelled from Armenia on charges of subverting its government's policies and efforts to resolve the Karabakh conflict. This was a serious signal, targeted not only at the ARF but also at the diaspora at large, that the Armenian leadership would not tolerate any intervention in the business of ruling the country. As Levon Ter-Petrossyan put it, mutual misunderstanding and mistrust would remain until the leaders of the diaspora get used to the idea that politics is made in Armenia not in the Spyurk.⁵ However, the continued activity of the ARF, its disagreement with many of the key ANM policies, served for the latter as grounds for even more repressive measures. In December 1994, the President imposed a ban on the ARF and all its structures, including its media arms. In addition, in that and subsequent years, several ARF members, including one of its leaders, were arrested and prosecuted on various charges.⁶

Importantly, these actions by the authorities were taking place against a general background of backsliding from the principles of democratic governance and rejecting not only criticism but even the slightest doubts with regard to government policies in a particular field. In that sense, the attitude to the second most influential returning party, the Ramkavar, was quite illustrative. Right from the outset,

4 *Armenia at the Crossroads: Democracy and Nationhood in Post-Soviet Era*. Ed. by Gerard J. Libaridian. – Waretown, MA: Blue Crane Books, 1991. – Pp.127-133.

5 *Armenian International Magazine (AIM)*. Los Angeles, March 1994. – P. 32.

6 *Armenian International Magazine (AIM)*. Los Angeles, November-December 1994. – Pp. 37-38.

the Ramkavar party's "soft opposition" to the Soviet authorities discredited it in the eyes of both the new government and a considerable part of the public. Having returned to Armenia in 1990, the Ramkavar party, unlike the ARF, assessed its capabilities soberly and relinquished any claims to power (at least, at that point in time), and generally adopted a loyal attitude towards the authorities. However, even the Ramkavar, in spite of their traditional opposition to the ARF, considered it necessary to speak out against repressions directed at the latter, denouncing the measures taken by the authorities as a serious threat to the emergence of a democratic society. Lacking valid reasons for banning the activities of the Ramkavar, the authorities resorted to other tactics: splitting the party from within. This was the time when the Ramkavar had to pay the price for its indiscriminate recruitment policies. The skillful actions of the authorities worked wonders: the Ramkavar party split, went into a deep crisis and left the ranks of Armenia's major political forces.

The crisis, however, affected the ruling party itself. The sharp drop in its popularity and credibility was especially evident during the second presidential election in 1996, when only 51.7 percent of the votes were cast in favor of Levon Ter-Petrosyan's re-election. Even that number was disputed by the united opposition, which accused the government of rigging the elections and tried to storm the parliament building. The authorities reacted by sending in troops and making arrests. *Le Monde* published a story where it described the policies of the Armenian authorities of the day: "the methods of Ter-Petrosyan's governance resemble the methods of the totalitarian regime that Ter-Petrosyan used to criticize early in his political career."⁷ The comparison seemed to be valid not only for the authorities' domestic policies. In its quest for the complete neutralization of the political forces of the diaspora, the ANM followed the example of the communist authorities of Armenia of the 1920s-1930s and attempted (albeit unsuccessfully) to create its own structures in the diaspora as an alternative to the political parties existing there.⁸

When it comes to considering the political processes underway in Armenia in the 1990s, it is quite difficult to unequivocally assess the actions of the authorities or the forces opposing them. The experience of state-building in the post-Soviet

7 *Le Monde*, 4 October 1996.

8 *Hayastani Hanrapetutyun* daily, 11 August 1994 (in Armenian). On the confrontation between the Armenian authorities and the political parties of the diaspora, and its impact on the election of the new head of the Armenian Apostolic Church in 1995, see Melkonian, Eduard. "Armyanskaya Apostolskaya Tserkov vo vzaimootnosheniakh Armenii i diaspori." *Religia i politika na Kavkaze* ("The Armenian Apostolic Church in the Relations between Armenia and Diaspora." *Religion and Politics in the Caucasus*). Ed. by Alexander Iskandaryan. – Yerevan: CMI, 2004 (in Russian). – Pp.31-52.

space shows that the transition from totalitarian to democratic principles of society building is fraught with various difficulties. After declaring its independence in 1991, Armenia became a country led by young people (most of them under 45) lacking any experience of government work. They became the country's ruling elite in circumstances that were even more extreme than in other post-Soviet republics (energy and transport blockade, military confrontation with Azerbaijan, etc.). They were forced to act hastily, adapting to the changing situation and putting back the development of strategies for national development. On the one hand, their sincere desire to lead the country out of the crisis was over time transformed into a firm belief that they were the only ones capable of doing it. On the other hand, the avalanche of new challenges, coupled with lack of funds or expertise needed to tackle them, made them intolerant to serious displays of disagreement with their policies. In addition, once they had, figuratively speaking, looked power in the face, they were no longer able to take their eyes off that mysterious Sphinx, and reveled in their increasingly unlimited power.

For their part, the returning diaspora political parties, seeking as they were, to make up - overnight - for their 70-year absence from the homeland, rushed to become major players in the still undefined political arena of the country. In pursuit of this objective, they did not only continue their habitual fight against each other but jumped into the power struggle with unconcealed excitement. Thus, wittingly or unwittingly, they largely discredited themselves in the eyes of the public, and provoked to some extent the harsh policies of the ruling party towards themselves and the opposition in general. Ultimately, this left a negative imprint on the democratization of Armenian society.

At the same time, one can argue that the role of the diaspora parties in Armenian politics was ambivalent. One can even say that, in the longer term, these parties' engagement had a positive impact on the building of Armenia's political institutions. In particular, they sped up the self-organization of the main political forces. The ANM was among the first to feel this effect. At the initial stage of its activities, it brought together a significant part of the society and individual organizations advocating the overthrow of the communist regime - the main obstacle to Armenia's independence and the self-determination of Nagorno-Karabakh. The ANM was a rather loose organization without a clear structure, policy and statutory documents. However, with the arrival of an increasing number of parties, including those returning from the diaspora, the ANM was forced to not only renounce claims to represent the interests of all the people, but to also self-organize - on the eve of coming to power - as a rigidly structured party with all of the necessary attributes. This was

what allowed the ANM to successfully confront the opposition, including the ARF. This also resulted in the emergence of a new party, the National Democratic Union (NDU), made up of former ANM members, which eventually became one of the chief opposition forces in the country.

Strange as it may seem at first, for the ARF, the three-year ban on its activities played, on the whole, a positive role in terms of its self-organization. In this period, it not only rid itself of the burden of people who had joined it for purely opportunistic reasons, but also acquired its own 'field leaders' who were regarded as martyrs because of their imprisonment. But, probably, the main thing was that the party had to rethink its tactics. Having given up unreasonable and excessive ambitions, the ARF reconciled itself with the need to increase its influence gradually, putting the stress not only and not so much on its past services, but on the best possible consideration of the political realities on the ground. The ARF chose this course when it was legalized again after the forced resignation of President Levon Ter-Petrossyan on February 9, 1998 (under pressure from both Prime Minister Robert Kocharyan, who was elected president shortly afterwards, and the ministers of defence and interior).

Following its re-legalization, the ARF became a staunch ally of the president and the party in power, thus gaining more influential positions in the executive and legislative bodies of the country. For the sake of preserving and consolidating its positions, the ARF, led by local party leaders, made a commitment to the norms of Western democracy, necessitated by Armenia's membership in European organizations. Some of these norms and standards (such as alternative military service) were rather alien to the traditional values of this party. Over the past thirteen years of its work in Armenia, the ARF has traversed the difficult path of transformation from a quasi-political party, which it had been in the 70 years of its existence in the Spyurk, into a genuine political party of the classical type. And as such, today it is responsible for resolving the problems hindering the democratization of the contemporary Armenian society.

The Ramkavar party has also managed to transform itself into a classical political party. Initially it appeared that this party that professed liberal democratic values would occupy a worthy place in the political system of modern Armenia. Lacking, however, sufficient ideological, political or institutional stability and certainty, it never quite recovered after the crisis of the mid-1990s, and ceased to play any meaningful role in the political life of the country. A recent surge of activity during the election campaign for the parliament in 2003 did not yield any results.

As for the third party of the diaspora, the Social Democrat Hunchakian Party, its

return to Armenia has to be treated with reservations, primarily because of its small size and unpopularity among the general public.

No doubt, the participation of the Spyurk in the democratization of the modern Armenian society has not been confined to political parties. The preference given to them in this article is due to the high degree of the politicization of the society, in general, and the high expectations from political parties, in particular.

REVOLUTIONARY IDEALS: POLITICAL DISCOURSES IN THE SOUTH CAUCASUS¹

By Alexander Iskandaryan²

In the South Caucasus and beyond, in a significant part of the post-Soviet space, 2004 was a year of Colour Revolutions. Discussions around any recent policy developments inevitably spark a heated debate on revolutions. Political narratives, newspaper reports, TV debates and even small talk in former Soviet countries are now brimming with sharp and often polarized comments on the topic.

Against this background, the discourse about revolutions becomes as valid an object of study as the revolutions themselves. In fact, Colour Revolution discourse that exist in the post-Soviet space in general, and in the South Caucasus in particular are, in themselves, so significant and so characteristic of the last few years' trends in these countries that research on the Colour Revolutions must include, as an integral part, analysis of the accompanying discourse.

A fact that immediately catches the eye once one looks at the discourse is that they are selective: even among the Colour Revolutions that took place in recent years in former socialist countries, the current discourse focuses on some and ignore others. Neither the media nor the para-academic circles thus pay any attention to the failed revolution in Moldova or the successful revolution in unrecognized Abkhazia. The Serbian Revolution is also seldom mentioned; at any rate, it is not referred to in the context of developments in 2004. Of course, awareness of historically and geographically distant precedents, such as the classical "People Power" or EDSA Revolution in the Philippines,³ is limited to scholars, as is the realization that the phenomenon which has now been nicknamed "Colour Revolution" has long been known to scientists and analyzed in detail in academic publications.

The selectivity of this discourse reflects its motivation: it appears that the revolutions per se are of little interest to the speakers, as are their causes and consequences.

1 This paper was published by the Caucasus Institute in Russian as: Iskandaryan, Alexander "Fenomen tsvetnykh revolutsiy kak yadro politicheskogo diskursa v stranakh Yuzhnogo Kavkaza." *Kavkaz – 2004. Yezhegodnik Kavkazskogo Instituta SMI* ("The Phenomenon of Colour Revolutions as the Nucleus of the Political Discourse in the Countries of the South Caucasus." *Caucasus 2004. CMI Yearbook*). Ed. Alexander Iskandaryan. – Yerevan: CI, 2006 (in Russian). – P. 6-15.

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3 See, for example, *Dictatorship and Revolution. Roots of People's Power*. – Manila: 1988; *People Power. An Eye-Witness History: the Philippines Revolution of 1986*. – Manila: 1986.

What the discussants are really trying to achieve is to test and fit the revolutions to their own country, based on the preexisting perception that a revolution is a valid method of solving a country's problems. Since the discourse is focused on proving – or disproving – the need for a revolution in the country where they circulate, they ignore the examples which one cannot easily copy-paste because they are too distant (the Philippines), failed (Moldova) or unfolding under very different conditions (unrecognized Abkhazia).

Should the discourse have such little relevance to the essence and the reality of revolutions, does it still deserve to be analyzed? It certainly does because this highly politicized discourse reflects some characteristic phenomena in the political life of former Soviet countries; moreover, its cause-and-effect relationship with the revolutions themselves may be more complicated than meets the eye. There are reasons to believe that the Colour Revolutions were to a large extent the result of this discourse.

In the recent past, even before the onset of the revolutionary wave, the possibility of *regime change otherwise than through periodic elections* was widely discussed in many former Soviet countries. Utterly and inherently non-scientific, this discourse is extensive and varied in form: it can be a media discourse, a quasi-scholarly debate or social talk. It instantaneously puts the speaker on one side of a political or even generational barricade. And, of course, these barricades are drawn across the domestic political realities of the country where the debate takes place and not the one where a revolution happened.

If the speaker is in favour of a change of government in a given country, then the argument is based mainly on the personalities of potential revolutionary leaders: they are characterized as democratic, progressive, and pro-Western. Since the West has a “plus” sign in this discourse, fluency in English is often additionally underlined.

Opposite arguments are mostly reduced to statements in the vein that the country at issue needs stability; Colour Revolutions are condemned as phenomena *imported from the outside* (the West) and bought with money from transnational forces. Proof or disproof of the fact of the import is one of the main topics of “revolutionary” debates. The fact known to every freshman student of political science - that revolutions can only be catalyzed but not introduced from the outside - does not matter here.

Another important feature is that discourse participants and authors of articles on the revolutions hardly ever have any idea about the countries where these revolutions took place. Often, the only thing known about Kyrgyzstan to politicized ob-

servers is the fact that recently there has been a revolution there. One can assume that the automatic imposition of foreign experience on realities of one's own country, done in search of simple solutions, leads to the mythologization of discourse. In other words, in this context, real Kyrgyzstan is not discussed; rather, the topic of discussions is the image of Kyrgyzstan, the main component of which is the potential *non-electoral regime change*. In a mythological context, it does not really matter which formal criteria of a democratic leader Bakiyev, Saakashvili and Tymoshenko meet. The only thing that matters is the possibility to cut the Gordian knot of problems of one's own country.

As for the actual phenomenon of post-Soviet Colour Revolutions, they have already displayed some common, typical features.

The first revolution of this kind in the former Soviet Union happened – and failed – in Armenia in September 1996. All the ingredients of this phenomenon were on hand there, except for the support of and interest from the West.

Three successful revolutions ensued, including the Georgian Rose Revolution in late 2003, the nameless revolution in Abkhazia in the autumn of 2004, and Ukraine's Orange Revolution at the very end of 2004. The Abkhaz revolution was among these the least discussed, but also the most impressive: it was a success, despite the strong opposition of the only, albeit very powerful, external force, Russia. The revolution in Moldova in February-March 2005 failed, but in March of the same year, the Tulip Revolution in Kyrgyzstan succeeded, though it was somewhat different from the others because of its regional and clan-related characteristics.

The first striking thing is the region where these revolutions happen. The territory of the former USSR may, for the purposes of our discussion, be divided into **three zones** on the basis of rotation of government.⁴

The first zone comprises those states that have more or less managed to develop a system of rotation of government based on the recognition of election results. In this case, it does not matter to what extent elections held in these countries are honest and fair, and to what extent they go without fraud and manipulation. First of all, the amount and type of election fraud varies across countries, and, secondly, in this case, the legitimacy of election results in the eyes of the society is more important than the integrity or fairness of the elections. The states in this zone have managed to build their political culture in a way that elections are held regularly, and

4 See the comparative classification by Dmitry Furman, in, for example, Furman, Dmitri. "Demokratia v Azerbajjane: problema rotatsii vlasti." *Kavkaz – 2003. Yezhegodnik Instituta Kavkaza* (Democracy in Azerbaijan: the problem of rotation of government." *Caucasus 2003. CMI Yearbook*). Ed. Alexander Iskandaryan. – Yerevan: CMI, 2005. – Pp.19-25.

the political opposition recognizes the results of these elections, though not always eagerly. The society, too, recognizes election results and, thus, power is transferred from one leader to another. The three Baltic countries and Moldova are part of this zone. In two of the first three states, there is a system of apartheid: about a quarter of the population in Estonia and about one-third of the population in Latvia do not participate in elections. However, for one reason or another, even those residents of Latvia and Estonia that are deprived of their right to vote recognize election results. In any event, they do not man the barricades after the elections. As a rule, these states have experienced the transfer of power at least twice (e.g., from Snegur to Luchinsky and from Luchinsky to Voronin), and society sees these transfers as legitimate and uses elections as a mechanism for the rotation of elites.

Interestingly, though, all four of the mentioned states accurately coincide with those territories of the former Soviet Union that were attached to it about 20 years later than the rest. However, this discussion is beyond the scope of this article.

The second zone consists of regimes such as the ones in Turkmenistan and Uzbekistan (the Belarusian and Russian ones are, in part, also close to them), where so far, there either has not been any transfer of power at all, or there has been one, but through succession. Strictly speaking, elections in these countries are nothing more than an instrument of the purely external legitimization of non-rotational governments. Had it not been for pressure from the West, there might have been no elections in these countries at all. But since there is an external standard, which must be conformed to, in general, the population goes to the polls in a disciplined fashion and votes for *the* leader, who often stands for the office unopposed.

It is quite clear why neither the first nor the second zone experience phenomena like Colour Revolutions. In the first zone, street revolutions are not necessary, as society simply does not feel the need because it has at its disposal a reliable working mechanism for the change of leaders. This, in my opinion, was the reason for the failure of the Moldovan revolution. In the second zone, Colour Revolutions are not feasible (in theory, there can only be bloody uprisings, similar to the events in Andizhan), because there are no prerequisites for the emergence of relevant forces and structures, including political opposition, independent media, political parties, etc.

Accordingly, halfway between the countries of the first and second zones there is a *third zone* where the system of rotation of government is already in place in one form or another, or it has started to take shape but has not yet fully formed and is not legitimized. Government in these countries changes sometimes, but not always in compliance with the law; whatever the outcome of elections, their results are not

recognized by the losing party, which is not allowed to take power but is not physically destroyed either. Thus, elections in the third zone are not perceived by society as an effective mechanism for the change of government. The main thing is that because the culture of legitimizing elections has not yet developed in these countries, they face a gap that allows the standard scenario of Colour Revolutions to unfold.

The *scenario* of these revolutions usually plays out as follows: elections are held, with the opposition preparing for defeat in advance and having no expectation whatsoever to win, either because of the established practice of election fraud in the country, or because of the weakness of the opposition, or both; the reasons in this case are secondary, the important thing is that the opposition cannot actually win at the polls. Next, the opposition challenges the election result and brings out the people to the streets. Sometimes it is at this stage that the leadership of the revolution forms; that was what happened, for example, in Georgia: the Burjanadze-Zhvania-Saakashvili trio transformed into Saakashvili's leadership; sometimes the leader changes in the course of events (Kulov-Bakiev in Kyrgyzstan). Sometimes at this stage, the revolution suffers a defeat. If not, then a period of pressure and a strong-willed game follows, and if the government is weak, it surrenders, and if not, it withstands the pressure. Next, the myth of the revolution is created for external consumption, becoming a topic of discussions everywhere as either a role model or a scarecrow.

The *leaders* of Colour Revolutions share a common and apparently non-incidental trait: all of them used to serve in the government. In this, they are different from the leaders of genuine revolutions, like the ones that happened in late 1980s and early 1990s, when not only personalities but also social order was changing. Neither Ter-Petrossyan, nor Elchibey nor Gamsakhurdia originated from the government, whereas the new leaders, to the contrary, are formed by the government. It is no accident that in all three countries of the South Caucasus the quasi-Russian term *obizhennik* (literally, someone who has a grudge) is widely used to describe people nursing a grievance against the government for, in their opinion, unfair expulsion from its ranks. This expression certainly deserves to be introduced into glossaries of political science terms, for it represents a specific phenomenon that does not coincide with political opposition, in the broadest sense of that word. Experience shows that the opposition formed 'outside' the government does not initiate Colour Revolutions. It probably does not have enough knowledge of government operation or understanding of its rules. The present revolutionary leaders, who had, for various reasons, lost their top government jobs in the past, were able to form the opposition at the moment when the government was weak, because power was being

transferred, elites were insecure and the political system was under stress. The result of the revolution is a kind of 'reinstatement' of illegally dismissed former officials.

All these phenomena are typical to *capital cities*. Strictly speaking, we are not dealing with Georgian, Abkhaz and Ukrainian revolutions, but with Tbilisi, Sukhumi and Kiev revolutions. Rallies may, of course, happen in provinces, too, as they did in Donetsk and in Batumi; moreover, they may go the opposite direction, but still the outcome of the revolution is determined in the capital city, or, more precisely, in its "social centre." A *special kind of vote* usually acts as a catalytic mechanism. I am using the term in italics on purpose; even though the expression of one's will by rallying on the squares of the capital is a very specific kind of mass participation in national politics, yet it is what makes these events worthy of the name of revolution, in contrast to cabinet coups, transfer of power to heirs and other means of rotation of government that are employed in the region under study. It is important to note that this form of "voting" does not express the opinion of the whole population, but only of the socially active segment of the capital's population. After all, casting a ballot paper into a ballot box is not sufficient for "casting a vote": one must also be ready to come out into the street and stand there for hours and days, resist, freeze, and take risks. To do this, one must be rather strongly motivated. The organizers and technologists of revolutions can only count on victory if this mechanism works. In this situation, it does not matter what happens in provinces and, generally, in the more socially passive strata of the society, for this is not a struggle for advantage on a "one man one vote" basis but a battle of social energies.

There is an exception, though, in this chain: Kyrgyzstan. There, the revolution originated in the town of Osh rather than in Bishkek. There was a good reason for that: in Kyrgyzstan, the opposition's energy formed mostly at the regional rather than the political level. Regional clans assumed the role of political parties. And in terms of both the availability of an opposition 'mass' and a place where such impulses originate from, Osh may, in a sense, be called the capital of Kyrgyzstan.

Colour Revolutions are online revolutions, i.e. they require *technology*, expertise and management: in particular, coordinating the work of the media, lobbying outside the country, managing the course of rallies, transportation arrangements, supply of food to protesters, etc. Technologies may vary; for example, in Abkhazia, lobbying the West was not possible because of its non-recognized status, the flow of money from abroad was limited, and the participation of foreign media was minimal. Accordingly, other technologies were used there: rallies were used instead of the press (the compact size of Sukhumi allows that), and money supplied by the Abkhaz diaspora in Russia was used instead of "Soros money." In Kyrgyzstan, re-

gional differences took the place of political delimitations. But technology and a certain degree of organization are always necessary, and, therefore, the availability of a structure capable of leading a revolution (i.e. *counter-elite*) is a prerequisite for a revolution; where this structure does not exist, the initiation of a revolution fails.

Therefore, another common trait of all successful Colour Revolutions is the *split of economic elites*. They feel the weakness of the state like no one else (in any case, often much better than professional analysts do) and begin to switch – in parts - from the government to the opposition side, supporting the latter just in case. If this element of the shift of economic elites to the opposition side is absent, then it means that the state is so consolidated that it has managed to form a kind of continuum, which includes the big business (at the national level, of course), the criminal community, the military elite, the corrupt bureaucracy, etc. This continuum simply does not allow for the emergence of counter-elites capable of organizing a revolution. Conversely, if the state is not able to consolidate elites, then some of them have the opportunity to either defect to the opposition or create one. This is an essential condition for Colour Revolutions to happen. For instance, the decentralization of corruption enables corrupt businesspeople to bet on different forces - this opened the way for the revolution in Georgia, for example, where Shevardnadze's regime simply lacked sufficient power resources to remove and appoint local princelings. In places where there is no such split and economic elites are more or less consolidated, the opposition has to fight alone, as was the case in Armenia's failed 1996 revolution.

The often overestimated influence of external forces may be included in the list of characteristic features of Colour Revolutions only with great reservations. External influence, in my opinion, is a private factor: it was not present everywhere, and where it was, its role was clearly overstated. It was, for instance, virtually absent in the successful revolution in Kyrgyzstan, and in Abkhazia, the external influence was directed against the revolution: tiny Abkhazia ultimately elected Bagapsh despite enormous pressure from Russia. The lesson is that external influence does not hurt, but it is never anything more than that.

It is too early to sum up the results of Colour Revolutions, of course. However, some of their direct results are already observable.

First, as a consequence of these revolutions *the level of democratic rhetoric often increases while the actual level of democracy decreases*. I am referring to that very specific level of democracy that enables these revolutions to take place. As a result of Colour Revolutions, people who led the counter-elite come to power. Left without a leader, the counter-elite has nowhere to recruit new leaders from - at least for a while - until the new government begins to disintegrate. Accordingly, for a while

the new government is free from the pressure of opposition forces. In addition, the revolution produces an increase in the influence of politics on the economy, with the latter becoming more and more controlled and centralized, hence becoming more similar to the models of those countries that have not had a revolution, because they were able to avoid the split of elites. Thus, Colour Revolutions are an element of nation-building in countries that failed to develop effective mechanisms for the consolidation of their elites and created, in their stead, Bonapartist regimes balancing between the interests of various, often regional, elite groups.

Secondly, the revolution results in a sort of *a premature change of generations*, i.e. the image of the country changes to a 'pro-Western' one despite the fact that relevant elites have not yet emerged. The public wants to distance itself from the former metropolis, and the result sometimes turns out to be very funny. For example, everyone knows that Saakashvili graduated from a Western university and is very fluent in English, and few people are aware that he began by graduating from the hardened Soviet Kiev Institute of International Relations and is at least as fluent in Russian as in English. The urge to change the image turned Bakiyev into a democrat and Bagapsh into a nearly anti-Russian politician. The truth is that potentially "non-Soviet" political leaders have not yet reached adulthood, whereas the development of a new mindset has already gone far enough for socially active people to try and escape the yoke of corrupt regimes, especially if the regimes are rotten enough for such an attempt to stand a chance of success.

Third, and perhaps the most important point, after revolutionary *countries remain as they used to be*. The main resource of the new Georgia is the same as the main resource of the old Georgia, i.e. the image of its ruler – a democratic, pro-Western ruler battling "external circumstances" (i.e. Russia) and domestic inertia; the only thing that has changed is his name: it is now Saakashvili and not Shevardnadze. Financial and industrial groups continue to tear Ukraine to pieces, dividing a nation that has not yet properly formed between the East and the West along political, economic, ethnic-cultural and even religious divides - not along the Washington-Moscow line, as it is sometimes seen by observers from the outside, but along the Lviv-Donetsk line. Kyrgyzstan remains divided among semi-criminal regional elites that alternately come to power; in this case, though, the division runs along the North-South line.

So far, no country in the world has succeeded in getting rid of its inherent political culture overnight. In the "third zone," where the government can change, but still cannot do so in a truly legitimate way, a kind of gap emerges with revolutions bursting into it. These revolutions are a personification of the natural desire of the

people, tired of the long-drawn out post-Soviet transformation, to change - with a scoop - the unsatisfactory reality of their life. However, it seems unlikely that a week or two of mass rallies on city squares and furious branding campaigns can replace years of political struggle, development of political institutions and the education and upbringing of people in the spirit of democratic freedoms.

ISLAM AND NATIONAL IDENTITY IN THE BORDERLAND: THE CASE OF AZERBAIJAN¹

By Tadeusz Swietochowski²

Throughout most of its history, Azerbaijan shared its destinies with Iran, including the Islamization that began in the mid-7th century, and the firm implantation of the Twelver Shi'a Islam in the 16th century under the Safavid dynasty. The early 19th century brought another turning point in the history of Azerbaijan: passing under the rule of a European power. As the result of the Russo-Iranian wars, in 1804-1813 and 1826-1828, the country and its people were permanently divided by the frontier drawn along the Araxes River. The Turkic-speaking Muslims of the Russian-held part of Azerbaijan differed from those remaining in Iran in one essential respect: there was a comparatively larger proportion of Sunnis among them. The Russian estimates of the 1830's showed that the ratio of Shi'a to Sunni Muslims was almost even, with the latter having a small edge.

While the sectarian distribution did not correspond with the administrative divisions, the Sunnis formed a majority in the northernmost and western parts of the country, subject to influences from the mountainous centers of Sunni Sufism especially the Naqshbandi order – Dagestan and Chechnya. The figures for the 1860's show a sudden and drastic decline of the Sunni population, which eventually stabilized at the level of about a third of the inhabitants of the Russian-held Azerbaijan.

The decrease in the proportionate strength of the Sunni element, ethnically to a large extent non-Azeri Turkic, was the result of their emigration to Ottoman Turkey, after the final suppression of the Northern Caucasus region by Russia. Russia, an underdeveloped and impoverished but expansionist colonial empire, resorted extensively to "divide and rule" policies, not only with regard to Christian and Muslim populations of Caucasia, but also toward the Islamic sects. Azerbaijani Shi'ite volunteers (but not Sunnis) were enlisted in Russia's conflicts with Turkey, the war of 1828, the Crimean War of 1853-56, and the war of 1876-78. The Shi'a - Sunni

1 This paper was published by the CI in Russian as: Swietochowski, Tadeusz. "Islam i natsionalnoe samosoznanie na pogranychnykh territoriyakh: Azerbadzhan." *Religiya i politika na Kavkaze* ("Islam and National Identity In The Borderland: The Case Of Azerbaijan." *Religion and Politics in the Caucasus*). Ed. by Alexander Iskandaryan. – Yerevan: Caucasus Media Institute, 2004 (in Russian). – Pp. 8-30.

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relations were the major concern for the Azerbaijani modernizing movement that began to emerge in the mid-19th century. The sectarian split reflected also differing political, cultural, and linguistic orientation typical for a borderland. The Shi'a tended to regard themselves as a part of the Iranian world, continuing the use of Persian as the literary language, while the Sunnis, though to a lesser degree gravitated toward Ottoman Turkey...

In the matter of language, the Sunni intellectuals were inclined toward literary Turkification. The rise of the native language press with the Baku newspaper *Akinchi* (1875-78), would soon lead to an intense public controversy sparked by criticism of the rites of the Ashura or the 10th day of the month of Muharram, the Shi'ite tradition of commemorating the martyrdom of the Imam Husain, killed in 680 at Karbala at the hands of other Muslims, the Umayyad khalifat forces³. In more than two thousand mosques and holy places of Russian-held Azerbaijan, the day of Ashura was marked with celebrations during which the participants, having worked themselves into a frenzy, inflicted wounds on their bodies by self-flagellation. The angry reactions that followed the expression of criticism came especially from Karabakh, a region renowned for its Ashura celebrations. The ensuing debate on the pages of the *Akinchi*, the first open discussion of an issue of public concern, revealed the extent of the strife between the two sects as much as between the reform-minded intelligentsia and the traditionalists. The deeper backdrop of the debate was spelled out in the newspaper's comment: "there is no unity among us, no cohesion. Half of the Muslims who live in the Caucasus are Shi'ites, half are Sunnis. The Sunnis cannot stop hating the Shi'ites and vice versa. Neither group wants to listen to the other."⁴

An unspoken dimension of the sectarian controversy was the question of the communal identity of the people called at that time Transcaucasian Muslims, or Tatars. The founder of modern Azerbaijani literature, Mirza Fathali Akhundzade, in his philosophical writings called for the need for "Islamic Protestantism" as a cure for divisive intolerance and fanaticism. As an immediate measure, he advocated that his countrymen cease keeping aloof from Russians under whose protection their

3 For a discussion of *Akinchi*, see: Swietochowski, Tadeusz. "Akinchi 1875-1878. The Rise of Azerbaijani Press and Public Debates in the Readers' Correspondence." *Presse und Öffentlichkeit in Nahen Osten*, eds. Herzog, Ch., Motika, R. Pistor-Hatam, A. – Heidelberg: Orientverlag, 1995. – Pp.175-83.

4 For a recent discussion of the subject, see: Smith, Michael. "Pamiat ob utratakh i azerbaidzhanskoe obshchestvo." *Azerbaidzhan i Rossiya: obshchestva i gosudarstva* ("Memory of losses and the Azerbaijani society." *Azerbaijan and Russia: Societies and States*). Ed. Dmitri Furman. – Moscow: Andrey Sakharov Foundation, 2001 (in Russian). – Pp.88-117. On the Muharram rites in Baku, see also: Lassy, Ivar. *The Muharram Mysteries among the Azerbaijani Turks of Caucasia*. – Helsinki: 1916.

lives, dignity, and property are secured. The spirit of fanaticism that prevails among them will disappear forever. There will arise among the Caucasian Muslims a desire for literacy and aspiration for learning which will guide them toward the improving of their morals. Until now it was only their religion that prevented most of them from learning the Russian language the knowledge of which, in the view of the clergy, makes the salvation of the soul unthinkable.⁵

Otherwise, identifying himself with Iran, he extolled the pre-Islamic glories of the Zoroastrian epoch that came to an end with the conquest by the "hungry and naked Arabs". In effect, he initiated the tradition of native secularism, a trend accepted by many modernizing intellectuals, not so much because of their hostility to Islam, but rather as a means of overcoming the sectarian division. Others embraced Jadidism, an educational movement opposing the separation of Islam from public life while calling for its modernization, especially through improved schools.⁶

It was the turbulent political condition that more than anything else was to shape the fortunes of Islam in 20th century Azerbaijan, and both the Shi'ites and Sunnis would be equally affected. In the face of common adversities their rivalries and antagonisms would lose not only intensity but, indeed, relevance. In the new political condition created by the weakening of the Russian autocracy with the 1905 upheaval, under liberalized government policies, such sensitive issues as gender inequality symbolized by the veiling of women became the topic of a long lasting press debate spearheaded by the most popular of Azeri magazines, Mollah Nasr al din.⁷

Yet, remarkably, the criticism of the Ashura rites did not grow; in fact the reverse was noticeable. The emerging native revolutionary movement, in its quest for mass appeal reached for the deeply rooted tradition of the Shi'ite funeral rites. Once a main target of the modernizers' condemnation, this tradition now came to serve as a means for the effective political mobilization of the masses, which otherwise were not responsive to conventional propaganda. In 1907, the funeral of Khanalar Sarafaliyev, a native Social-Democrat, turned into a large political demonstration, and among its organizers was a young Bolshevik activist, Joseph Stalin. Quite apart from generating a close link to the masses, the Azeri revolutionaries saw in the use of the traditional Islamic funeral rites the means of asserting the native distinctiveness from the Russian comrades, be it the Mensheviks or the Bolsheviks.⁸

5 *Akinchi*, no. 2, 1877.

6 Akhundov, Mirza Fathali. *Asarlari*. – Baku: 1958-62, vol. 2. – P. 384.

7 For a recent discussion of jadidism, see: Malashenko, Aleksei. *Islamskoe vozrozhdenie v sovremennoi Rossii (Islamic Revival in Modern Russia)*. – Moscow Carnegie Center, 1998 (in Russian). – Pp.32-33.

8 See: Siegel, Evan. *Debate on Women's Rights: Azerbaijan 1907*, unpublished paper submitted to

From now on, during all of the period of revolutionary *Sturm und Drang* stretching up to 1920, the native Social-Democrat Himmat (Endeavor) group, and then the national-liberal Musavat (Equality) party, made use of the funeral rites of native Muslims, who had fallen in political confrontations, and the setting was inspired by the traditions of Ashura or religious rites with revolutionary politics marked the origins of what would be called a national social-democracy. It came along with the sense of Islam as the distinctive mark of communal awareness at the time when not only the population, but also the intellectual and political elite of Russian-held Azerbaijan still did not have a clear notion of their own nationality.

The controversy between the emerging Azerbaijani nationalism and the traditionalist Islamic identity came to the open under the first independent republic in existence from 1918 to 1920. While Musavat, the largest political force, stood for the secular nation-state, its main antagonist was the pan Islamic Ittihad (Union) party, which called for the rule by traditional Islamic norms, and promoted the ideal of the unity of all Muslims of the Russian empire. In its hostility to the idea of the Azerbaijani nation-state, the Ittihad welcomed the Bolshevik invasion, only to take soon up arms against the new power.

The crucial test for Islam in Azerbaijan came with the Soviet rule. Toward the peoples whose primary identity was still Islamic, the Soviet regime applied anti-religious policies, and in doing so it tried to draw on the legacy of the intelligentsia's native secularism and anti-clericalism. Even though the Soviet policies toward Islam were always tainted by hostility, its degree of intensity varied. In the 1920's period of *korenizatsia* (indigenization), the guiding principle was in effect a social contract with the native modernizing forces, largely the intelligentsia, shaped by the spirit of enlightenment, Jadidism, and secularism. In return for the acceptance of Soviet power, they were given access to government positions as well as the recognition of national identity - full rights for the national language and culture, a notion that tacitly included Islam. Likewise, the Azerbaijani Soviet regime, headed by Nariman Narimanov, often presented itself as the spokesman for national aspirations, hence the term national communism referring to the Azerbaijani ruling party's politics of the period.⁹

Soviet-type secularism in the early 1920's tended to be relatively moderate and

the Middle East Studies Association Annual Convention, 1999.

9 For a discussion of the Bolshevik policies toward the Muslim intelligentsia, see: Bennigsen, A., Lemercier-Quelquejay, C. *Islam in the Soviet Union*. – New York: Praeger, 1967. – Pp.123-7; on *korenizatsiia* in Azerbaijan, see: Swietochowski, Tadeusz. *Russia and Azerbaijan. A Borderland in Transition*. – Columbia University Press, 1995. – Pp. 108-115.

seemed to reflect the current ideas of Mir Said Sultangaliev. A Volga Tatar Communist activist, well-known in Baku for his journalistic writings in the local newspapers, Sultangaliev believed that Muslims should attain socialism in their own ways and that Islamic notions of politics and society did not contradict Marxism. As the faith of the oppressed victims of imperialism, Islam could fit the Bolshevik vision of the East as the prime center of world revolution.

Initially, the Soviet regime's actions against Islam did not go beyond measures presented as part of the overall modernization, and these included expropriation of the charitable foundations, waqfs, the phasing out of the Islamic Shari'ah civil courts and makhtabs (schools), or banning entirely the Ashura processions, their political potential clearly understood by the new regime. On the other hand, the policy of encouraging the self-assertion of an ethno-linguistic identity was regarded as the application of the divide and rule principle toward the Muslims. A point in case was the replacing of the Arabic alphabet with the Latin. This reform, that at one stroke broke the integrity of the literary heritage of the past, and there could be no doubt that the Islamic literature would not be republished in transliteration, was received by some as deepening the ethnic distinctions among the Muslims of the USSR.¹⁰

It met with opposition from the conservative elements as well as the revolutionary followers of Sultangaliev, who looked toward the liberation of the Muslim masses from the ruling nation. Even though some mosques had been closed down during the mid 1920's and the customary law, *adats* were banned in 1927; the all-out offensive against Islam was launched only toward the end of the decade upon the consolidation of Stalin's personal rule. Some encouragement also came from the forceful secularization policy currently under way in Kemalist Turkey, and there was, in addition, the tradition of native secularism. Soon, Azerbaijan would see the promotion of veritable cult of Akhundzade as the pioneer of philosophical materialism.

The anti-Islamic drive coincided with the forced collectivization of agriculture, and the countryside population experienced deprivation of property together with the all-out attack against their faith as well as customs and traditions. The campaign opened with the old battle-cry of the modernizing movement, the call for the emancipation of Muslim women. While the symbolic act of their liberation had become the discarding of the veil, the Soviet legislation imposed in the late 1920's severe punishment for such practices rooted in the native traditions as polygamy, marrying under-age women, bridal payment (*kalym*), abduction, as well as the blood ven-

10 For a recent comprehensive work on the Soviet alphabet reform, see: Baldauf, Ingeborg. *Schriftreform und Schriftwechsel bei den Muslimischen Russland und Sowjeturken (1850-1937). Ein Symptom ideen-geschichtlicher und kulturpolitischen Entwicklungen.* – Budapest: Akademiai Kiado, 1993.

geance. A law passed in 1930 qualified the killing of a woman as a counterrevolutionary act punishable by the death sentence.¹¹

In the new political climate, the authorities began to agree to orchestrated popular demands for the massive closing down of mosques. Among the results was razing down of monumental works of architecture. Some party and government officials who became victims of the "Great Terror" were accused of having attended Friday mosque services or even assuming the functions of the despised mollahs. As the process gathered momentum, even insufficient ardour in the struggle against the religion, was the ground enough for punishment. National Islam was being uprooted along with national communism as a prime target of purges, but in the mid-1930's, the frequent accusation against the victims of the purges was phrased as Pan-Islamism, a reactionary, religion-based ideology serving the interests of foreign powers. The clerics, who symbolized the religious obscurantism of the past, were rendered harmless not only by terrorization, but also by acquiring the reputation of police informers. This circumstance kept the faithful from attending prayers in the few remaining mosques.

In general, the perception was formed that Azerbaijan had suffered greater repressions than its Transcaucasian neighbours because of identification with Islam. The long range effects of the brutal, persistent, and all pervasive campaign against Islam are still difficult to evaluate. By its nature, Islam is both a way of life and a religion. The visible manifestations of Islamic identity, such as observance of the Five Pillars of Islam, came into disuse, except for almsgiving. Likewise, seclusion of women ended with the banning of polygamy and the discarding of the veil. Women were given equal rights with men, and here the most impressive achievement became the wide access to education. All the same, Azeri marriages kept on being arranged, men seldom married outside of the community, and women hardly ever did. Azeris maintained strong kinship loyalties, which accounts for the significance of clans in the society. Until recently, they seldom migrated, especially to non-Muslim regions of the USSR, refused to eat pork, even if available, and only slowly succumbed to the attractions of alcohol. As late as 1950 the Minister of Internal Affairs reported that the absolute majority of the Muslim population, including numerous members of the nomenklatura, the ruling elite observed the practice of circumcision for their sons.¹²

11 Baberowski, Jorg. "Stalinismus an der Peripherie: das Beispiel Azerbaidzan 1920-1941." *Stalinismus vor dem Zweiten Weltkrieg. Neue Wege der Forschung*. Ed. by Manfred Hildermeier and Elisabeth Mueller-Luckner. – Munich: 1998. – P.315.

12 See: Ismailov, Eldar. *Vlast i narod. Poslevoennii stalinizm v Azerbaidzhane, 1945-1953 (The Authorities and the People. Post-War Stalinism in Azerbaijan)*. – Baku: Adilogli, 2003 (in Russian). – P.175.

As a religion, Islam clearly suffered from the repressions and atmosphere of terror. With the rites no longer observed in public, the religion was privatized, closed within the confines of family life, the most stable and conservative institution in Azerbaijan. Some scholars observed that women, who as a group were the beneficiaries of the earlier Soviet secularization drive, having acquired an equality of rights, more formal than real, subsequently assumed the role of the guardians of native traditions and these included the preservation of an elementary Islamic identity.¹³

Oftentimes, however, it was deemed too risky to pass the knowledge of the tenets of Islam to the younger generation, whose members grew up unable to say whether they were of the Shi'a or Sunni background. The widely circulating adage was: "Keep religion in your heart." These words echoed the spirit of an age-old response to religious oppressions. Indeed, the Soviet period brought the flourishing of the spirit of *taqiya*, the practice of dissimulation, including apostasy, sanctioned by the Quran, in answer to compulsion or threat.¹⁴

While the practice of *taqiya* in one form or another became a necessity of life everywhere under Communist totalitarianism, it had historically deep roots in Azerbaijan, the borderland region, which was the battlefield of sectarian struggles, the hotbed of heresies, the area of frequently changing sovereignties and centers of power. As in a demonstration of an ingrained impulse, the membership of the Godless Society shot up within a year from the modest number of 3,000 to more than twenty times of that number. By 1940, the statistical data recorded 3,200 cells and 129,622 members of this organization, which gave 2,567 lectures attended by 212,105 persons.¹⁵

The *taqiya* tradition together with the Shi'a teaching that the only true sovereign remains the Invisible Imam, and all other power is usurpation, also explains the relatively limited Azeri attachment to the institution of state, which, historically was often a foreign-imposed institution. The late 1930's, the high point of the Stalinist repressions, brought also advent of Azerbaijanism, a particularistic variety of na-

13 For a further discussion see: Tohidi, Nayereh. "Guardian of the Nation. Women, Islam, and the Soviet Legacy of Modernization in Azerbaijan." *Women in Muslim Societies*. Ed. by Herbert Bodman and Nayereh Tohidi. – Boulder: Lynne Rienner, 1998.

14 For a recent work on the subject, see, Kohlberg, Etan. "Taqiyya in Shi'i Theology and Religion." *Secrecy and Concealment. Studies in the History of Mediterranean and Near Eastern Religions*. Eds. Hans Kippenberg and Guy Stroumsa. – Leiden: E.J.Brill, 1995. – Pp.345-60.

15 Abasov, Ali. "Islam v sovremennom Azerbaidzhane: obrazy i realii." *Azerbaidzhan i Rossiya: obshchestva i gosudarstva* ("Islam in Modern Azerbaijan: Images and Realities." *Azerbaijan and Russia: Societies and States*). Ed. Dmitri Furman. – Moscow: Andrey Sakharov Foundation, 2001 (in Russian). – P.291.

tionalism intended to replace the traditions of links with the outside, non-Soviet world. Azerbaijanism spelled out not only the rejection of reactionary pan Islamism but also of Turkism, the identification with the Turkic speaking world, all the more so that Turkey ceased to be viewed as the friend of the USSR. The newly introduced form of national identity soon found an additional meaning during World War II with the entry of the Red Army forces into Iranian Azerbaijan. The temporary occupation prompted the dreams about possibilities of unity for the divided people.¹⁶

Despite the statistical successes in its anti-Islamic campaign, the Soviet regime chose to alternate the brutal repressions with periods of relative religious tolerance, such as the time of World War II, and a token of Moscow's new policy was the establishment in 1944 of the Muslim Spiritual Board of the Caucasus. The relaxation was all the more advisable in view of the signs that resentful Muslims were more likely than other Soviet citizens to switch over to the German side. Moreover, by this date the plans were under way to set up a pro-Soviet autonomous government in occupied Tabriz. Of the forceful anti-Islamic campaigns, the last one came in the post-Stalinist period of the Khrushchev years, no longer a part of bloody purges but rather of the broader policy of assimilating the Soviet nationalities to the Russian language and culture.

There followed intensification of scientific criticism of Islam as a foreign religion imposed on peoples of Transcaucasia by fire and sword. Of the Baku mosques that had survived Stalinism, all but two were closed down. In the late Soviet period there were in Azerbaijan 54 registered places of religious cult, of which 17 were mosques: 11 Shi'a, 2 Sunni, and 4 mixed in which Shi'a and Sunni successively performed the namaz. Among the total of 162 persons officially recognized as "religious activists", Muslim, Christian, and Jewish, around 100 were mollahs, of whose number no more than 16 had theological training, usually in the Tashkent Islamic University or the Bukhara madrassah (college), Mir Arab.¹⁷

Side by side of the structure of the official Islam, presided over by the Spiritual Board of the Caucasus, there existed popular Islam, especially noticeable in the southern, Shi'ite raions (counties) of Masalin, Bilasur, Jalilabad and Lenkoran known for the high levels of religiosity. Prayers were held secretly in private houses, or sometimes in holy places, the pirs. Some increase of religiosity was also observed

16 For a recent work on the Soviet occupation of Iranian Azerbaijan, see: Hasanli, Camil. *Soyuq muharebenin baslandigi yer. Guney Azarbaijan, 1945-1946*. – Baku: Matbu Evi, 1999. Consult also: Fawcett-L'Estrange, L. *Iran and the Cold War. The Azerbaijan Crisis of 1946*. Cambridge University Press, 1992.

17 Akhadov, Abdulla. *Islam v Azerbaidzhane (Islam in Azerbaijan)*. – Baku: 1998 (in Russian). – P.31.

in the northern raions of Kazakh, Evlakh, Devechi and Kusar, where historically Sunni were the majority or formed a large part of the population. Gradually, in the years of Soviet imperial decline signs of the religious reawakening began to grow, centred more on the popular than official Islam. In the late 1970's, according to Soviet sources, approximately one thousand clandestine houses of prayer were in use and some three hundred holy places of pilgrimages were designated. Among them were such famous shrines as Bibi-Eybat, Nardaran Piri, Et Agha Turbesi, Imamzade, Shaik Zahid, Khidir Zindeh.¹⁸

This growth could be viewed as breaking the ground for the opening of hundreds of mosques in the decade that followed. Although few observers agree on the depth and extent of this reawakening, Soviet surveys indicated that statistically, the level of religiosity was the highest in southern districts, and around Baku, i.e. in the solidly Shi'a parts of the country, and lower among the Sunni population. The Iranian revolution, a truly popular change of the Shah's regime into a militant Islamic state, caused fears of its reverberations in the neighbouring countries especially with the Shi'a population. Such considerations induced the United States to provide some support for Saddam Hussein in the war against Iran. The revolution created concern in Soviet Azerbaijan, where the authorities resorted to counterbalancing its potential religious impact by the nationalist slogans of a united Azerbaijan, echoing the World War II sentiments.

For many Shi'a Azeris, the echoes of the Islamic upheaval on the other side of the border could sound as foretelling the shakeup of the Soviet status quo, and it was becoming increasingly apparent that the religious revival would be intertwined with the change of the political climate. The "January Days" of 1990 that resulted in hundreds of Azeris killed or wounded by Soviet troops seeking to quell anti-Armenian riots in Baku, were followed by national mourning in the tradition of Shi'a funeral rites, 40 days after their deaths. This time the mourning was ordered by the government of the Soviet Azerbaijani Republic, and the country's Communist Party. Soon after the demise of the regime high ranking Azerbaijani officials, oftentimes former Communist public figures, began to appear at religious festivities or performing pilgrimage the holy places, and politicians as a rule were courting the support of believers.

The last Communist party head, Ayaz Mutalibov announced that he had always been a Muslim, and his archrival Heidar Aliyev after taking the presidency of the republic made the Hajj (pilgrimage) to Mecca. As for the new political force of the

18 *Ibid.* – P.30.

transition period, the People's Front of Azerbaijan, the one year long tenure of this post-Soviet regime was marked by the undoing of much of the Soviet anti Islamic legislative heritage. The Milli Majlis (National Council) that replaced the Supreme Soviet, passed on August 18, 1992, the law "On the freedom of religious faith," proclaiming the separation of religion from the state, mutual non-interference, and equality of all religions before the law. The legislation provided for recognition of religious organizations and their representatives. It allowed also for the subordination, in case of necessity, to religious institutions abroad, a point of special significance for the complex relationship with Iran, the historical homeland of the Azeri people where most of them still live, and the centre of the world Shi'ism.¹⁹

How successful has been the revival coupled with political change, from the perspective of more than a decade? The answer depends very much on one's standpoint: a former Communist party functionary may see the coming wave of fundamentalism; a visitor from the Iran is shocked by laxity and superficiality of Azeri clergymen. A neutral observer is apt to reach the conclusion that Islam survived under the Soviet regime, but the survival has exacted its price. The persistent propagation of atheism and secularism has left its mark among the different peoples and classes in Azerbaijan. The striking result in terms of individuals is how disjunctured or broken their knowledge is of the main line of thought and history of their religion. This was particularly evident among Muslim middle-aged and younger persons I interviewed. The anti-religion campaigns and classes were successful in neutralizing religion and making it ineffectual for most everyday purposes. Without mosques, without trustworthy clerics, religion was resorted to only in times of bereavement and difficulty.²⁰

The same author remarks that because of the low level of general religious knowledge among many young and middle aged urban individuals, "it is almost folk Islam or what one might call secular Islam. People identified themselves as Muslims and as members of a Muslim nation, but in the same breath defended materialism, and the fact that there is no God."²¹

Old Turkish-Iranian rivalry in Azerbaijan re-emerged in the post-Soviet years, and here the current political developments affected the course of Islamic revival. With funds from Teheran mosques were restored, and to deal with the problem of low level of theological education, the future clerics were invited to study in Iran. As

19 Safizadeh, Fereydoun. "On Dilemmas of Identity in the Post-Soviet Republic of Azerbaijan." *Caucasian Regional Studies*, Vol.3, no.1, 1998. – P.4.

20 *Ibid.*, p.4

21 *Ibid.*, p.4.

if replying to the Iranian challenge, the secular Turkey began also to build mosques and madrassahs enjoying more support from the Baku authorities than the Iranian activities. The Ankara or Istanbul-based religious foundations appreciated that Islam was an appropriate avenue to promote Turkish presence in Azerbaijan.

As for the religious contacts with Iran, political considerations loomed large in the background. The Teheran government was concerned about the nationalist disposition of Baku, and its possible repercussions in Iranian Azerbaijan, where despite integration of the local Azeris into the Iranian state, autonomist or even separatist sentiments could be awakened. The distrust of the independent republic of Azerbaijan was especially strong with regard to the People's Front regime of Abulfaz Elchibey, in power in 1992-1993.

In the Nagorno-Karabakh conflict, Iran took an equivocal position, which in Baku was seen as in effect breaking the Islamic solidarity, even if a large number of Azeri displaced persons were given refuge on the Iranian side of the border. The Iranian assistance to the camps in republic of Azerbaijan was later rejected after it became apparent that missionaries were agitating among the refugees for adoption of more radical Islam. Furthermore, Teheran appeared to be supporting Russia in its policies toward Caucasia and the Caspian region against the generally pro-Western disposition of Baku. While the Republic of Azerbaijan was perceived as threatening to stir the Azeri national sentiments across the border, Iran continued to throw its weight in the matters religious of the neighbouring country, with the second largest Shi'ite population in the world.

Linked to the influence of Iran was the emergence of a political association, the Islamic Party of Azerbaijan, founded in 1991. Its membership soon reached an estimated number of 50,000, mainly in small towns and villages around Baku. The party called for closer ties with Iran, including oil concessions. In cultural aspect, it opposed the restoration of the Latin alphabet and called for the return to the Arabic, and even organized courses teaching that script. In 1995, the head of the party, Aliakram Aliyev and several other leaders were arrested and their organization denied re-registration on the grounds that it was receiving financial support from Iran and had some links to that country's special services. The party has continued, however, to exist under changed leadership, in a semi-legal status.²²

Subsequently, all Islamic organizations, as well as mosques, were subordinated to the Muslim Spiritual Board. In 1996, the Parliament adopted the law banning activities of foreign missionaries, and requiring that local religious communities register

22 See: Abasov, Ali, *op.cit.*– P.297; see also: Motika, Raul. "Islamskie seti v Azerbaidzhane 90-kh godov" ("Islamic Networks in the Nineties"). Furman, Dmitri (ed.) *op.cit.* – P.320.

with centers of traditional religious organizations. These restrictions were justified by the need to prevent the exploitation of religious freedom for political purposes by foreign emissaries. As the traditional groups, enjoying full religious freedom were recognized Shi'a, Sunni, Russian Orthodox, and Jewish.²³

The 1995 Azerbaijani constitution allowed persons of all faiths to practice their religion and at the same time reaffirmed separation of the state and religion. Adopted under the auspices of Heidar Aliyev's regime, this point of the constitution has not met with reservations of any major opposition party. Indeed, their diverse programs agree in upholding separation of religion and state. Clearly, the intelligentsia upholds its secularist tradition, even though some opposition groups have cooperated with the Islamic party. The secularist character of the constitution provoked, however, reactions across the border in Iranian Azerbaijan. In response to the publication of the draft of the constitution of the Republic of Azerbaijan, Friday worshipers in Tabriz protested against the clause on the separation of religion and state and the fact that the constitution did not declare Islam as the official religion of the republic. Reportedly, the people of Tabriz called upon their "dear Azeri brothers" to reject the constitution. On the occasion, voices were raised again that if the two Azerbaijanis were to unite, "it is they who should come back to Iran."²⁴

The official position was indicated in the remarks of Ayatollah Mohsen Shabestary, of May 1996, who used the reference to the old Turkish-Iranian rivalry, with the implicit sectarian differences: "the Azerbaijan Republic once was ours. So, if there is any talk of unification of the two Azerbaijanis, it is they who should come back to Iran....Some agents of world arrogance are trying to damage our national unity by spreading secessionist sentiments in our region. Unfortunately some of their mercenaries in Tabriz repeat these words, and talk of Pan-Turkism. The policy of the Islamic Republic is to avoid such polemics. We do not want to create a hue and cry. But if we are faced with these satanic plots, we should remind everyone, including the people of the Azerbaijan Republic, that have lost some Azeri cities, and we could one day claim them back."²⁵

In Baku, despite the principal secularism, as an author remarked that "with the collapse of the political and social system came a crisis of meaning and identity.

23 See: US Department of State. Annual Report on International Religious Freedom for 1999: Azerbaijan.

24 Shaffer, Brenda. *Borders and Brethren. Iran and the Challenge of Azerbaijani Identity*. – Cambridge, Mass: MIT Press, 2002. – P.187.

25 "Ayatollah Shabestary Addresses the Seminary Students in Tabriz." Sobz, May 28, 1996, cited in Human Rights Watch/ Middle East, Vol.9, No.7 (E), September 1997. – P.27.

Observers have noted the growth of participation in small study groups on religion, the urban elite and secularized women with polished nails and western attire talking about their daily prayers, or the striking similarity in the narrative of some Azerbaijani people's religious experience with that of "reborn" experiences here in the United States. People are rediscovering Islam readopting it, transforming it, and using in ways that suits them."²⁶

Islamic intellectuals, the term describing mainly scholars in the field of oriental studies try to impart to Islam in Azerbaijan modern and reformist qualities, especially with regard to interpreting the Shariah in the light of contemporary society's needs. On the other hand, a group of women called for restoring polygamy or temporary marriage, so that they could enjoy the happiness of motherhood in the society with the shortage of males because of the emigration or the Karabakh war. Another group sued for the right to wear Islamic headscarves in passport photos, and in 1999 the court decided in their favour. There was nothing in the law, the judges ruled, that prevented the women from wearing the headscarves in the official photographs.

The signs of religion-based feminism, as much as the growth of Islamic associations among the poorer sections of the population, are symptomatic of a wider issue: in the condition of post-Soviet transformation with the attendant disruptions. Islamic revival assumes additional character of social protest of the underprivileged. If the roots of the radical Islam reach the religious spirit of communality and mutual support, the present day social and economic realities leave their strong impact. In Azerbaijan, as in the whole post-Soviet space, where the minimal system of social security has largely broken down, there is vast reservoir of discontent among the impoverished groups of population, including the refugees from the Karabakh war. The benefits of the oil wealth do not filter down across the layers of the more privileged, who often are regarded not only as corrupt but also irreligious. For all the secularism of the political elites, the overwhelming majority of Azeris are known to identify themselves as Muslims, even though few of them observe the requirements and prohibitions of Islam. One set of figures recently made available, estimates the proportion of most ardent believers at less than a tenth of the population, slightly more than the number of declared atheists, with the balance falling into the category of those who consider Islam above all as the way of life or an attribute of their group identity. An Azerbaijani response to the trend toward nationalizing Shi'ism and enmeshing it with the statehood, visible not only in Iran but also in Iraq and Lebanon,

26 Safizadeh, *op.cit.* – P. 10.

has been national Islam, a variation on the theme that had emerged already in the early 20th century. Regardless of the degree of individual religiosity Islam is recognized as an integral part of national identity.²⁷

National identity in a borderland, implies self-assertion, but vis-à-vis whom? The answer most obviously is in the face of outsiders of Christian and European background, and the articles in pro-government and independent newspapers alike linked Christian missionary activities with the interests of Russia, or Western powers... But another target of the press criticism were foreign-backed Muslim missionaries depicted as a threat for stability and civil peace, or as part of an Iranian scheme to influence and eventually absorb Azerbaijan..

With regard to other Muslims nations, Azerbaijan began to stress a specifically native character of its Islam, in an attempt at emancipating itself from outside, notably Iranian centres. National Islam, is viewed as a part of the long historical process of emancipation from the religious domination by Iran. At the same time national Islam stresses the need for the unity of Shi'ite and Sunnis, which entails avoiding politically divisive, rigid, or uncompromising positions. The 1999 sectarian riots in the mosque of the town of Goychai are seen as intended to undermine the spirit of Azerbaijani Islam by foreign meddlers. More violent were the disturbances at the town Nardaran, resulting in loss of life, at the hands of the government forces. The cause of the violence was officially termed as dissatisfaction with the successes of the state secularist policy.

More than the fear of the spread of Islamic militancy from Iran, there appears another threat, coming recently from a northern direction, Chechnya and Dagestan. The brand of Islamic militancy in these two countries was called by the Russian media somewhat imprecisely "Wahhabism." This term refers to the puritanical and conservative movement that had put down roots in the Arabian Peninsula, but belongs to the Sunni rather than Shi'a branch of Islam. The most obvious connection with Saudi Arabia was the financing of the missionary activities in the North Caucasus and Central Asia with petrodollars. A special concern in Azerbaijan is that a group receptive to the Wahhabi agitation may become the Lezgins, an ethnic minor-

27 For data on religiosity in Azerbaijan, see: Faradov, Tair. "Religiosity in Post-Soviet Azerbaijan: A Sociological Survey." International Institute for the Study of Islam in Modern World (ISIM), Newsletter, August 2001. – P.28; Motika, Raoul. "Foreign Missionaries, Home Made Dissidents, and Popular Islam. The Search for New Religious Structures in Azerbaijan," unpublished paper presented at the conference "The Twelver Shi'a in Modern Times," Freiburg, October 4-7, 1999. – P.2. Other set of data indicating a greater degree of religiosity is provided by Abasov, *op.cit.*– Pp.306-307. For a discussion of nationalizing Shi'ism, see: Oliver, Roy. "The Crisis of Religious Legitimacy in Iran." *Middle East Journal*, vol. 53, no.2, spring 1999. – Pp.201-212.

ity of some quarter of a million, straddling the border with Dagestan. The Lezsgin community has the record of raising some autonomist and even separatist claims in the first years of the post-Soviet period..

Meanwhile, the day to day realities of the relationship between and varieties of Islam and political life, including international politics keep imposing themselves, as indicated in a semi-official report in a Baku newspaper. The acting head of the government Religious Affairs Office declared that some religious communities functioning in Azerbaijan are violating the law. They do not report to the Caucasus Clerical Office, disseminate religious literature of subversive nature among the population and promote discord among religious sects. The law enforcement has been called on to thwart the activity of foreign missionaries who under the pretext of humanitarian aid propagandize sectarianism in Azerbaijan introducing religious precepts of their respective countries. In particular, the Office mentioned the organizations from Iran, Saudi Arabia, Kuwait, and Qatar. Of the brand of Islam whose spread caused special concern for the authorities was mentioned Wahhabism.²⁸

Typically, the term Wahhabism associated now with the upheaval in the North Caucasus was singled out, although in the Soviet years it covered all foreign-linked fundamentalist activities. The threat on the part of the Shi'ite fundamentalism has not been the subject of official statements inasmuch as the Iranian theocracy does not appear to represent an immediate danger for stability of the republic of Azerbaijan. The Azerbaijani authorities, invoked the Wahhabi danger to ban the opposition rally in Baku, and a number of persons were detained, some had to leave the country, and others were delivered into Russian hands. Even before the world wide antiterrorist drive initiated by the 9/11 catastrophe, Russia and Azerbaijan concluded an agreement on suppressing the flow of arms and militants across the frontier, strengthening the border controls, and arresting suspected supporters of the Chechen insurrections. As for the antiterrorist cooperation with Washington, it has apparently been underway for years, as indicated by President Clinton's thanks to Haidar Aliyev for the capture of several extremists in 1998.²⁹

Even stronger indication that anti-Americanism had reached the ranks of radical Islamists in Azerbaijan, were the long prison sentences given in October after the World Trade Center disaster to the members of the local terrorist organization, Jaish al-Islam (Army of Islam) for plotting an attack at the USA embassy. These steps were in line with President Aliyev's declaration of wholehearted support for the global struggle against terrorism. With the beginning of the campaign

28 *AzerNews*, Baku, August 18-24, 1999.

29 See: US Department of State, *Patterns of Global Terrorism – 2000*, Eurasia Overview.

in Afghanistan, Azerbaijan offered overflight rights to the United States, along with intelligence sharing and the use of the airbase in the Absheron Peninsula. Yet as post 9/11 tremors continue to roll across the Islamic world, the responses in a country that borders Chechnya, Iran, and Turkey may, in the long term, prove less predictable.

* * *

As post-Soviet Azerbaijan is rediscovering its historical roots, this process includes return to Islam even though it still carries largely an ethno-cultural character. The Islamic revival, in itself a complex phenomenon, is marked by exercises in re-adaptation from a purely defensive practice of *taqiya* to the self-asserting national identity. In a country with secular traditions of the modern period, the educated elite and a large part of the urban population shaped by the Soviet experience, the probable model of the future evolution seemed to be closer to Turkey than to Iran, despite of the common historical heritage and the links of Shi'ism. Yet Turkey, after a number of past attempts, also turned openly toward an Islamic revival, implicitly questioning some of the Kemalist heritage. The 2002 Turkish electoral victory of the Islamist moderates as they declared themselves to be, carried the message that the first standard-bearer of secularism in the Middle East, is changing the attitude toward the heritage of history. In Azerbaijan, the quintessential borderland, the shape of Islamic revival will most likely be influenced by similar processes in the neighbouring countries.

MOVING IN SEVERAL DIRECTIONS AT ONCE: RELIGION IN GEORGIA IN THE 21ST CENTURY¹

By Ivlian Khaindrava²

Despite the pretentious title, this paper does not in any way purport to offer a comprehensive review of religion and politics in Georgia; fulfilling such a task would require writing a monograph, or even several. Besides, drawing a detailed and objective picture would be difficult anyway, as the situation with religion is extremely controversial even in comparison to other spheres of public and political life of Georgia. Considering that there are more than enough contradictions in Georgia, we can use a less-than-original metaphor: Georgian citizens today are like the passengers of a departing train who wish to reach different destinations by that same train. Obviously, a train cannot do that.

I will refer to this metaphor at the end of the paper; in the meantime, while attempting to give an idea about the relationship between religion and politics in Georgia, we will take two walks down the streets of Tbilisi.

OVERVIEW OF THE RECENT PAST

First, let us take a tour of the late eighties of the previous century, when the country was swept with national-liberation rallies, protest hunger strikes, demonstrations and manifestations, which became a salient feature of the everyday life in Georgia. Alongside national three-colour (and other historical) flags and portraits of prominent Georgian social and political activists, the Holy Cross became an integral attribute of mass protests.

The triad “motherland, language, faith” put forward as a national slogan by Ilya Chavchavadze in the 19th century, posters and calls similar to “Long live free, democratic, Christian Georgia!” (with minor variations) defined the surface of the national-liberation movement.

To be fair, it should be noted that dissent in Soviet Georgia also contained a

1 This paper was published in Russian as: Khaindrava, Ivlian. “Religiya v Gruzii: XXI vek.” *Religiya i politika na Kavkaze* (“Religion in Georgia: the 21st Century. *Religion and Politics in the Caucasus*). Ed. Alexander Iskandaryan. – Yerevan: Caucasus Media Institute, 2004 (in Russian). – Pp.53-74.

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religious component. Even high-ranking Communist party members had their children baptized, some out of adherence to traditions, and some, assuming that “if God exists, why upset relations with him?” Dissenting human rights activists demanded, amongst other things, respect for freedom of consciousness and religion. Students and the most courageous representatives of intelligentsia set up a movement for the protection of historical monuments, which in Georgia were mostly churches and monasteries. Overall, whether adequately or not, the Georgian Orthodox Church, alongside, perhaps, the Tbilisi Dinamo football team and the Sukhishvili-Ramishvili folk dance group, was perceived as one of the few national institutions that survived during the Soviet times.

Once the Soviet ideology collapsed – a fact virtually officially recognized during the Perestroika - people felt a natural need to fill the resulting ideological vacuum and to find and establish a new identity. That period was characterised by a radical, slogan-based tendency to replace concepts with opposite ones: totalitarianism with democracy, communism with freedom, atheism with faith. Overall, the image of a Soviet person with no roots, no motherland, no God in his heart or his mind, speaking a *lingua franca*, was opposed to the image of an Orthodox Georgian with a glorious ancient history in his backpack. Reduced to sameness in the Soviet times, people of various nationalities were now striving to find their own unique individuality, to revive their historical identity or create a new one. The Baltic nations successfully became Europeans within a short period of time, Ukrainians and Belarussians aspired to prove that they were not Russians; Moldovans tried but failed to identify themselves with Romanians, and Azerbaijanis, with Turks. Georgians were in a more difficult situation, similar perhaps only to that of the Armenians (there was no need to prove non-Russianness and no one to welcome them as “poor relatives”). They decided to present themselves as Orthodox Georgians guarding the eastern outpost of the Christian world.

Religion (in this case, Orthodox Christianity) became the necessary and natural mainstay. However, souls corrupted by the Soviet system did not – and could not – feel an innate willingness to return to the fold. At grassroots level, this return mostly happened in accord with the perceived *Zeitgeist*: people were following the vogue or habitually imitating those who define the country’s political atmosphere, and all the public leaders of the national-liberation movement - Zviad Gamsakhurdia, Merab Kostava, Zurab Chavchavadze, Temur Chkheidze, Gia Chanturia, Irakli Tsereteli - constantly emphasised their devoutness.

There is a reason why I spoke above about the “the surface” of the national-liberation movement while describing its religious component. Amongst the public,

there was (and there still is) no understanding or thorough knowledge of Orthodox Christianity; instead, there is appalling ignorance of religious matters. Only a handful of people are aware of the differences between the Orthodox and Catholic Churches, let alone between the Lutheran and Anglican Churches. Meanwhile, the rest are certain that Orthodox Christianity is the only true religion.

Back then, this surprising manifestation of religious faith drained of its content (here or below, I am by no means aiming to hurt the feelings of genuine believers) suited the formula “Orthodoxy without Christianity” or, “Orthodox atheism” if you will.

This vision is exemplified by a tragic incident that took place during the night on April 9, 1989. When it became obvious that security forces were about to advance on the participants of a hunger strike and supporting protesters, the Catholicos-Patriarch of Georgia Ilia II called on the protesters to move to the Cathedral opposite the government house and to pray to God (and thus perhaps avoid blood-letting). The answer was a unanimous “no”! The majority of the protesters were holding lit church candles; right after saying “no” to the Patriarch, they began saying the Lord’s Prayer with thousands of voices chanting in unison. How do you then explain such blatant disobedience of the supreme religious authority?

For better or for worse, after having been a companion of the national-liberation movement, the Georgian Orthodox Church automatically became a companion of the post-Soviet authorities in Georgia. It thus became one of the attributes of the new statehood, defying “the underlying idea of freedom of religion, according to which the principle of political unity of people within one state is not only necessary but sufficient for normal functioning of the state” (Nodar Ladaria).³ It’s characteristic of the times that while neither President Zviad Gamsakhurdia nor his supporters liked Ilia II, the president insisted on the Patriarch’s presence at key events in the parliament (the first session, presidential oath etc). There are two virtually identical photographs in my archive. In one of them, the Patriarch is shown with President Gamsakhurdia, who is taking an oath on the Bible, and in the other one, with President Shevardnadze taking an oath on the Bible. Apart from other things, this means that both of the presidents considered the blessing of the Georgian Orthodox Church instrumental for their legitimacy.

It is only natural that under these circumstances church blessings became the vogue. Major events organised by the authorities and opposition alike, including

3 Ladaria, Nodar. “The Historical Motivation for Freedom of Religion.” *The Church, the State and Religious Minorities in Georgia: Is there a Danger of Religious Fundamentalism?* Ed. Ghia Nodia. – Tbilisi: Caucasus Institute for Peace, Democracy and Development, 2000 (in Georgian). – Pp.7-13.

public gatherings, openings of new facilities, exhibitions, presentations, the laying of foundation stones and so on, seemed to require the presence and involvement of the clergy. I once watched on TV a ceremony in which a priest was blessing a newly-opened... bookmaking office. The next step would have been the blessing of a brothel; fortunately, I have not witnessed that so far. However, a news item by *Prime-News* agency describes an event which, in my opinion, is very similar. I am quoting verbatim, "On Friday, the Catholicos-Patriarch of Georgia Ilia II blessed the terrain in the yard of Prosecutor-General's Office in which a church will be built, named after the Holy Tsar Vakhtang Gorgasali. Friday was the official Prosecutor Day. The head of the department of Judicial-Procedural Oversight of the Prosecutor-General's Office, Temur Moniava, told journalists that the construction of the church would start this year. According to him, the construction will be fully funded from donations. Prosecutor Day has been celebrated for sixth years now."⁴

However, our first tour is over. Now let us glance at the legal framework of religious life in Georgia, since the trends prevalent therein reflect the state policy towards religion, if not directly, then at least indirectly.

LEGAL FRAMEWORK

International Covenants

In 1994, Georgia ratified the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights. In 1999, Georgia joined the European Convention on Human Rights.

The Constitution

The Georgian Constitution, which was adopted and came into effect in 1995, looks perfectly benign in terms of religious freedom. E.g.

Preamble

The citizens of Georgia, whose firm will is... to secure universally recognized human rights and freedoms...

Article 14

Everyone is free by birth and is equal before law regardless of race, colour, language, sex, religion, political and other opinions, national, ethnic and social belonging, origin, property and title, place of residence.

4 *Prime-News Agency*, Tbilisi, 30 May 2003 (in Georgian).

Article 19

Everyone has the right to freedom of speech, thought, conscience, religion and belief.

The persecution of a person on the account of his/her speech, thought, religion or belief as well as the compulsion to express his/her opinion about them shall be impermissible.

The restriction of the freedoms enumerated in the present article shall be impermissible unless their manifestation infringes upon the rights of others.

Article 24

1. Everyone has the right to freely receive and impart information, to express and impart his/her opinion orally, in writing or by any other means.

Article 35

Everyone shall have the right to receive education and the right to free choice of a form of education.

Article 38

Citizens of Georgia shall be equal in social, economic, cultural and political life irrespective of their national, ethnic, religious or linguistic belonging.

However, the crucial formulation of the Georgian Constitution with regard to our subject is contained in Article 9:

1. The state shall declare complete freedom of belief and religion, as well as shall recognise the special role of the Apostle Autocephalous Orthodox Church of Georgia in the history of Georgia and its independence from the state.
In 2001, a second clause was added to this article:
2. The relations between the state of Georgia and the Apostle Autocephalous Orthodox Church of Georgia shall be determined by the Constitutional Agreement. The Constitutional Agreement shall correspond completely to universally recognised principles and norms of international law, in particular, in the field of human rights and fundamental freedoms.

We shall later come back to this article of the Constitution, and to the Constitutional Agreement.

Domestic Legislation

The creation of religious organisations is, apparently, regulated by the 1997 Civil Code. According to its *Article 1509*, in particular, legal persons of public law include

non-governmental organizations created on the grounds of legislation for accomplishment of public objectives (political parties, religious associations etc.). However, the 1999 Law on Legal Persons of Public Law does not prescribe a procedure for setting up a religious association as a legal entity. According to the second clause of *Article 5* of this law, a legal person of public law can be created by:

1. *The law;*
2. *The edict of the President of Georgia;*
3. *The administrative act of a state body in case expressly stated by law.*

Clearly, none of the above can serve as a basis for establishing a religious association; the registration issue is thus pending to this day. Things got even worse after a ruling of the Supreme Court of Georgia regarding the registration of Jehovah's Witnesses. The Supreme Court ruled that a religious association *must* be a legal person of public law and may not be registered as a union (association), which is a legal person of private law, as prescribed by the Civil Code. As a result, the registration and legal functioning of religious associations became even more problematic.

Article 101 of the Tax Code makes the Patriarchate of Georgia exempt from VAT but does not mention any other types of religious associations (cf. Article 6, paragraph 5 of the Constitutional Agreement). Article 47 (income tax exemption) also works like that. The 2002 state budget allocated the Patriarchate just under 1 million lari (about 450,000 US dollars); in addition, the Patriarchate got financing from the President's Fund, the city budget of Tbilisi and regional budgets. Various state sources alongside private donations are being used to fund the construction of the Holy Trinity Cathedral.

A key principle prescribed by the Law on Education is the independence of educational institutions from political or religious associations (Article 1). However, according to Article 13 of the same law, the state supports the functioning of church education facilities for the purpose of sustaining and developing the traditions of national culture. The Patriarchate of Georgia participates in designing educational programs and standards. Similar provisions are enshrined in the Constitutional Agreement (Article 5).

According to Article 26 of the Law on Imprisonment, a convict is entitled to engage in religious practices and use any required accessories and literature.

Article 155 of the Criminal Code prescribes penalties for unlawful obstruction of religious practice. Article 166 of the Criminal Code of Georgia prescribes penalties for interfering with the creation and functioning of political, civil or religious associations.

The Law of Georgia on Export and Import of Cultural Property prescribes that in the event of a dispute, a representative of the Patriarchate of Georgia must sit on the expert consultative commission.

Article 2 of the Law on the Protection of Cultural Heritage mentions but does not regulate the relationship between the state and Patriarchate of Georgia, as the owner of a substantial part of the cultural heritage. The Constitutional Agreement covers this relationship in more depth, but still not fully.

Summing up, I would like to quote from a legal review called “Religious Freedom in OSCE member states”: “even a brief overview of the Georgian legislation allows to conclude that the legislation is inconsistent and does not provide sufficient guarantees for freedom of religion; if we recall the existing practice, we can directly state that Georgia still falls very short of international standards of religious freedom.”⁵

Article 9 of the Georgian Constitution and the Constitutional Agreement

During the drafting the Constitution and its adoption by the parliament (the author was a member of parliament in 1992-1995 and a member of the State Constitutional Commission), there were discussions about whether the Constitution should mention the Georgian Orthodox Church, and if so, in what exact words. As in many other matters, a compromise wording was proposed: the Constitution emphasised the unique role of the Georgian Orthodox Church in the Georgian history and declared full religious freedom and the independence of the Church from the state. Each side attached its own meaning to this wording: the “secularists” decided that it would take the issue off the table, and the “clericalists” decided that it would allow them to embody the “unique” role of the Church in various legal acts that would boost the role of the Church in public life. The “clericalists” prevailed. On March 30, 2001, the parliament unanimously (with 191 votes) adopted the Law on Amendments and Additions to the Georgian Constitution that added a second clause to Article 9. Though on the same day, the parliament adopted a Decree on Manifestations of Religious Extremism, which prescribes to several government agencies the task of eradicating the growing manifestations of religious violence, it became clear that the situation had changed dramatically. The Georgian Orthodox Church became “the first among equals.” In a nutshell, the Georgian Orthodox Church became the only religion in Georgia to have constitutional status.

On 14 October 2002, a Constitutional Agreement was signed between the state of Georgia (represented by President Shevardnadze) and the Apostolic Auto-

⁵ *Religious Freedom in OSCE Member States. Legal Overview.* – Tbilisi: Freedom Institute, 2002 (in Georgian). – P.9.

cephalous Orthodox Church of Georgia (represented by the Catholicos-Patriarch of Georgia Ilia II). The Agreement was ratified by the Georgian parliament on 22 October, 2002, and blessed by the Synod.

While the agreement was being drafted, several European consultants had a look at it. Dr Rick Lawson, Council of Europe expert, Professor of Law, University of Leiden, stated that there was no evident connection between the Georgian Constitution and the Constitutional Agreement.⁶ Another CoE expert, Ringolds Balodis, Dr. of Law, said that the agreement had some resemblance to Italian, Spanish and Polish Catholic concordats. However, in those countries, a law on religious organisations is in place, and the concordat plays the role of a by-law, whereas in Georgia it was raised to the status of a Constitutional Agreement. In addition, it does not properly define the liabilities of the parties, and execution of certain provisions is impossible without amendments to some existing laws or adoption of new ones. For example, under Article 3 of the Agreement, the state recognises marriages made in church; however, relevant procedures and legal consequences (the rights of women and children, property issues) are not defined in the Agreement.⁷

Georgian scholar Zurab Kiknadze considers Article 11 of the Agreement “offensive:” under this Article, the government assumes partial restitution liability. The Patriarchate’s demands for compensation of losses incurred by the Church during the Soviet times perplex Kiknadze, “as if sovietisation, dekulakization, collectivisation, confiscations, pre-war and post-war repressions did not affect the whole population of Georgia, regardless of ethnicity, religious affiliation or social status.”⁸

Without analysing the agreement any further, we can state that its existence *per se* attests, directly and indirectly, to the fact that, in the realm of religious freedom and inter-religious relations, the situation in Georgia is far from rosy and falls short of modern democratic standards. Interestingly, according to many experts and analysts, the constitutional status did not reinforce the position of the Church in but on the contrary, undermined it. According to political scientist Ramaz Sakvarelidze, “There is a risk that the church may reinforce its administrative position but weaken its religious influence (a similar paradox happened in world history many times:

6 Meladze, Giorgiy. “A Legal Analysis of the Agreement between the State of Georgia and the Georgian Autocephalous Orthodox Church.” *Tavisupleba (Freedom)*. – Tbilisi: Liberty Institute, №3, 2002 (in Georgian). – Pp. 20-22.

7 Meladze, Giorgiy. “A Legal Analysis of the Options for the Agreement between the State of Georgia and the Georgian Autocephalous Orthodox Church.” *Tavisupleba (Freedom)*. – Tbilisi: Liberty Institute, №1-2, 2002 (in Georgian). – Pp. 24-30.

8 Kiknadze, Zurab. “The Church and the Law.” *Tavisupleba (Freedom)*. – Tbilisi: Liberty Institute, №1 (13), 2003 (in Georgian). – Pp. 31-43.

inquisition gave birth to European atheism; the Russian church with its administrative power was a forerunner to Communist atheism). Thus, due to the modern policy of the Church, with religious intolerance as one of its main manifestations, the Church risks losing its authority, which is equally dangerous for the Church and for the state.”⁹

In his book called *World Religions in Georgia*, Nugzar Papuashvili writes, “Since perestroika and the awakening of the national-liberation movement, a certain category of the clergy and society have been obsessed with religious-nationalist and religious-rigorous, i.e. ultra-clericalist ideas, emotions and thoughts. These ideas have been upheld by political parties, and an anti-ecumenical front appeared in Georgia. The Catholicos-Patriarch and the Holy Synod met the demands of radicals: on May 20, 1997, the Georgian Orthodox Church left the ranks of the World Council of Churches and the European Conference. An imminent split in the ranks of the Georgian Church was prevented but the problems remained. In the eyes of radicals, ecumenism is not just membership of ecumenical organisations but even a Eucharistic union with churches that participate in the ecumenical movement and do not reject joint prayers with non-orthodox Christians.”¹⁰ However, small-scale schisms could not be prevented, and several groups left the jurisdiction of the Georgian Patriarchate.

A TOUR OF THE PRESENT

So, how did we come to this? To answer this question, let us make another tour: one of Tbilisi in the early 21st century. The followers of a truly deranged schismatic, Basil Mkalashvili, have, with impunity, carried out pogroms at prayer houses of other religions (Jehovah’s Witnesses bore the brunt of the attacks but Baptists and others also suffered). The pogroms, which number in the hundreds already, were ideologically supported by a Member of Parliament, Guram Sharadze, leader of “Our Georgia” movement, who demands, among other things, that Orthodox Christianity be proclaimed the state religion of Georgia. On several occasions, “wrong” religious books were burned. On July 10, 2002, there was a raid on the office of a non-governmental organisation, Liberty Institute, which dared to protect the rights of victims. Those who fight against religious intolerance and violence get verbally abused in the mass media and at various public gatherings...

9 Discussion. Nodia, Ghia (ed.), *op.cit.* – P.49-52.

10 Papuashvili, Nugzar. *World Religions in Georgia*. – Tbilisi: Liberty Institute, 2002 (in Georgian). – P. 95-96.

Meanwhile, law-enforcement and government stand by and watch - in essence, encouraging the abuse. Only recently, criminal charges were filed against Basil Mkalashvili, and court sentenced him to three months of pre-trial detention. Interestingly, (1) Mkalashvili's aggressive supporters huffed and puffed for days but the court's ruling was not overturned, and no cataclysms ensued; (2) Several dozen "soft-hearted" MPs signed a petition for the release of Mkalashvili before trial, thus revealing their moral, intellectual, professional and other qualities; (3) There are reasons to expect that Mkalashvili will become a "martyr" of sorts, and the number of his supporters may increase. There is a limit, though, to the number of people who will openly dare to follow the excommunicated Basil.

Let us make a few finishing touches to this image of Georgian reality. In the summer of 2001, Gigla Baramidze, the then presidential envoy in Samtskhe-Dzhavakheti (simply speaking, the governor) was awarded a church certificate and silver cross, blessed by the Catholicos-Patriarch, "for his personal contribution to strengthening the Georgian Orthodox Church in the region and on the occasion of the 2000th anniversary of the Nativity of Christ."¹¹ However, in February 2002, the chairman of the Parliamentary Committee on Self-Government and Regional Policy announced that the administration of the aforementioned governor "regularly misused public funds allocated by the state for the teaching the Georgian language to the local population, mainly spending them on his administrative staff."¹² By that time, however, Gigla Baramidze had stepped down from his post, and there was no investigation into "misuse of funds."

Recently, the Patriarchate attempted to prevent a British theatre company's tour of Tbilisi. The Patriarchate's statement read that performances based on Shakespeare's sonnets contained homosexual and erotic scenes, and got "controversial reviews" in London."¹³

Meanwhile, new churches and chapels are being built all over Georgia, their funding sources as dubious as their architectural value. On one of the highest hills overlooking Tbilisi, the grandiose Trinity Church is being erected. Who cares that the city is brimming with juvenile and elderly beggars, and that many people cannot afford healthcare? Instead, the legacy of Shevardnadze's and Ilia the Second's era will remain for generations to come...

11 *Prime-News*, Tbilisi, August 1, 2001 (in Georgian).

12 *Prime-News*, Tbilisi, February 26, 2002 (in Georgian).

13 *Prime-News*, Tbilisi, June 13, 2003 (in Georgian).

MORALS AND VALUES

In 2001, the US and UK embassies to Georgia issued a joint statement on religious intolerance and violence in Georgia. On February 5, 2002, the leaders of Catholic, Jewish, Muslim, Lutheran and Baptist religious associations wrote an open letter to the Georgian president calling on him to take measures against religious violence. In the summer of 2002, 15 members of the US Congress called on the Georgian president to adopt effective measures to this end. Senator Ben Campbell, Chairman of the Senate Select Committee on Intelligence, said that President Shevardnadze and Georgian authorities turn a blind eye to incessant violence against specific religious communities, and expressed his hope that the congressmen's letter will be perceived as a direct signal of the extreme concern of the United States, which are looking forward to the Georgian authorities taking all necessary measures to protect people regardless of their religious affiliation.

In his biannual reports to the Parliament, the Georgian Ombudsman strives to draw attention to the grievous plight with freedom of religion in the country, but fails to evoke any response. Civil society activists, to the best of their capacities, systematically point out disturbing developments in this sphere. For instance, in December 1999, the Caucasus Institute for Peace, Democracy and Development held a discussion on "Religious Minorities in (Semi)-Democratic Societies." In this paper, I have quoted several times from speeches given by experts at this discussion. However, so far, those are voices in the wilderness.

It is illustrative that no single influential Georgian politician is a church-goer, let alone inclined towards Orthodox fundamentalism. On the one hand, it is difficult to determine how religious each politician is, on the other, it is easy: their deeds and lifestyles speak for themselves. President Shevardnadze, Minister of State Dzhorbenadze, Ajarian Governor Abashidze, labour leader Natelashvili, socialist leader Rheulishvili, major manufacturer Topadze - the list can be continued - all have Communist party and nomenclature backgrounds, varied in length and scope only. It is difficult to find Christian values at the heart of their political activity.

Nor is there any reason to suspect the new opposition leaders of piousness. Most of them grew out of the president's party: Parliament Speaker Burjanadze, National Movement leader Saakashvili, United Democrats' leader Zhvaniya, leaders of the New Right Gamkrelidze and Gachechiladze. A few parties within the national-liberation movement - republicans and traditionalists - have managed to stay afloat; their leaders are not ardent believers either. Yet none of them dares to openly criticize these alarming tendencies, for fear of losing votes. National democrats have

always been special: in the 1980s, they put forward a concept of “theo-democracy” which was both vague and dangerous.

According to Paata Zakareishvili, “There is an apparent unhealthy tendency to speculate with religious values. The time is approaching when the policy of ignoring problems between religious associations in the country will inevitably become an obstacle to democratic change. Unfortunately, Georgian politicians either do not take this problem seriously, or dwell in the state of illusory complacency, due to ignorance, flag-waving patriotic incompetence and misguided self-confidence.”¹⁴

Nugzar Papuashvili, whom I already quoted above, writes that “the major problem is ignorance, or, to put it mildly, insufficient competence of the authorities, the administration and most educators in matters of religion and law.”¹⁵

However, according to Zurab Chiaberashvili, “someone who claims to abide by a set of principles (Orthodox faith), but in fact does not, provides the ideal foothold for people who want to treat the society as a backward illiterate crowd. Such a person is just like a Soviet-time communist, who declared one thing (equality, fraternity and unity) but did quite another (appropriated public funds).”¹⁶

ON SURVEYS

Why did we come to this, and not something else? Doesn’t Georgia have the image of a religiously tolerant country whose history knew neither religious massacres nor religious harassment? Let us have a look at the religious map of present-day Georgia (the data below is approximate, compiled from various sources, and data on the number of atheists is altogether absent).

Chart 1.

no	Religious Affiliation	Numbers	%
1	Armenian Apostolic	200 000	5,0
2	Muslims	400 000	10,0
3	Catholics	50 000	1,25
4	Yazidi	30 000	0,75
5	Jehovah’s Witnesses	15 000	0,375
6	Jews	10 000	0,25

14 Zakareishvili, Paata. “Why Agreement and Not Law?” Nodia, Ghia (ed.), *op.cit.* – Pp.14-21.

15 Discussion. Nodia, Ghia (ed.), *op.cit.* – Pp.44-46.

16 *Ibid.* – Pp.39-42

7	Baptists	6 000	0,15
8	Representatives of Pentecostalism	5 000	0,125
9	Molokans	2 000	0,05
10	Doukhobors	1 500	0,04
11	Salvation Army	800	0,02
12	Lutherans	700	0,02
13	New Apostolic Church	700	0,02
14	Bahá'ís	500	0,0125
15	Seventh-day Adventists	400	0,01
16	Krishnaists	200	0,005
17	Others	200	0,005

Obviously, Georgia, unlike its neighbours in the Caucasus, is a multi-religious country. According to Avto Jakhadze, in such conditions “cooperation and mutual tolerance between religions is a necessary but not sufficient precondition for peaceful co-existence.” Jakhadze also points out, “It often happened that conflicts on political, ethnic or other grounds acquired a religious component over time. It sometimes happened that the original non-religious causes of the conflict became irrelevant but the conflict continued on religious grounds.”¹⁷

Civil society experts are aware of all this, but does the general public understand it? Must not these tendencies be nurtured by someone or something in order to persist?

Below is some interesting data of an opinion poll that may throw light on the situation. The poll covered 1200 respondents countrywide.¹⁸

Chart 2. Trust towards various institutions in Georgia

	Trust	Do not trust	Cannot answer	Refused to answer
Police	51	1006	57	114
President	124	910	89	88

17 Jakhadze, Avto. “The Political Dimension of Religious Diversity in the Caucasus.” Nodia, Ghia (ed.), *op.cit.* – Pp. 22-26.

18 *Your Rights*. Periodical of the Office of the Human Rights Defender of Georgia, #1, 2001 (in Georgian).

Court	116	913	87	95
State Security	82	947	86	96
Parliament	51	982	75	103
Government Administration	44	949	111	107
Oversight Chamber	78	914	114	105
Ombudsman	174	749	187	101
State Tax Service	39	984	84	104
Orthodox Church	767	235	118	91
Ministry of Environment	118	838	148	107
Anti-Corruption Council	80	881	144	106

This data demonstrate that there is, with insignificant variations, a complete lack of trust towards state institutions that are corrupt, incompetent, inefficient and indifferent towards the general public. Against this background, people are looking for a reference point, a moral compass which will guide them to faith and hope in the ruthless reality. If this compass is any good is quite another story. In terms of logic, this does not work very well either, as long as individual members of the clergy very seldom qualify as a moral authority, let alone an intellectual one, whereas as a group, they apparently qualify as both. Indeed, the Lord's ways are past finding out...

One more chart:

Chart 3. Qualities of which parents disapprove in a future son/daughter-in-law

Different religion	306
Low culture	292
Nothing, as long as the person has moral integrity	267
Criminal past	262
Previous sexual contacts	211
Different nationality	180
Previous marriage	166
Physical disability	140
Unemployment	121
Low income	65
Disrespect towards traditions	58

Inferior social status	49
Unattractive appearance	21
No higher education	16
Unacceptable political views	15
Being a refugee	14
Living in a different part of Georgia	10
Other	9
Foreign citizenship	7
Superior social status	7

The data in Chart 3 turned out to be even more unexpected than that in Chart 2, to an extent that no single expert in the field was willing to analyse it in-depth. It seems that this data still needs some reflection.

Now let us look at the data of a survey made a few years back and mentioned by Ghia Nodia in the volume quoted throughout this paper.¹⁹ In 1997, the German Arnold-Bergstrasser-Institute and the Caucasus Institute for Peace, Democracy and Development conducted a survey in Georgia, in which 65% of the respondents agreed that “faith and religious values should define all aspects of public life.” In international sociological practice, the answer to that particular question is used to measure the extent to which society supports religious fundamentalism. More specifically, it reflects the willingness of society to obliterate the divide between religion and social-political life, fully subordinating the latter to the former. According to this survey, Georgia is ready for religious fundamentalism. Notably, 70% of the respondents who favoured fundamentalism were students, which is not a good sign.

Speaking of students, whereas in 1978, just 1% of the students of Tbilisi State University said they were religious, in 2000, this figure rose to almost 89%.²⁰ Of course, back in 1978, some people did not dare to admit that they were religious, and in 2000, some people did not dare to admit to being atheists, but the trend is obvious.

In order to avoid dramatisation, it should be noted that even if there is a threat of religious fundamentalism in Georgia, Georgian citizens are its only possible target.

19 Nodia, Ghia. “Is There a Threat of Religious Fundamentalism in Georgia?” *Ibid.* – Pp.57-68.

20 Papuashvili, Nugzar. *World Religions in Georgia.* – Tbilisi: Liberty Institute, 2002 (in Georgian).

Georgia has no domestic resources for exporting Orthodox fundamentalism, and no export market. Our neighbours need not worry.

WHY?

Here is how Sozar Subeliani explains the dominant attitudes, “A very significant part of the society considers Orthodox Christianity the “national ideology.” In their eyes, the “national role” of the Orthodox faith rates much higher than the mystical or social functions of the church. Consequently, other religious trends are viewed as a threat to the Georgian state and national unity, which causes the aggressive attitude of the society to non-Orthodox religious trends.”²¹

Zurab Kiknadze believes that “Inter-religious peace in Georgia is inextricably linked to the public mindset. As long as any other religion is perceived as “alien” and thus “hostile,” we shall have no peace... This is Byzantine heritage. Just like in Byzantium, our population is excessively politicized, and religious disagreements are manifestations of this fact. This is Byzantine mentality, which the most perfect law cannot change.”²²

An interesting observation was made by Ghia Nodia, “We can say that there is a gap between the corporate interests of the Church and the national interests. It is in the national interests of Georgia to protect national unity and the unity of the state, which requires strengthening democratic institutions and especially, implementing a policy of religious tolerance... The Orthodox Church views this set of national interests as a threat to its corporate interests.”²³

A similar concern is voiced by Avto Jokhadze, “Throughout the post-soviet space, the evolution of economic and political systems is directed towards the West (in any case, there is an attempt towards Westernization), whereas the revival of Orthodoxy and Islam pushes the society away from Western values. Obviously, society is unable to move in two opposite directions at once. This circumstance exacerbates the already severe contradictions within our transition society, and is extremely dangerous because it is conducive to the ignition of domestic conflicts.”²⁴

21 Subeliani, Sozar. “On Some Causes of Religious Aggression and Conflicts in Georgia.” Nodia, Ghia (ed.), *op.cit.* – Pp. 27-37.

22 Discussion. *Ibid.* – Pp.52-55.

23 Nodia, Ghia. “Is There a Threat of Religious Fundamentalism in Georgia?” *Ibid.* – Pp.57-68.

24 Jokhadze, Avto. “The Political Dimension of Religious Diversity in the Caucasus.” *Ibid.* – Pp.22-26.

* * *

Apparently, the current problems are caused by the current plight of society (more accurately, proto-society). There are few oases in a society, even fewer than in the desert. If policy, governance and education are a mess, things can't be any better with religion or sports.

Georgian citizens today are like the passengers of a departing train who wish to reach different destinations by that same train. There are three ways out of this situation. The train can remain stuck at the station until the passengers start a fight and tear it to pieces. Or else, the train can start moving, but to just one of the two possible destinations. Either we go back to a medieval mentality and corresponding lifestyle, or we move on, towards modern mentality and a lifestyle based on modern pluralistic values.

All this said, I still believe that Georgia will not collapse into fundamentalism. Otherwise, Georgia will stop existing.

THE ISLAMIC FAITH IN THE NORTHERN CAUCASUS: A NEW TREND OR A FLASHBACK?¹

By Alexander Iskandaryan²

The Northern Caucasus is a region where almost every social, political and ideological issue has an Islamic aspect. The Muslim faith has become part of the identity of ethnic groups living in the Northern Caucasus, and is deeply rooted in their behaviour patterns. Moreover, social and political dimensions are intrinsic to the Islamic faith, which, unlike Christianity, does not prescribe a clear distinction between the mundane and the religious. Consequently, it is only logical that the ongoing Islamic revival, or “re-Islamisation,” involves the emergence, among other things, of political Islamic trends.

The Muslim faith was persecuted in the Soviet Union along with other religions. Opportunities for receiving an Islamic education, opening a mosque or performing the *hajj* (pilgrimage to Mecca) were severely restricted. As a result, by the late 1980s, the Muslim faith was preserved almost uniquely at the level of household traditions and ethnic identity; it functioned as a part of ethnic culture rather than as a system of religious views. Even in Dagestan, the most Islamised part of the Northern Caucasus, there were only 27 mosques in the republic’s twelve regions and four cities. By late 1994, Dagestan already had 720 mosques, eight Islamic universities and 111 madrasahs. In 2000, Dagestan’s mosques numbered 1,594.

In the last decade of the twentieth century, pilgrims to Mecca and Medina from the Northern Caucasus numbered in the hundreds of thousands. The re-emergence of Islamic religion was, thus, part of the general tendency for religious revival within the former Soviet Union.

Alongside conservative growth, there is also a tendency for the emergence of those types of Islam which are absolutely new to the Northern Caucasus, some of which are the so-called radical or political Islamic trends. Put into perspective, the influence of Islamic trends on Northern Caucasus politics is so considerable that one can speak of serious distortions of secular statehood.

1 This paper was published in Russian as: Iskandaryan, Alexander. “Islam na Severnom Kavkaze: re- ili doislamizatsiya?” *Religiya i politika na Kavkaze* (“Islamic Faith in the Northern Caucasus: Renewed Islamisation or an Old Trend?” *Religion and Politics in the Caucasus*). Ed. Alexander Iskandaryan. – Yerevan: Caucasus Media Institute, 2004 (in Russian). – Pp. 96-110.

2 The author has been the director of the Yerevan-based Caucasus Institute since 2005.

THE GEOGRAPHICAL DISTRIBUTION OF ISLAMIC TRENDS

The prominence of Islamic trends in the Northern Caucasus apparently decreases from east to west. The most Islamised societies in the Northern Caucasus are Dagestan, Chechnya and Ingushetia, and the least Islamized are the Circassians who populate the western parts of the Northern Caucasus: Adygeya, Karachay-Cherkessia and Kabardino-Balkaria. In Chechnya and Dagestan, Sufism, a mystic Islamic trend, maintains a strong hold over traditional Islam. Sufis in these regions typically belong to one of several Sufi orders, or *tariqas* (Arabic for “way”): *Naqshbandi*, *Kadyriyya* and, to a lesser extent, *Shadhiliya*. The Sufi orders are not popular in the western parts of the in the Northern Caucasus; on the whole, traditional Islamic culture, including unofficial (sometimes undercover) teaching of the Arabic language, was preserved to some extent in the eastern parts of the Northern Caucasus, but almost dissolved in its western parts.

Currently, religious activity is on the rise in the west of the region, and there are more contacts between ethnic sub-regions. Islamic studies Professor Aleksey Malashenko describes these developments as “resumed Islamisation”: he argues that the Islamisation of the Northern Caucasus is an old trend which was interrupted by the Communist revolution and has now resumed.

TRADITIONAL ISLAMIC TRENDS

It can be said that two types of Islamic trends are now popular in the Northern Caucasus. One is what is perceived as ‘traditional,’ or ‘dogmatic’ Islamic faith; the other is popularly known as *Wahhabism*, a term used to designate the ‘new,’ largely politicised Islamic trends.

Traditional Islamic religion in the Northern Caucasus, represented by the Sufi orders in the region’s east, is no longer based on the Islamic scholarly tradition and profound mystic learning, both of which were thoroughly and purposefully eradicated by the Soviet authorities back in the 1920s. Restoring the scholarly basis of the religion would take a long time; even if the necessary number of teachers were available, it would take adherents decades to acquire the knowledge and skills required for practicing the traditional Islamic faith.

So far, traditional Islam in the Northern Caucasus is in the stage of conservative growth: its infrastructure is expanding, and the number of religious teachers (sheikhs) and students is increasing. Leading sheikhs have thousands of followers; among the sheikhs who have risen to prominence, one can name Sayd of Chirkey

and Bagrutdin of Botlikh; Tajuddin of Khasavyurt (Ramazanov) who died in 2001, leaving several successors including Adam of Gudermes; Mahomed-Mukhtar Babatov, Arspanali Gamzatov and Serajjudin Israfilov. Any deficiency of education or *baraka* (grace) that some of the sheikhs may have is compensated for by their social activity. Through religious rituals and mystic rites, a new believer can adopt the Muslim faith and join a particular local *tariqa* (Sufi order). Since it is Sufism that has become institutionalized in the Northern Caucasus as the traditional Islamic faith, all “official” clergy belong to *tariqas*. Meanwhile, no outstanding *alims* (Muslim scholars) are active in the region, and no fundamental Islamic studies are conducted. The tension that arises once in a while between adherents of the two prevailing Sufi orders, *Naqshbandi* and *Kadiriyya*, chiefly concern rituals, not dogmatic issues.

Official Islamic faith in the Northern Caucasus is no longer centralised; the Soviet-era *Religious Office of the Northern Caucasus Muslims* dissolved in 1989 along the borders of autonomous republics. In turn, republic-level religious offices broke down and split according to the ethnicity of adherents; this was one of the many manifestations of an ongoing separation of ethnic groups living in the Caucasus. By now, even in Dagestan, almost every ethnic group in the Northern Caucasus has an official Religious Office of its own.

However, in terms of political orientation, all the Religious Offices are rather traditional, and so are all three local *tariqas* (the two prevailing ones plus *Shadhiliya*, which in the Northern Caucasus is endemic to Dagestan). They usually support the political authorities, and members of the Muslim clergy are incorporated into the political elite. In this sense, Sufi, or *tariqa*, Islam is not an independent political player in the Northern Caucasus. The guiding principle of *tariqa* leaders is something like, “rulers guide the people, and *alims* guide the rulers.”

This said, one must note that in many parts of the Northern Caucasus, and especially in highland areas, it is the local Imams, not the heads of local administrations, who lead communities. A candidate for a political post will often make a large donation to a mosque in the hope that the Imam will encourage his community to vote for him. There have been cases when an Imam rejected the donation of a candidate of whom he disapproved.

WAHHABISM

The trend known as *Wahhabism* is quite special. A more accurate name for the groups known as *Wahhabi* in the Northern Caucasus would be *Salafi* (from the Arabic *as-salaf*, ancestors), a term used in the Moslem world to refer to revivalists, i.e.

advocates of the revival of ethical standards that supposedly existed in early Islamic history. The Salafites' declared aim is to purify the Islamic faith from subsequent additions, including those originating in ethnic cultures and common law.

In fact, the term usually applied to revivalists in the Northern Caucasus is *Wahhabi* – originally the designation of a particular trend in Salafism. Wahhabis get their name from the 18th century Arabian preacher Muhammad-ibn-Abdul Wahhab, the founder of a puritanical Muslim sect. Revived by ibn-Saud in the 20th century, this sect became the basis of official Islam in Saudi Arabia and has very little relevance to the Northern Caucasus.

However, it is already common practice to refer to Islamic puritans in the Northern Caucasus as Wahhabis; one must bear in mind, though, that they have little in common with the Wahhabis of Saudi Arabia.³

Moreover, revivalism in the Northern Caucasus is not a unified movement, in either the institutional or dogmatic aspect. Varying from region to region, it is quite heterogeneous and only perceived as a homogenous body by outside observers, mostly by hostile ones.

The emergence of political Islamic groups in modern Russia dates back to June 1990, when the first Islamic Revival Party was established in the city of Astrakhan. It was officially registered in Dagestan; its founders included almost all the individuals who later became leaders of political Islamic groups in the Northern Caucasus: Ahmadkadi Ahtaev, Bagauddin Kebedov (who later changed his name to Bagauddin Muhammad) and his brother Abbas. By 1994, the Islamic Revival Party disintegrated; its moderate leaders (such as Valiahmed Sadur) left the political scene, whereas the less moderate ones gradually evolved into undercover activists and eventually founded the Northern Caucasus Wahhabi movement.

The movement originated in Dagestan, and only later gained popularity in Chechnya and other parts of the Northern Caucasus. In Chechnya, puritan religious trends inevitably grew and radicalized as a result of the Chechen War; in the meantime, these trends persisted in Dagestan and expanded towards the west. Wahhabis are frequently accused of getting support from abroad. Without going into detail, it is worth noting that in all probability, the Wahhabis do get some financial support from Saudi Arabia and other Middle Eastern countries (and so, by the way, do Muslim groups in other parts of Russia where Islam is the traditionally prevail-

3 It is also important to note that *Wahhabi* is a derogatory term for Muslim revivalists in the Northern Caucasus. They never refer to themselves by that name and, naturally, neither do the Saudi Arabian Wahhabis apply this term to revivalists in the Northern Caucasus. Yet, this term has become part of the political discourse and found its way into political dictionaries.

ing religion). The support itself, however, does not provide sufficient grounds to regard Wahhabism as an imported trend. There is no doubt that its emergence in the Northern Caucasus has its profound societal causes.

SOCIETAL ROOTS OF WAHHABISM IN THE NORTHERN CAUCASUS

The Northern Caucasus, more than any other region in Russia, provides the perfect societal environment for the emergence of radical egalitarian ideologies based on the Islamic faith. Similar to the Middle East, the social foundation of radical Islamic trends is the impoverished youth.

At the time of its emergence, revivalist Islamic trends had little chance of gaining wide popularity; their only supporters were marginalized Muslim intellectuals. As the local population, especially in the poor highlands, began to fall into poverty following the collapse of the Soviet economic system, Wahhabism became increasingly popular in the Northern Caucasus. In the highlands, with high birth rates and an acute shortage of arable land, young people have almost no future. In some regions, youth unemployment surpasses 85 percent. The quality of life is extremely low in those areas even by Russian standards; in addition, local elites are extremely corrupt and the economy is criminalised throughout. Against this background, ideologies of social equality become increasingly popular, especially where they criticised the corrupt political authorities and the hypocrisy of “official” Mullahs.

The Northern Caucasus form of Wahhabism belongs to one of several types:

1. The Wahhabism of intellectuals. This group comprises the founders and leaders of the revivalist movement, plus those young people who received their Muslim education in post-Soviet times at Middle Eastern universities and are now returning home. By virtue of their education, they can not integrate into the traditional Islamic structures with their present-day leaders.
2. The Wahhabism of the poor. To poverty-stricken farmers and impoverished, unemployed urban dwellers, Wahhabism offers a simple social doctrine and a clear set of strict ethical standards. The ethics of brotherhood and unity advocated by revivalist Muslims helps their followers fight despair while also filling them with aggression towards “others.”
3. The Wahhabism of the rich. Its adherents are successful players in the new economy who do not wish to integrate into the Soviet-legacy corrupt power structures. While strongly success-driven, these businesspeople have preserved tradi-

tional religious standards that set them apart from their surroundings (this type of Wahhabi was practically eradicated by police measures taken after the 1999 events in Dagestan).

Starting in the early 1990s, the adherents of “new Islam” began to form Islamic communities (called “Jamaat”) in Dagestan, and then in the rest of the Northern Caucasus. The communities soon found themselves in opposition to the political authorities and the Sufi clergy. .

Dozens of Jamaats were formed; in two of them, in the villages of Karamakhi and Chabanmakhi, the communities proclaimed independence from the political authorities. Regardless of their proclamations, most revivalist Islamic communities were de-facto independent, because their members (as well as most villagers in these parts) were usually armed, and authorities could not risk interference with their activities. Sometimes Jamaat members experienced tension and even confrontations, including armed ones, with people from neighbouring villages. In some cases, Dagestani Wahhabis were involved in clashes with Russian army soldiers. Local authorities made clumsy attempts to check the radicals’ activities by imposing restrictive laws or police actions. Neither could do any good, however, since the Wahhabis were often better armed than the police. Harassment and the overall negative attitude of the society made many Wahhabis migrate to Chechnya, which was beyond the control of either the Dagestani or Moscow authorities. There they continued to live in Jamaats, of which the most well-known was based in Serzhen'-Yurt village and led by combatant leader Hattab who came to Chechnya from Jordan. In fact, the community functioned as a military training base located in the highland parts of Chechnya. Young men from Chechnya and Dagestan received military training at the base and were simultaneously taught the basics of Muslim faith at an institute which was established there.

Drastic changes were brought to these parts of the Northern Caucasus by the events of 1999 when Chechen rebels led by Basaev raided Dagestan. After that, the Dagestani Wahhabis were forced to go undercover, and some migrated, this time to the Georgian Pankisi Gorge, which was beyond the control of any government. This migration wave was smaller simply because the gorge itself is quite small.

It should be emphasized that what the majority of revivalist Wahhabi groups adhere to is more of a political ideology than a religion proper. In revivalist Islamic ideology, there are two types of binary oppositions: “the West” vs. “the Islamic world” and “true Muslims” vs. “bad Muslims.” Differences between various Islamic trends thus provide just as much ground for confrontation as differences between

Muslims and adherents of other religions. The ideology places great emphasis on *Jihad* (from the Arabic “struggle,” or fight for faith) and stresses the importance of political or even armed struggle against infidels, making it look more like a political ideology dressed up as a religious trend. The ideology has a social component (fighting against the corruption of state officials, combating social inequality, questioning the authority of traditional clergy, etc.) and a political component (rebellious against non-Islamic authorities and fighting for the establishment of an Islamic state outside Russian borders). According to revivalist extremists, the traditional Islamic trends that prevail in the Northern Caucasus contradict the dogmatic foundations of true Islam. Revivalists criticise ethnic nationalism and refer to the concept of *Al-umma Al-Islamiya*, “Nation of Islam.” When revivalist Muslims confront Russian authorities, they perceive this as an inter-religious conflict between Muslims and Christians. Religious phraseology is used as the basis for a primitive confrontational political ideology which is used to justify a Resistance movement.

THE STRUCTURE OF THE WAHHABITE MOVEMENT

In the Northern Caucasus, most revivalist Muslim groups exist as enclaves. Several groups are active in Dagestan.⁴ These include the *Islamic Jammaat*, led by Bagaudin Muhammad who was based in Chechnya until 1999; his whereabouts have been unknown since then and it is not clear if he is still living. *Al Islamiyya* is a group led by the followers of Ahmadvadi Akhtev who died in 1998. There is also a group led by Ayub Omarov in the village Tsumadi in Southern Dagestan, a group centred around the *Al Hikma* (“wisdom”) Mosque in Kizilyurt, and a few others.

In Karachay-Cherkessia, there is *Al Islamiyya* and the *Islamic Jamagat* (the Karachay spelling of *Jamaat*, “Islamic community”), and the *Imamat* (from the Arabic verb *amma* – to lead). In Kabardino-Balkaria, there is a group called *Muslim Brothers*, and one called *Jamaat*. There is also a *Jamaat* group in Adygeya.

It is generally believed that the founder of the “Wahhabi project” was Bagaudin Muhammad who preached revivalist Islam since the late 1980s. Although Wahhabi groups in different republics frequently bear the same or very similar names, they have very few political or ideological ties. Their ideology does not usually go beyond a primitive opposition to “Western pagans.” Chechnya is perhaps the only region where “Wahhabism” became really widespread.

It is extremely difficult to estimate the numbers of religious extremists in the re-

4 The names listed below are approximate: some of the groups may have ceased to exist, some leaders are in hiding or fleeing from authorities.

publics of the Northern Caucasus, and not merely because most Wahhabis operate underground. The revivalist groups in the Northern Caucasus have an exceptionally flexible structure. Quite naturally, there is no individual membership in either the political or the quasi-religious organisations. Numerous communities, or Jamaats, are in fact amorphous structures which use a very flexible procedure to recruit and accept new members. If we try to make a very rough estimate of the number of people who adhere to Wahhabism in the Northern Caucasus, we can surmise that in every republic, the radical trends have **dozens** of activists or adepts willing to pick up arms (many of these activists, irrespective of ethnicity, already do or did fight in Chechnya). Then, there are **hundreds** of people in every republic (although figures will vary significantly from one republic to another) who permanently keep in touch with one another and “learn Islam.”⁵

And finally, there is no doubt that there are **thousands** of people in every republic who are not direct supporters or even less activists of Wahhabism, but who have good feelings towards its adherents and sometimes give financial support to communities or mosques.

On the whole, it can be said that Wahhabis form a very small minority of the population throughout the Northern Caucasus with the exception of the regions which are in a state of total economical collapse, such as highland Dagestan or Tyrnyauz Region in Kabardino-Balkaria. However, there is also some “frozen activity,” meaning that a change of the political situation, such as increased pressure from the federal centre, can lead to a dramatic upsurge of religious extremism, the way it happened in Chechnya.

In Chechnya, the war was certainly a trigger. During and immediately after the first Chechen campaign, Chechen political leaders felt the need for an ideology that could be used to organise resistance and eventually to structure the Chechen state. They chose Muslim identity and the idea of a “Muslim state” ruled by “Muslim laws”; after a while, political leaders – in Chechnya those were the military commanders – started to publicly proclaim themselves adherents of “true Islam.” An “Islamic guard” was formed among revivalists. A number of political/military leaders – Mavlady Udugov, Zelimkhan Yandarbiev, Shamil Basaev – became associated in the eyes of the public with the Wahhabi movement.

In this context, Shamil Basaev’s raid against Dagestan in 1999 can be seen as a logical development. The Wahhabi project was by its very nature directed outward and had to expand beyond Chechen borders. Dagestani Wahhabite ideologists, in-

⁵ Of course, in most cases, learning Islam will simply mean learning the most primitive formulas used to justify Jihad; the teachers are usually quite ignorant.

cluding Bagauddin Muhammad and Ahmadkadi Ahtaev, used to spend a lot of their time in Chechnya organising propaganda, while also recruiting armed groups in Dagestan. However, Dagestan had not experience a revolution as Chechnya did, nor did it engage in armed hostilities with federal Russian authorities; in fact, Dagestan preserved most of its elite structures intact since Soviet times. Consequently, the Wahhabi project was doomed to failure in Dagestan because social upheaval could disrupt the fragile ethnic balance in this multiethnic republic. Still, as doomed as the project was to failure, it was also doomed to happen.

After 1999, Wahhabism became the main ideological tool used to recruit new combatants to the guerrilla war in Chechnya. As a result, being a Wahhabi in Chechnya became a sign of being a combatant.

Moreover, in Chechnya, in contrast to other regions of the Northern Caucasus, Wahhabism started to grow younger. According to anecdotal evidence, about a third of the Chechen combatants are now teenagers between 15-17 years of age. Children are easier to recruit; they do not have families to support and are more willing to fight than adults. Moreover, this is a generation of children many of whom never went to school and that can barely read and write. Raised in an environment of permanent war and total criminal license, this generation is extremely hostile to Russia and everything Russian. For the older generation of combatants, the war is a struggle for independence led by the Chechen nation against Russian authorities, rather than a religious war. Many of the older combatants adhere to traditional Islam (Sufi orders), or even place little value on religious beliefs (to the extent that this is possible in Chechnya). For the teenagers, a Russian is just an enemy, bearing no individual traits. Their justification of the war is entirely different: they see it as a struggle between the Muslim and the Judeo-Christian world. Revivalism, the mythology of Middle Eastern radicals, is becoming increasingly popular and almost universally accepted among young Chechen combatants. Wahhabism is purposefully propagated by the commanders as an extremely instrumental ideology. It is taught as a subject called *The Basics of Islamic Faith* which is on the curriculum of all military training courses for young men. Moreover, the conduct of Russian soldiers, the practice of kidnapping and unmotivated murders, all fit into the simple picture of a religious conflict where the Christians are simply trying "to kill all the Muslims."

Given the social flexibility of guerrilla structures and the existence of an inflammable mass of illiterate radically-minded young people, a very special sub-culture is emerging. In Chechnya, the people who were brought up on Jihadist ideology are so far rank-and-file guerrilla fighters, whereas their leaders are apparently using Wah-

habism as a convenient instrument for recruiting and managing their armed forces. However, there is no reason to expect the fighting to stop in the near future, which means that today's young people have few prospects for an education and integration into peaceful life, which means that within 5-7 years, today's teenagers will become the majority of the rebel fighters and produce the next generation of guerrilla leaders. The new type of commander will be very different from the present one in that negotiations or peace with Russia will be out of the question; the new leaders will be an almost exact replica of the Middle Eastern Islamic radicals.⁶

One of the consequences of the 1999 events was the final determination of both local and federal Russian authorities to persecute the Wahhabis by police measures and impose a ban on Wahhabism both inside and outside Chechen borders. The Wahhabi communities in the Northern Caucasus which openly defied public authorities were attacked and destroyed. All Islamic groups were subdivided into "official" Sufi ones which are under state control and illegal "Wahhabite" groups. The latter are actively persecuted; since the overall number of groups is quite small, the authorities do not single out any particular groups. Police is the main tool used against revivalists, which usually makes sense because most adherents of radical Islam do commit crimes and break the law by possessing illegal weapons, etc. Sometimes, the persecution is clearly aimed against Wahhabi ideology, especially in Dagestan where it is more widespread.

The harassment of Wahhabis and the general hostility of societies compels the revivalists to migrate to Chechnya or to the Pankisi Gorge in Georgia, which is currently beyond the controlled of any country or authority.

The authorities of the Northern Caucasus republics fear that the revivalist Islamic movement may jeopardise their entire clan system. In some of the republics, redistributing financial subsidies from the federal centre is in fact the main industry of the economy: Dagestan, for instance, relies on federal subsidies for around 90 percent of its budget. In these regions, the political, economic and criminal elites and the leaders of ethnic clans are in fact the same people. So far, the authorities are

6 One must, of course, note that most information on the development of Wahhabi movements and groups in the Northern Caucasus is contradictory. With the exception of Chechnya, Wahhabism was not recognised in any of the regions; both the political authorities and traditional Muslim clergy are extremely hostile to it, so that it unfolded half-secretly even before 1999, and absolutely illegally afterwards. Even key facts are often unknown, for example, whether Bagauddin Muhammad is dead or alive, or in which direction particular groups are developing. One can, however, observe the general development trend: revivalist Islam in the Northern Caucasus is clearly evolving into a secret sect, decentralised, yet constantly expanding.

still able to consolidate most of the societies against “imported Islamic trends,” but they can do nothing to address their causes.

Wahhabism is certainly not on the decline; to the contrary, political revivalist trends are becoming increasingly popular and are actively making their way into the Western parts of the Northern Caucasus. The Wahhabi subculture is becoming part of ethnic and social identity, especially among young people. This phenomenon has not been well researched. Although political Islam in the Northern Caucasus is heterogeneous, still, as the situation changes, it can easily fill the “gap” of identity that has opened in recent years.

Islamic revivalism is a complex phenomenon which has various aspects: social, economic, ethnic, cultural, ideological, legal and political. A complex problem of this kind cannot be dealt with by direct bans. Although police measures should probably be part of an effort to resolve this problem, they can hardly be the main or only type of activity. Of course, there is no such thing as a strategy for combating radicalism with any 100-percent guarantee. Experience in dealing with problems of this kind in other parts of the world is more often negative than positive. But, on the whole, it should be admitted that harassment and attempts to regard religious followers as individual criminals who have no roots in society yield the opposite result: they strengthen the social basis of the radicals and make them act in a more clandestine fashion. The strategy is clearly counterproductive. Judging from the experience of the Middle East, religious extremists do not normally come to power but can act as a destabilising factor for decades. In a situation where traditional Islam has been destroyed and Wahhabism has nothing to oppose it except social conservatism, the consequences may be especially grave.

Although the Wahhabis themselves, initially in small closed communities, but now as a growing force, pose a serious risk to stability in the Northern Caucasus, no less serious threats come from marginal political leaders who use them as instruments and from the public authorities due to their inconsistent attempts to combat a phenomenon which they do not even understand. Since all of these risks are objective in nature, one can expect the Wahhabis to continue their existence as a criminalised illegal community. Of course, the chances that they will unite and launch a Jihad throughout the Northern Caucasus are clearly not realistic. Still, dozens of non-Chechen young men will join Chechen rebel forces and add to the perception of a “pan-Islamic Jihad” in Russia.

ARMENIA IN KARABAKH, KARABAKH IN ARMENIA: LIVING WITH A CONFLICT¹

By Sergey Minasyan²

Since the time when the military phase of conflict over Nagorno-Karabakh ended in May 1994, Armenia and Nagorno-Karabakh have formulated their own strategies with respect to the conflict. Throughout these years, the conflict has remained a factor that influenced the development of independent Armenia; this fact has had a significant impact on Yerevan's approaches to conflict settlement. Moreover, the Karabakh issue in Armenia merged with anti-Communism and with the struggle for independence from the USSR, and ended up as the cornerstone of the ideology promoted by Armenian political actors in 1988-1992, prior to the disintegration of the USSR and the independence of Armenia. It is, therefore, essential to allow for the role of the "Karabakh factor" when discussing the foreign or the domestic policies of Armenia.

NAGORNO-KARABAKH IN ARMENIA: THE IMPACT OF THE CONFLICT ON DOMESTIC DEVELOPMENTS IN ARMENIA

In terms of domestic policies, the conflict over Nagorno-Karabakh is no less important for Armenia than it is for Azerbaijan, and in terms of the formation of political elites, it is much more important for Yerevan and Stepanakert than for Baku, being a fundamental and systemic factor. A significant part of the current political elite in Armenia consists of former activists of the Karabakh movement, former combatants, or just people originating from Nagorno-Karabakh or the formerly Armenian-populated regions of Soviet Azerbaijan. The issue of Nagorno-Karabakh, seen from various angles, is a key component of the program of almost every political party, whether in coalition or in opposition.

The tremendous influence of the Karabakh issue over Armenia's political system and its political development is best illustrated by the careers of independent Ar-

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2 The author has led the Political Studies Department at the Caucasus Institute since 2006.

menia's first three presidents. Levon Ter-Petrosyan, Robert Kocharyan and Serzh Sargsyan all played leading roles in the Karabakh movement. During the war, each of them either led Armenia and/or Nagorno-Karabakh, or commanded military operations. Armenia's first president, Levon Ter-Petrosyan, had to resign in 1998 as a result of putting forward a conflict settlement plan that was unacceptable to Armenian elites and society. Ter-Petrosyan was succeeded by Robert Kocharyan, formerly the first president of Nagorno-Karabakh. Since 2008, Armenia has been led by Serzh Sargsyan, formerly minister of defence of Armenia who had also led the military command in Nagorno-Karabakh during the war.

Azerbaijan is different in this respect. Although the Karabakh issue led to a series of coups d'état and power handovers in Baku in the early 1990s, it has not been as instrumental to the formation of today's political elite in Baku as it has been for Yerevan. After Azerbaijan lost the war, the mid-1990s era political elites, including the then-ruling Azerbaijani Popular Front, gradually became unpopular, leading to the demise of President Abulfaz Elchibey and his government, and the accession of a neo-Communist nomenclature led by Heydar Aliiev. As a result, many activists who gained prominence during the conflict were either politically marginalized or even physically eradicated. However, Heydar Aliiev incorporated some combatants and some of the military elite into the camp of his supporters and into the power pyramid. Still, the role of the "Karabakh guys" in Azerbaijan's elite is negligible compared to the political, military and economic importance that Karabakh combatants and activists hold in Armenia and especially in Nagorno-Karabakh.

The role of "Karabakh guys" in Armenia's political and economic life reached its peak in the last years of Levon Ter-Petrosyan's presidency and only began to decrease at the start of the presidency of Robert Kocharyan, himself a Karabakh man. This may sound illogical but it is not: as someone coming from Nagorno-Karabakh, Kocharyan was not getting enough support in Yerevan and needed to incorporate strong local actors, both in the capital and in the provinces, into the bureaucracy and economic elite. The turning point was May 2000, when Kocharyan dismissed Armenia's prime minister, Aram Sarkisyan, brother of war hero Vazgen Sarkisyan who had also held the post of prime minister and was murdered during the October 27, 1999 fatal attack on the Armenian parliament. From that point on, Armenia's political system was gradually de-militarized; in most offices, supporters of the slain prime minister were replaced by the new generation of bureaucrats. This did not dramatically reduce the role the Karabakh factor in politics, especially since the rotation of elites was still incomplete. However, political developments in Armenia before and especially after the 2008 presidential election proved that the elite rota-

tion and the decrease of the role played by “Karabakh guys” was still underway and would in all probability intensify during Serzh Sargsyan’s presidency. Regardless of the wishes of President Sargsyan or his team, this potential intensification stems from the overall trend in the interplay between coalition and opposition, and from the new political situation in Armenia that begs for the expedient rotation of the political and economic elites.

Meanwhile, the “Karabakh factor” has been losing its prevalence in Armenia’s political landscape. Over the last two years, domestic developments have proven this very clearly. The society and part of the elites gradually started to pay less attention to the struggle for Nagorno-Karabakh because, in the public perception, Armenia already “owns” Nagorno-Karabakh. Moreover, in the last few years, exploiting the “Karabakh factor” has no longer been a good way to win over the support of the underprivileged strata of the population, perhaps with the exception of people living along the border with Azerbaijan for whom the settlement of the conflict is directly linked to their personal survival. Unlike Azerbaijan’s authorities, Armenia’s leadership cannot use the non-settled status of the conflict over Nagorno-Karabakh as a convincing explanation for their country’s social problems. The Armenian opposition does use this kind of logic with some degree of success to mobilize the disgruntled part of the electorate with promises of potential economic development in the wake of rapid conflict resolution. However, the authorities cannot mobilize the disgruntled electorate in their favour in the name of protecting something the country has already gained (i.e. the province of Nagorno-Karabakh) because the society no longer perceives this as a priority concern.

Another aspect of the issue is that as a result of Armenia’s victory in the war, Armenian society is more open to compromises than Azerbaijani society. This creates illusions amongst Azerbaijani experts, making them inclined to see this openness as a sign that the Armenian society is weary of the conflict. However, they overlook the fact that the compromises that Yerevan (and to some extent also Stepanakert) may be willing to make do not concern the vital interests of Nagorno-Karabakh, i.e. its security and the protection of its citizens’ fundamental rights.

Despite the fact that the Karabakh issue has slipped down on Armenia’s domestic political agenda, no other political issue is so instrumental for political actors in Armenia, whether opposition or coalition. The authorities are trying to take a hard line on the issue, and the opposition criticizes the official approach, albeit only where the implementation of policies is concerned. As to the overall approach to the future and the status of Nagorno-Karabakh, there is a near complete consensus within Armenian society over this issue. Therefore, this approach can hardly be

expected to change should the opposition come to power in Armenia. Very little depends on the leaders' personal opinion; whatever steps any Armenian president may try to make to achieve dramatic changes in Armenia's policy with respect to the conflict, they are certain to fail due to a combination of domestic deterrents and external influences. Moreover, it has been clear since the 1990s that Yerevan cannot make completely independent decisions with regard to the conflict, because Nagorno-Karabakh is an important actor with a will of its own.

Consequently, the fact that some Armenian political actors address domestic audiences with visions of potential compromises in the Karabakh issue does not in fact imply that these actors are defeatists in real politics. It is highly improbable that Armenia's main strategic priorities, including those that concern Nagorno-Karabakh, should change even as a result of changes in the power configuration. Just as in the ruling coalition, many of Armenia's actual opposition actors were once directly involved in Armenia's military and political victories during the war; after moving into opposition, they continued to participate in the dealings over Nagorno-Karabakh. It would be very superficial to divide Armenian politicians into camps of doves and hawks, as far as foreign policy is concerned. The experience of many modern local conflicts shows that at some stage of ethno-political conflict, compromises are often promoted by politicians who started out with the most radical nationalistic policies, have extensive experience of political struggle or undercover activities, and/or were the most brilliant and successful military commanders. In contrast, it is the liberal politician with a reputation for compromise and peace initiatives in an armed conflict with a neighbouring state that often (consciously or unconsciously) makes the toughest and most radical decisions, starts wars or forms military coalitions. For example, one of the strongest criticisms of the 1967 Six Day War in Israel came from David Ben-Gurion, one of the founders and first prime minister of Israel who spent his lifetime fighting for his nation's independence and security. He believed Israel would be unable to win the war and, thus, doomed to perish as a result of it. The decision to start the 1967 war, leading to Israel's victory and ensuring dramatic change of the entire political landscape in the Near East, was made by Prime Minister Levi Eshkol, a reputedly mild and timid politician inclined to concessions and endless negotiations.³

3 See: Epstein, Alek D. "Twelve False Axioms of the Arab-Israeli Conflict." *Jews of Euro-Asia*, 1(2), 2003. – Pp. 26-32. "The experience of those Israeli political leaders belonging to the "national" camp testifies to the following: it is not necessary to give power to the social democrats in order to develop and promote relations with Palestine and/or other Arab countries. It was a right-wing "nationalist", prime minister Menachem Begin, who signed the peace Agreement with Egypt in 1979, as a result

Moreover, even the most radical opposition actors in Armenia believe that surrendering lands occupied by the Karabakh army or otherwise yielding to Azerbaijani pressure would not lead to the settlement of the conflict (since the controversy is about who owns Karabakh!) but would simply transform it so that Armenians will find themselves in a less advantageous position for defence and maintenance of the political and technical balance in the conflict. The public opinion in Armenia holds that any change in the geography of the frontlines would only upset the balance in favour of Azerbaijan, giving Baku a new motive to resume war. By this logic, any change in the status quo would increase, rather than decrease the probability of war. The placement of peacekeeping forces on the borders will not solve the problem because the experience of other countries shows that peacekeepers are no guarantee against war in the conflict zone in the case of external pressures.

ARMENIA IN KARABAKH:
HOW ARMENIA INFLUENCES POLITICAL DEVELOPMENTS IN
NAGORNO-KARABAKH

Armenia's policy with regard to resolving the conflict over Nagorno-Karabakh strongly impacts the society, political actors and elites of Nagorno-Karabakh. The impact has remained very strong regardless of exactly who was in charge in Armenia. Yerevan has been constantly pressurizing the leadership of Nagorno-Karabakh to moderate its approach to conflict settlement and to the prospects of improving relations with Azerbaijan. While maintaining some degree of independence in conflict resolution, the authorities and society of Nagorno-Karabakh perceive the people and the leadership of Armenia as their only reliable allies in the confrontation with Azerbaijan.

of which the whole Sinai peninsula, a territory of which exceed that of the sovereign State of Israel, 3 times was returned to Egypt; it was his successor Yitzhak Shamir, who headed the Israeli delegation at the Madrid international peace conference in 1991; it was another right-wing prime minister, Benjamin Netanyahu, who signed the Wye River Memorandum, according to which Israel undertook to give the Palestinian Authority full or partial control of 40 percent of the Judea and Samaria territory. The dominant political party, be it as it may, should neither take the full credit for concluding agreements between Israel and the Arab countries, nor be held responsible for the failure of the talks. Both success or breakdown of a negotiation process depend mostly on the (non-)readiness of the Arab leaders to reach accord. This fact became particularly evident when then Prime Minister Ehud Barak was prepared to make unprecedented concessions in order to enter into a peace treaty with the Palestinians. His extraordinary efforts, however, resulted in nothing but a new cycle of the uprising... Ehud Barak, who was ready to generously compromise with both Palestine and Syria, had been the chief of Israeli special troops and the military intelligence."

Accordingly, the elites of Nagorno-Karabakh usually support the authorities of Armenia in periods of political tension and especially during elections. This was what they did in 1996, 2003, and 2008. Stepanakert's reaction to the 1998 removal of President Ter-Petrosyan from office was also part of the trend. Since the reason why Ter-Petrosyan had to resign was his offer to make concessions in the Karabakh issue, the society and elites of Nagorno-Karabakh were obviously not on his side. However, at that time, the position of Nagorno-Karabakh had little impact on the situation in Yerevan, so that the resignation of the first president resulted from pressure coming from inside the Armenian political elite and was determined by the position of domestic players.

KARABAKH IN ARMENIA: THE CONFLICT OVER NAGORNO-KARABAKH AS A FACTOR AND RESOURCE IN ARMENIA'S FOREIGN POLICY AGENDA

The impact of the conflict over Nagorno-Karabakh on Armenia's foreign policy has two dimensions. The first consists of Yerevan's reactions to Azerbaijan's policies with respect to Armenia and Nagorno-Karabakh. The second is the way the conflict is used by international policy-makers, affecting Armenia's foreign policy priorities.

It is only natural that reactions to Azerbaijan's actions are part of Yerevan's and Stepanakert's strategies. All parties in conflict use typical "propaganda war" techniques; apart from that, each party has its own methods and approaches. Azerbaijan's policies include pressure in the communication sphere; exploitation of the Caspian oil as a political, psychological and material resource; threats to resume warfare and an arms race. The strategies used by Yerevan and Stepanakert have the following dimensions:

- *Asymmetrical perceptions of the conflict*: first of all, asymmetrical interests of the parties and differing attitudes towards the conflict. What is regarded in Baku as a political problem, a component of nationbuilding, and an issue of prestige and revanchism, is considered a survival issue in Yerevan and even more so in Stepanakert. This asymmetric perception, often leading to the weaker side winning and the stronger side losing, has been manifest since the 1990s in armed conflicts between unrecognized entities and former parent states. Political asymmetry has its disadvantages, especially where its psychological perception is concerned.

The losing party can never forget that it lost to a weaker opponent.⁴ Since irredentists are fewer in numbers and formally weaker, the losing party starts to believe they would have been unable to win the war on their own and had only won due to the support of external actors. Former parent states, therefore, have difficulty coming to terms with their defeat; this is a lot easier to do if one's opponent is more powerful. Historical experience shows that the revanchism of the losing party can only decrease after another devastating defeat (or series of defeats); it can also diminish over time if the *status quo* prevails for a long time. As military theorist Carl von Clausewitz pointed out, defeat in a war is almost never regarded by the losing side as an absolute and final reality, because "the conquered state often sees in it only a passing evil, which may be repaired after times by means of political combinations."⁵

- *The "complementarism" of Armenia's foreign policy*, i.e. the fact that Armenia avoids opposing either Russia or the West but tries to combine the interests of both while also taking heed of the Iranian factor in the conflict. Under whatever external conditions, Armenia comes across as much more pro-Western than Azerbaijan, whereas Russia perceives it as more pro-Russian than Azerbaijan. Moreover, Western political perceptions of Nagorno-Karabakh, given that Russian peacekeepers are not stationed in the zone of the conflict, are very different from perceptions of South Ossetia or Abkhazia.
- *Sustained military and technical parity* as a result of the fact that defensive action requires fewer men and smaller material resources. Moreover, many experts believe Armenia's army, and even more so Nagorno-Karabakh's army, to be better trained and better motivated than the army of Azerbaijan. Though smaller in size, the armies of Armenia and Nagorno-Karabakh are mobile, have well-trained officers, and their mid- and top-level command consists almost entirely

4 The founder of Israel David Ben-Gurion wrote on November 27, 1948: "What is our reality: the Arab nations have been beaten by us. Will they forget that swiftly? 700,000 men have beaten 30 million. Will they forget this insult?" Ben-Gurion, David. *War Diary: the War of Independence. 1948-1949*. Eds. G.Rivlin and E.Orren. – Tel-Aviv: Ministry of Defense, 1982 (in Hebrew), cited in: Shlaim, Avi. *Collision Across the Jordan*. – New York: Columbia University Press, 1988. – P.343. The Arab world was extremely bitter about the 1949 victory of Israel. The defeat the Arab nations suffered in Palestine became the embodiment of everything they disliked about their governments: their weakness, corruption, military incompetence, and inability to act together with other Arab countries. What made the defeat especially painful was that it came from a mere handful of "Zionist intruders". This bitterness laid the foundation for many years of Arab revanchism with regard to the much less numerous Jews.

5 Clausewitz, Carl von. *On War*. Project Gutenberg, <http://www.gutenberg.org/files/1946/1946-8.txt>

of 1992-1994 war veterans. The structure of the two armies enables the mobile and efficient operations of small units, as suitable in the case of a defensive in the highlands. The fortified frontline offers Armenian armies an advantage when defending their positions against an offensive by Azerbaijan's more numerous troops. As regular military exercises in Nagorno-Karabakh have shown, almost the entire male population of Nagorno-Karabakh can be drafted in the event of war. These men include many veterans of the last war who have combat experience and good knowledge of the terrain. All this can compensate for the much larger numbers of soldiers on the side of Azerbaijan. A recent illustration was the March 3-4, 2008 encounter near the Levonarkh village in Nagorno-Karabakh, probably the largest-scale military engagement that occurred on the frontline in Nagorno-Karabakh since the May 1994 ceasefire.⁶

- *Balance of threats, or the deterrence policies of Armenia and Nagorno-Karabakh.* The probability of war goes down with each next round in the arms race within the conflict zone. Seemingly ironic, this situation has been common since the time of the Cold War, and is well researched by political scientists. The arms race leads to mutual deterrence, when the military potentials of the parties in conflict become so high that any benefits a country might hope to get from starting the war cannot compensate for the potential human and material losses, to say nothing of the political consequences of a negative reaction on the part of the international community. At the time of the Cold War, it was the potential of nuclear weapons held by superpowers involved in a bipolar confrontation that led to deterrence. In the conflict over Nagorno-Karabakh, deterrence is ensured by conventional weapons. As a result of the arms race, the military potentials of parties in conflict are incomparably larger than they were during the war of the 1990s; it is very probable that should warfare resume, all parties would lose tens of thousands of soldiers and civilians in the very first days of combat. From a technical perspective, there is no reason to expect Azerbaijan to win a *blitzkrieg* in Nagorno-Karabakh; the most probable scenario is long-term trench warfare similar to the 1980-1988 war between Iran and Iraq. In the event of long-term engagement, the side that starts the war suffers greater military losses and more political damage too (in the eyes of the international community). By continuing to purchase more weapons, Azerbaijan can change the military balance in its

⁶ During this encounter, timed to coincide with post-election unrest in Armenia in early March 2008, a reconnaissance unit of the Azerbaijani army assailed Karabakh positions on the north-west stretch of the frontline. The unit met with Karabakh troops, including many veterans, and had to withdraw. The encounter left 13 to 15 Azerbaijani soldiers dead, and just two Armenians wounded.

favour to some extent; however, it is another type of balance – the “balance of threats” – that that will ensure stability in the zone of the conflict over Nagorno-Karabakh and make the parties in conflict sustain fragile and instable peace for quite a long time. British military theorist and historian Basil Liddell-Hart once said that “the *object in war is to attain a better peace* — even if only from your own point of view.”⁷ In a situation when every party in conflict is aware that whatever the outcome of the war in Nagorno-Karabakh, it is going to lose tens of thousands of men and suffer large material and economic damage, it will think very hard before deciding to resume the war. Should Azerbaijan make this decision, there is not much chance that the resulting peace will be a better one. As Liddell-Hart wrote, “victory in the true sense implies that the state of peace, and of one's people, is better after the war than before. Victory in this sense is possible only if a quick result can be gained or if a long effort can be economically proportioned to the national resources. The end must be adjusted to the means.”⁸

- *Conversion of the time factor into a power resource in the political struggle*: time is a resource that all post-Soviet unrecognized states use to strengthen their political de-facto existence and status. In most modern local conflicts, success in a military campaign does not directly depend on the military and technical potentials of the parties in conflict. Non-military factors are at least as important; these include political, psychological and ideological factors, including the ability to mobilize society and legitimize military action throughout all strata of the population.⁹ Time plays a leading role here. As a potential initiator of a revanchist outbreak of war, Azerbaijan would face more problems with legitimizing a military campaign than Nagorno-Karabakh, for which this war would become a war for survival. The history of colonial wars and current confrontations between unrecognized quasi-states shows that the asymmetrical motives and ambitions of parties in conflict lead to a situation when, as David Lynch found, “the de facto states are playing the long game, in which not losing means winning.”¹⁰ Nagorno-Karabakh might not win a new exhausting war with Azerbaijan, whether a trench war or long-distance war, but that would not be the same as losing it. As for the

7 Liddell-Hart, Basil. *The Strategy of Indirect Approach*. – London: Faber and Faber, 1941. – P.202.

8 Liddell-Hart, Basil. *The Strategy of Indirect Approach*. – New York: Fredrik A. Praeger, 1954. – P. 370.

9 Deriglazova, Larisa. “Paradoks asimmetriyi v mezhdunarodnom konflikte” (“The Asymmetry Paradox in International Conflict”). *Mezhdunarodnye Protssessy*. Volume 3. Issue 3(9), September-December 2005 (in Russian).

10 Lynch, David. “Separatist States and Post-Soviet Conflicts.” *International Affairs*, Vol.78, # 4, 2002. – P.848.

leadership of Azerbaijan, which has been talking about reclaiming Nagorno-Karabakh by military force for 14 years now, any outcome except total control over the territory of Nagorno-Karabakh amounts to political and military defeat with ensuing consequences for the ruling elite.¹¹

Obviously, Armenia and Nagorno-Karabakh do not limit their strategy to reacting to Azerbaijan's policies, especially since it had been the two Armenian parties that initiated the original conflict back in 1998. Yerevan, and to some extent also Stepanakert, make their own steps towards using the "Karabakh factor" as a foreign policy resource regardless of current developments in their confrontation with Azerbaijan. In a way, Georgia does the same when it uses its conflicts over Abkhazia and Southern Ossetia and its confrontation with Russia as major trump cards in its foreign policy game, bringing Georgia significant political and economical dividends from the West regardless of developments in Abkhazia and Ossetia proper. This dimension of the Karabakh factor in Armenia's foreign policy, though intertwined with the direct confrontation with Azerbaijan, still deserves to be considered as a trend in itself.

At any rate, Armenia's leadership insists that it is prepared to unfold its foreign policy regardless of developments in the conflict over Nagorno-Karabakh or of the economic and political price that Armenia has to pay for those developments; it is set on pursuing its strategies and integrating into European structures. The stringent reality of the conflict does not give much hope for any improvement of relations with Azerbaijan in the short-term or even in the mid-term perspective. Accordingly, Armenia needs to resign to the situation and try to build relations with other regional countries, international organizations and world powers. The Armenian authorities believe that by creating a positive environment for regional integration, cooperation and trust, they can hope to prepare a platform for improving relations with Azerbaijan in the future.

An initiative that may prove the most important in this sphere is the effort to normalize relations and potentially open the borders between Armenia and Turkey.

11 Henry Kissinger described the asymmetry of the US engagement in Vietnam, where the "weak" side was able to win the war by not losing it. Small nations which are at war for a meaningful cause that unites the society (e.g. Finland in the 1939-1940 Winter War, Algeria in 1950-1960, Vietnam in its wars against France and the US between the 1940s and the 1970s, Israel in the wars with Arab nations in 1948-1982, unrecognized post-Soviet states in the early 1990s) can, under favorable political and psychological conditions, keep mobilizing material and human resources for a long enough time to win a war against a much stronger opponent.

Another approach, seemingly contrasting with Armenian-Turkish normalization, is to make use of the conflict to stimulate the interest of European organizations and world powers in the South Caucasus. The conflict, and the information flow arising from it, is used to attract attention and to stimulate economic aid and political support. In other words, Yerevan exploits the conflict over Nagorno-Karabakh in order to boost the geopolitical importance of Armenia in the regional format and on European platforms. Another example of Armenia's reliance on Western political formats is the way it utilizes European and US interests as resources for Armenian-Turkish normalization. This, too, has a direct impact on the situation in the conflict and on the relations between Armenia and Azerbaijan.

PRECEDENTS AND PROSPECTS: THE DE-FACTO STATES OF THE SOUTH CAUCASUS IN 2008¹

*by David Petrossyan*²

INTRODUCTION

The major events in the lives of the three unrecognized states of the South Caucasus in 2008 occurred in the month of August, both during and after the Russian-Georgian war. In late August, the Russian president issued a decree recognizing the independence of two of these three entities, namely Abkhazia and South Ossetia. This marked the transformation of the *de facto* Russian protectorate over Abkhazia and South Ossetia to a *de jure* protectorate. In addition, this created a precedent - one-sided to be sure - of the legal recognition of the independence of the *de facto* South Caucasian states.

The previous widely discussed precedent was that of Kosovo. Despite numerous official statements by representatives of the Western community to the effect that the recognition of the independence of Kosovo cannot serve as a precedent for resolving other conflicts, especially in the Old World, the expert community is far from being unanimous on this issue. In any case, during my numerous contacts with Western experts and diplomats, I have repeatedly heard the opinion that in fact the case of Kosovo *is* a precedent, or, at least, it may eventually become one.

In fact, this has happened. After just six months, Russia demonstrated its willingness to create its own precedents, although from a purely formal standpoint its recognition of the independence of Abkhazia and South Ossetia did not look particularly impressive, since, apart from Moscow, only Nicaragua recognized them, whereas Kosovo by that time had already been recognized by 50 nations.

There are, in fact, quite a few similarities between Kosovo, Abkhazia and South Ossetia. In all three cases, there was a conflict between former provinces and parent states, followed by the dispatch of peacekeeping contingents to the conflict zone. In

1 This paper was published in Russian as: Petrossyan, David. "Nepriznannyye strany Yuzhnogo Kavkaza v 2008 g.: pretsedenty i perspektivy." *Kavkaz - 2008. Yezhegodnik Instituta Kavkaza* ("The Northern Caucasus: the Situation as of 2008." *Caucasus 2008. CI Yearbook*). Ed. Alexander Iskandaryan. - Yerevan: Caucasus Institute, 2009 (in Russian). - Pp.68-82.

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Kosovo, peacekeeping units came from NATO member states and other countries, and in Abkhazia and South Ossetia they came from Russia.

There are also differences. Following the deployment of peacekeepers in Kosovo, no serious negotiations took place, while in the case of the Georgian-Abkhazian and Georgian-Ossetian conflicts talks were constantly underway, albeit sluggishly. They began to wind down only in 2004, mainly on the initiative of Georgia. Georgian State Minister for Conflict Resolution Giorgi Khaindrava was the last negotiator from Tbilisi who agreed to conduct a genuine dialogue with the Abkhaz and the Ossetians in the framework of the Moscow and Dagomys Agreements signed in the first half of the 1990s. Khaindrava was sacked at the beginning of August 2007, exactly a year before the start of the war in August 2008. In general, in the eyes of Ossetians (but not Abkhazians), the “doves” in Georgia’s ruling party (including the late Prime Minister Zurab Zhvania, former Foreign Minister Salome Zurbishvili and the aforementioned Giorgi Khaindrava) suffered a crushing defeat with the advent to power of Saakashvili’s administration. Abkhazians have never really had a positive disposition even towards the Georgian “doves.”

In addition, since the armistice and the signing of, respectively, the Moscow and Dagomys Agreements, Georgia made several attempts to regain - by force - its positions in Abkhazia and South Ossetia (in Abkhazia it happened in 1998 and 2001, and in South Ossetia it occurred in 2004 and, obviously, in 2008). All those attempts ended in failure. Serbia has never made any such attempts with regard to Kosovo.

As for domestic political developments, the year 2008 in Abkhazia and South Ossetia may be tentatively divided into two parts in the political sense: before and after Russia’s recognition of their independence.

1. SOUTH OSSETIA

1.1. External Actors and Conflict Resolution

The war marked a turning point in South Ossetia. Several issues that were little covered by the media must be highlighted in connection with the war, including in the context of the events of August 2008.

The Georgian-Russian conflict saw the interplay of the “duo” of Mikheil Saakashvili vs. Vladimir Putin. Analysts in Georgia have noticed this duality a while ago; some of them believe that these two politicians are very similar to each other. For instance, in a paper for the *Caucasus 2006 Yearbook*, Georgian scholars Marina Muskhelishvili and Gia Zhorzholiani wrote that “... the Georgian government has learnt a lot from its Russian counterpart – and, perhaps, also vice versa. In their

ongoing confrontation with external enemies, both countries are gradually tightening their political regimes, often utilizing similar methods. The public support for the presidents of both countries among a particular (albeit different-sized) portion of their populations displays a markedly similar ideology and worldview of a post-Soviet type. Methods used both here and there look as if they have been deliberately replicated. Putin, however, is not losing the image of a rational politician, and in domestic politics he apparently acts systematically and purposively. Meanwhile, Saakashvili is better versed in the intricacies of public propaganda in the global arena and is able to navigate in the modern information space, manipulating the public opinion on a global scale, something Putin who has inherited the hard materialism of dogmatic Marxism decidedly lacks. Saakashvili is staking on the virtual reality of the 21st century, while Putin is putting the emphasis on the material “energy component” of our age. In this they are dissimilar: each of them has inherited something of his own from the Soviet Marxism-Leninism: Putin has inherited the cynical Marxist belief that politics is a means of fulfilling egotistical interests, and that any talk of democracy creates false identity, while Saakashvili has inherited the Leninist belief that the end justifies the means, and the Bolshevik belief that politics can be built on ideology.”³

The Russian media and expert community claimed, often without evidence, that Washington gave the go-ahead to the August venture of Saakashvili, and the Georgian opposition, citing its sources, states the contrary, saying that Georgia’s president was recommended - in a very rigid form - to not undertake any military action in South Ossetia and to generally avoid clashing with either the peacekeepers or Ossetian armed forces, and even more so, with the Russian army.

Much has been said about democratic Georgia and its popularly elected president acting as Moscow’s opponent in the South Caucasus region. However, in reality, the war was fought by two hybrid regimes, not by an authoritarian and a democratic state.

1.2 Domestic Politics

The domestic political situation in South Ossetia in 2008 was closely intertwined with problems in the socio-economic sector and, especially, the need to restore the war-ravaged economy.

The Interdepartmental Commission (IDC), in which the Ministry of Regional

3 Muskhelishvili, Marina and Gia Zhorzholiani. “Gruziya i Rossiya v 2006 g.: novye realii.” *Kavkaz – 2006. Yezhegodnik Instituta Kavkaza* (“Georgia and Russia in 2006: New Realities.” *Caucasus 2006. CI Yearbook*). Ed. Alexander Iskandaryan. – Yerevan, 2008 (in Russian). – Pp.55-56.

Development of the Russian Federation was supposed to play the leading role, is responsible for the provision of Moscow's assistance to South Ossetia. The assistance program is designed for the period through 2011 (at the end of August 2008, 1.5 billion roubles were allocated for urgent activities). With the regulation of financial and other flows, there had for a while been a total bureaucratic mess: the Ministries of Finance, Regional Development and Foreign Affairs could not sort out their responsibilities. The bureaucratic shuffles of this period resulted in the discharge of four coordinators of the programs of financial and economic aid to South Ossetia. Only in April 2009 did the bureaucratic machine appear to be finally decided. Until then, however, the Chamber of Accounts of the Russian Federation expressed its dissatisfaction with the disbursement of funds allocated in 2008.

The IDC developed a plan for the rehabilitation of housing and a total of 575 facilities in the sphere of utilities, communication, education, health, agriculture and transport. The Ministry of Regional Development created a so-called state unitary enterprise (SUE), named the "Southern Directorate," which will act as a client for the construction and reconstruction of facilities and infrastructure in South Ossetia. In 2009, the Russian government plans to allocate 8.5 billion roubles to South Ossetia, and another 3 billion is expected to come from off-budget sources.

The situation as of April 2009 may be summed up as follows:

- The issue of the delimitation of the Georgian-South Ossetian border remains unresolved;
- A major construction project will be launched at the dual-purpose military airfield in the villages of Achabet and Kekhvi (Cheh);
- In July 2009, the Republic of South Ossetia (RSO) plans to launch the operation a natural gas pipeline running in a straight line bypassing Georgia (Tbilisi shut off South Ossetia's access to Russian gas on August 12, 2008).

Control over financial flows to South Ossetia is the key to the stability of its domestic political system. The struggle for control over financial flows from various forces, both from the Russian and Ossetian sides, was critical for both the opponents of President Eduard Kokoity and the president himself. In the second half of 2008, Anatoly Barankevich, the former Secretary of the Security Council of South Ossetia, Moscow-based businessman Albert Jusoev (Gazprom's contractor for the gas pipeline project to South Ossetia), as well as former Prime Minister Yury Morozov were widely discussed in media as potential opponents to the president.

The South Ossetian president sacked the government for "failing to fulfil their duties" in the crisis period of August 2008. The formation of the new cabinet was

delayed until November 2008. The new government underwent significant restructuring: all committees were transformed into ministries, and the functions of some of them were reshaped. There were new faces on the new government, including people from North Ossetia and the Ulyanovsk region (Russia). A new supra-governmental body, the Presidium of the Government, came into existence. The members of the Presidium include the prime minister's deputies and some key ministers. Eduard Kokoity became the Chairman of the Presidium of the Government.

Formally, neither Barankevich nor Jussoev nor Morozov are running for any office in South Ossetia, and are not taking part in the campaign for the parliamentary election set for May 31, 2009. Four parties are running for the parliament (three of them are represented in the present parliament): "Unity" (the party of the parliamentary majority), the Communist Party, the People's Party and the Fydybasta ("Fatherland") Socialist Party.

However, there are some serious concerns. In particular, in early April 2009, the People's Party (reportedly backed by Albert Jussoev) had serious problems with registering for the election. A clone People's Party headed by Roland Kelekhsayev appeared on the scene. This is something new in the political life of South Ossetia; such technologies were not used in the past. To resolve the situation, the leadership of the People's Party even appealed to the Russian authorities. It is unclear what can be done, but it is obvious that Kokoity still has some insecurity about his influence in the domestic political arena, and it is possible that in future this feeling may grow.

In general, despite the many challenges and serious delays in the disbursement of funds, President Kokoity remains an effective lobbyist for his country in Moscow, at least in the eyes of the Russian leadership. In today's realities, this quality must not be underestimated. In addition, Kokoity, by and large, controls the situation in South Ossetia, which does not mean that he will not face opposition, for instance, in the future parliament, especially if the genuine and not the cloned People's Party is allowed to run in the upcoming parliamentary elections. On the whole, regardless of its outcome, the parliamentary election will almost certainly provide political stability to South Ossetia. This is partly explained by the absence of radical opposition sentiment, despite all the problems that still exist.

2. ABKHAZIA

2.1. External Actors and Conflict Resolution

Following Moscow's recognition of Kosovo's independence in February 2008, the secession of Abkhazia got a major boost. In March 2008, Russia officially lifted its economic and trade sanctions against Abkhazia, thus signalling a benevolent political course with regard to Abkhazia.

To demonstrate its flexibility in the negotiation process, at the NATO Bucharest Summit of April 2008, Georgia declared its readiness to provide the status of "unlimited autonomy" and "economic freedom" to Abkhazia. In response, Abkhaz President Sergei Bagapsh said, "we will only negotiate if Georgia signs a treaty on the non-use of force and non-resumption of war and if Georgian troops withdraw from the Kodori Valley. Only after that will Abkhazia be ready to establish relations with Georgia on an equal footing, as a neighbouring country." Sukhumi thus demanded that Tbilisi execute the 1994 Moscow Agreement in full.

In May, the EU made an attempt to revive the negotiating process. According to the Abkhaz leadership, they registered some changes in the attitude of Brussels towards the settlement of the conflict; there were even hints at the possibility of some collaboration between Abkhazia and the EU. Overall, however, the EU and US mediation (including the settlement plans drafted by Dieter Boden and Walter Steinmeier, which contained very significant "economic carrots" for Abkhazia) was seen in Sukhumi as purely "pro-Georgian" and divorced from reality.

Interestingly, the authorities of Abkhazia believe that they have already fulfilled the part of the Moscow Agreements relating to the Gali district, because the refugees have returned there. Georgia has withdrawn from the Moscow Agreements, and Sukhumi refuses to implement the part of the Agreements dealing with the remaining refugees, considering that this topic needs to be revisited in the framework of new negotiations. According to Sukhumi, in the 15 years since the end of the war, Georgia has not created proper preconditions for the return of all Georgian refugees, and the Abkhaz society is not ready to take that step.

2.2. Domestic Politics

The Abkhaz domestic political situation of 2008 is remarkable in that political groups have *de facto* and *de jure* aligned for the presidential elections due to be held in early 2010.

Alignment within the opposition can, generally, be considered complete; it ended up creating two blocs.

The first bloc consists of the veteran Aruaa Movement (“The Warriors”), the Forum of National Unity of Abkhazia (a social and political movement which has transformed into a party), and the marginal Social Democratic Party. The real leaders of this bloc are Vice-President Raul Khajimba and, in a veiled manner, Foreign Minister Sergei Shamba. The opposition-style rhetoric and actions of the vice president have recently become more pronounced: if infrequently, he criticizes the actions of the current administration. For example, Khajimba criticized the authorities for their handling of the issue of Abkhazian passports to residents of the Gali district, and of the Geneva negotiations. In addition, he has been involved in various opposition activities.

The second bloc comprises the Party of Economic Development of Abkhazia (“ERA”), a powerful and capable force led by businessman Beslan Butba, who has openly declared his presidential ambitions. Butba funds *Abaza*, the first ever non-state TV station in the territory of Abkhazia which started its broadcasts in late 2007 and remains the only television station to give the floor to opposition actors. Butba began active consultations with leaders of other political movements, and by early 2008, Beslan Butba and the leader of the People’s Party of Abkhazia (NPA), Jakob Lakoba, signed a cooperation agreement. According to Butba, the methods of governance used by Sergei Bagapsh are based on an outdated system of power, lack of transparency and corruption. Previously cautious in his criticism of the authorities, this time Butba stated in categorical terms that he did not accept the course chosen by the authorities and highlighted the need to get rid of the “(Soviet) regional committee management style” and to modernize the system of governance.

The leaders of the two blocs cooperate, and it is quite possible that they will put forward a single candidate for the election; this will chiefly depend on Khajimba. In fact, the future of all opposition forces seeking to dislodge the current head of Abkhazia largely depends on his decision. At the time of Russia’s recognition of Abkhazia, the domestic balance of power was clearly not in favour of the incumbent government. However, the recognition gave a boost to the popularity and credibility of the authorities, and the president’s rating has been growing steadily ever since.

The third bloc is the main pro-governmental force, the presidential party, “United Abkhazia.” Its chairman, Daur Tarba, has declared that “United Abkhazia” supports a strong presidential power that ensures compliance with the constitution and efficient governance. In addition, he expressed confidence that “the present government is able to solve the main issue in the post-war development of Abkhazia, its recognition as a subject of international law.” According to him, “the country’s leaders are able to do everything necessary to strengthen the international positions of

Abkhazia and ensure its further integration into the global political and economic space.” The two most powerful social and political movements of Abkhazia of 2000-2005 - “Aytaira” (“Renaissance”) that supported the current Prime Minister Alexander Ankvab in the previous election, and veteran “Amtsakhara” (“Beacon”), have, in essence, turned into government puppets. Since Sergei Bagapsh’s ascent to power, both organizations have proved to be virtually redundant.

In 2008, the political discourse in the country was revolving around the planned constitutional reform, which, inter alia, is expected to establish the following:

- Approval of the candidacy of prime minister by the Parliament;
- The President’s right to dissolve the Parliament in the event that the Parliament thrice rejects the President’s nominee for the post of prime minister;
- Vote of no confidence in the prime minister;
- The Constitutional Court endowed with the right to interpret laws;
- The Chamber of Accounts;
- The Ombudsperson’s Office;
- Deprivation of the Attorney General of the right of legislative initiative;
- A 5-year residency requirement for candidates running for the parliament and for vice presidential candidates.

The stumbling blocks were the president’s right to dissolve the parliament and the five-year residency requirement for elective offices. The opposition fought against these two innovations, and against the adoption of Russia’s controversial constitutional procedures. The authorities of Abkhazia, having learnt hard lessons from the previous presidential election, use a variety of honest and dishonest technologies applied in the past. One of the problems is that the Central Election Commission (CEC) of Abkhazia, in charge of preparing for the election, is collaborating with the CEC of Russia, the professional experience of which is ambiguous, to say the least.

3. NAGORNO-KARABAKH

3.1. External Actors and Conflict Resolution

The recognition of the independence of Albanian Kosovo by leading Western powers, and Russia’s recognition of Abkhazian and South Ossetian independence following the Five-Day War, became a powerful incentive for the population and leadership of Nagorno-Karabakh to further defend their *de facto* independence from Azerbaijan. In fact, Nagorno-Karabakh believes that the difference of the problem

of Kosovo Albanians from their own can be reduced to just three aspects: the bigger population of Kosovo; the *de facto* exclusion of the possibility of an effective military operation by Belgrade to reintegrate the province into Serbia; and the active participation of international organizations in statebuilding in the region. As for Abkhazia and especially South Ossetia, their recognition, as perceived by Nagorno-Karabakh, was a demonstration of Russia's capabilities to play in the South Caucasus by the "double standards" unleashed in the Balkans. Hence, the statements of the leaders of Western countries, on the one hand, and Russia, on the other, on the "uniqueness of the cases" of Kosovo, Abkhazia and South Ossetia, i.e. the hints that those cases cannot be regarded as precedents.

In this context, the widely-touted "Madrid principles" on the settlement of the Karabakh conflict, proposed by the OSCE Minsk Group, may turn out to be unacceptable, especially for Stepanakert. It remains unclear how long the internationally-mediated negotiations between Baku and Yerevan can continue, when Nagorno-Karabakh, i.e. *the* most interested party, has not been participating in them for 10 years already, whereas its international mandate to participate in the negotiations has not been cancelled by anyone.

The documents discussed in the framework of the mediating efforts of the OSCE do not indicate either any intent to achieve a sustainable peace process (in light of the guarantees by all parties to the conflict to refrain from using force) or any desire to follow their own decisions and documents adopted earlier. An example would be the failure to comply with the decisions of the OSCE Budapest summit on the negotiations between the conflicting parties, and not merely between recognized states; another example is the failure of Azerbaijan, Armenia and Nagorno-Karabakh to follow through on their agreement "On the strengthening of the ceasefire," which came into force back on February 6, 1995.

The Five-Day War, which happened before the November 2, 2008 signing of the Moscow Declaration, called into question the work of the OSCE Minsk Group because of complications in the US-Russian relations. New formats are currently being tested (including the Turkish-Armenian "football diplomacy"), but none of the parties to the conflict and none of the mediators have officially abandoned the internationally recognized format of negotiations within the OSCE. Following the war, Washington and Brussels made considerable efforts to maintain the upper hand in settling the Karabakh conflict.

The results of the Five-Day War have significantly reduced the likelihood of renewed hostilities in the conflict zone, as Azerbaijan's leadership witnessed that attempts of the former parent state (Georgia) to apply force to resolve its conflict

with the former rebel province (South Ossetia) may result in a military and political disaster.

The new leadership of Armenia remained committed to the foreign policy of the previous government and stated its willingness to settle the Karabakh conflict solely by peaceful means and to continue the negotiations within the OSCE Minsk Group on the basis of the Madrid proposals, while insisting on the need for full participation of Karabakh in this process.

In February 2008, Azerbaijan submitted a draft resolution to the UN, reflecting its position on the conflict over Nagorno-Karabakh. Tabled at the UN General Assembly in March, the resolution was adopted by a majority of 39 votes; however, the countries co-chairing the OSCE Minsk Group - the US, France and Russia - voted against it. Most UN member states, including all EU countries, did not support the resolution. Nevertheless, Azerbaijan tried to use this resolution as a basis for negotiations and made efforts to dissolve the Minsk Group format.

In 2008, the Presidents of Armenia and Azerbaijan, Serzh Sargsyan and Ilham Aliyev, met twice, on June 6 in St. Petersburg and on November 2 in Moscow. The Moscow meeting, held at the initiative of and brokered by the Russian President Medvedev, was a milestone in the Nagorno-Karabakh conflict. The meeting resulted in the signature of a declaration, providing for the continuation of negotiations on the Karabakh problem within the framework of the OSCE Minsk Group and for a political settlement of the conflict on the basis of the Madrid proposals. It underlined the importance of confidence-building measures.

On behalf of the presidents of Armenia and Azerbaijan, the foreign ministers of the two countries, continued the negotiations on resolving the conflict under the mediation of the OSCE Minsk Group. In 2008, the top diplomats of the two countries held seven meetings.

Azerbaijan's leadership continued declaring the possibility of resolving the conflict by military means. On December 4, 2008, the foreign ministers of the countries co-chairing the OSCE Minsk Group made a joint statement, emphasizing the importance of maintaining the positive trends that emerged as a result of the meetings between the Presidents of Armenia and Azerbaijan in Saint Petersburg and Moscow. The statement further emphasized that there is no alternative to the peaceful settlement. The 16th meeting of the Council of Foreign Ministers of OSCE, held in Helsinki on 4-5 December, adopted a statement concerning the peaceful settlement of the Nagorno-Karabakh conflict. In their statement, the foreign ministers of OSCE member states welcomed the Moscow Declaration and called for further negotiations within the OSCE Minsk Group and on the basis of the Madrid propos-

als. They called on the parties to initiate the elaboration of a peace agreement and to take concrete steps to strengthen the cease-fire. Armenia has been consistent in the neutralization of obstacles arising during the negotiation process, and in the continuation of the negotiations, in line with the spirit of the Moscow Declaration and the Declaration adopted in Helsinki.

To reduce the likelihood of possible resumption of the Karabakh conflict, it would be useful for both Armenia and Azerbaijan to stick to the quotas for heavy and assault weapons, established under the Treaty on Conventional Armed Forces in Europe (CFE). However, in light of the moratorium imposed by Moscow and the refusal of NATO member states to ratify the adapted CFE Treaty, the proposal may fail to find understanding among the key players.

In general, in the medium term, the probability of the settlement of the Karabakh conflict is low, if, indeed, the settlement is understood as the signing and execution of a series of legally binding, rather than declarative documents, especially without the participation of Stepanakert. The proof of this statement lies, first of all, in the confrontation between the two asymmetrical doctrines: the “deferred revenge” (Baku) and the “retention of territories” (Yerevan, Stepanakert). Furthermore, a number of other circumstances provide additional evidence.

Firs, as a result of the “Five-Day War” between Russia and Georgia, a most important geopolitical line in the region, the Batumi-Baku line, is now outside the control of Moscow. Part of another major geopolitical line, Tbilisi-Tabriz, passes through the area of the Karabakh conflict. Should they establish control over the zone of the Karabakh conflict through the deployment of their peacekeeping forces, the main rival actors from the outside – Russia, on the one hand, and the US and its partners, on the other - could take part of the Tbilisi-Tabriz line under their de facto control. In the event that Russian peacekeepers are deployed there, Moscow will continue its fight for the South Caucasus. In the event that Western peacekeepers appear in the conflict zone, Russia will gradually be forced out of the region. Presently, Moscow, Washington and Brussels have developed a balance of forces and capabilities in terms of their influence on the situation.

Second, the configuration prevailing in the conflict zone and around it reflects the existing military balance between Baku, on the one hand, and Yerevan and Stepanakert, on the other. One has to note that the military budget cannot serve as solid evidence of a tangible military advantage. Azerbaijan has to use its military budget to sustain its defence capacities in other directions from which potential threats may come, especially on the border with Iran and its fleet on the Caspian Sea. Azerbaijani naval forces cannot threaten the security of Nagorno-Karabakh, and Armenia

is blocking the threat from the western, Turkish, direction with support from its strategic ally, Russia. This allows Armenia to concentrate its forces and resources on the eastern, Azerbaijani, direction. In addition, the balance system includes the fortified line of defence of the Armenian troops in the conflict zone. Any withdrawal from this line will create military imbalance between the parties in conflict, which, according to Armenia, cannot be compensated by the deployment of international peacekeepers, especially if one takes into account that there is *a priori* distrust towards hypothetical peacekeepers among all the conflicting parties.

Third, the whole philosophy of Western and Russian policy towards the settlement is mainly reduced to unilateral pressure on Armenia and the weakening of its position at the negotiating table, because their logic is that Armenia must make concessions and withdraw its troops from the “security zone.” However, even if it gives its consent, or pretends to give its consent to concessions, Armenia cannot make them in reality for a number of very good reasons, among them the absolute uncertainty relating to the future status of Nagorno-Karabakh, and the dissatisfaction with the international guarantees with regards to its security, as well as the reluctance of Baku to make any concessions in future. On the one hand, Baku’s tough stance partly provokes systemic external pressure on Yerevan, but on the other hand, it is shaped by Western and Russian policy of pressurizing Armenia.

Fourthly, the OSCE Minsk Group is a balanced policy instrument for major foreign players, allowing them to keep the process under control. Real progress in the settlement of the Karabakh conflict is possible in the event that a new system of balance is built, which will have to be no less complicated than the one now in place. Balance is needed not only among the actual parties in conflict (Baku, Yerevan and Stepanakert), but also in the centre of each of the parties (internal balance). In addition, a new system of balances needs to emerge in the capitals of the countries neighbouring the South Caucasus: Russia, Turkey and Iran, as well as in Washington and Brussels, and on top of that, a system of balances between all the stakeholders. This can take quite some time, of course. Currently, the critical points of this future system of balances are located outside the region and linked to major global developments.

Finally, under the present circumstances, the mediators have done little to establish at least a minimum level of trust between the warring parties. In this situation, the co-chairs would be well-advised to switch to politics of “small steps” towards peace. For example, they may proceed with the implementation of the agreement between Azerbaijan, Armenia and Nagorno Karabakh “On the strengthening of the ceasefire.” This would help improve trust in the military field.

3.2. Domestic Politics

The domestic political life in Nagorno-Karabakh in 2008 may be summed up in one word: stagnation. Due to lack of funds, two important alternative sources of information on Nagorno-Karabakh closed down: the *Demo* newspaper and the *Karabakhopen* website.

Perhaps the most significant event in the socio-political life of Nagorno-Karabakh was the establishment of the Council on Foreign and Security Policy by a group of local public figures. Former Deputy Foreign Minister Masis Mailyan assumed the position of Council Chairperson. The Council will be preparing analytical notes, publishing comments and peer reviews. According to Mailyan, the Public Council will revitalize the functioning of official foreign policy bodies and ensure the involvement of civil society in shaping the country's foreign policy.

In 2008, the economy of Nagorno-Karabakh continued its progress from survival to development. In 2008, the gross domestic product (GDP) of Nagorno-Karabakh rose by 14.9 percent and the self-generated income increased by 22.8 percent. From January 1, 2009, the minimum average wage was set at 30,000 Armenian Drams (about \$75). For 2009, the projection for real economic growth rate was 14%, including growth of self-generated income by 15 percent.

PUTTING THE “COLOR REVOLUTIONS” BEHIND OR
WELCOME BACK, FLASHMAN(?)¹: WESTERN POLICIES
TOWARDS THE SOUTH CAUCASUS IN 2007

*by Vladimir D. Shkolnikov*²

INTRODUCTION

The year 2007 was not the most exciting for the relations between the West and countries of the Southern Caucasus.³ The year did not feature a high-profile attempt for a breakthrough of frozen conflicts similar to the high-level proximity talks on the settlement of the Nagorno-Karabakh conflict that took place in Key West, Florida in the spring of 2001. There were no visits by Western leaders to the region to rival the visit of President George W. Bush to Georgia in 2005. There is no obvious candidate for *the event* of 2007 in the relations between the West and the countries of the South Caucasus. Observers of the region with a healthy sense of humor could point to one event of importance to two out of the three countries in the region directly due to both its symbolism and its emotional significance for a great deal of the region's population. This sphere is football and the event is the decision by the Union of European Football Associations (UEFA) on June 25, 2007

1 This paper was published by the Caucasus Institute in Russian in its *Caucasus Yearbook 2007* as: Shkolnikov, Vladimir. “Politika Zapada v otnoshenii Yuzhnogo Kavkaza v 2007 g. Proschanie s “tsvetnymi revolyutsiami,” ili s vozvrascheniem, Flashman(?)” *Kavkaz – 2007. Yezhegodnik Instituta Kavkaza* (“Western Policies towards the South Caucasus in 2007: putting the “colour revolutions” behind or welcome back, Flashman(?)” *Caucasus 2007. CI Yearbook*). Ed. Alexander Iskandaryan. – Yerevan: 2009 (in Russian). – Pp. 218-233.

2 At the time of writing of this paper the author had been with the Office for Democratic Institutions and Human Rights of the Organization for Security and Co-operation in Europe (OSCE/ODIHR) for over 12 years. Since 2003 he had been the head of the ODIHR's Democratization Department.

3 The definition of the West used throughout this paper is identical to the one introduced by Richard Giragosian in the *Caucasus Yearbook 2006*: “Although not fully comprehensive, the most concise definition for this context is to define the West as the European Union and the United States, but also including the Western institutions (NATO, CoE, PACE, OSCE, etc.) as the main vehicles for engagement.” Giragosian, Richard. “Prisutstviye zapada na yuzhnom kavkaze: natanutoye sotrudnichestvo ili strategicheskoye sopernichestvo?” *Kavkaz – 2006. Yezhegodnik Kavkazskogo Instituta SMI* (“Western Engagement in the South Caucasus: Strained Cooperation or Strategic Competition?” *Caucasus – 2006. CMI Yearbook*). Ed. Alexander Iskandaryan. – Yerevan: 2008 (in Russian). – P. 190.

to cancel the European Championship qualifying matches between Armenia and Azerbaijan and not to award any points to either team, after the football federations of the two countries could not reach an agreement on the location of the matches.

This decision merits mentioning not only because it sent Armenian and Azerbaijani football teams to the bottom of their qualifying group, but because it symbolized notable trends in Western policies towards the South Caucasus. These include:

- Increasing efforts by the West to institutionalize its relations with the states of the Caucasus and impose some rules to govern these relations. The examples of these are the European Neighborhood Policy (ENP), programs of the US Millennium Challenge Corporation (MCC), and the discussion of the NATO Membership Action Plan (MAP) for Georgia. As these programs include certain benchmarks, the symbolism of the aforementioned UEFA decision is the notion prevalent throughout the region: it is the West that sets the rules and awards points (or assistance) to the Caucasus countries;
- Clear signs that the West is losing hope for regional cooperation and perhaps coming to terms that regional cooperation is somewhat an illusion (i.e. if Armenia and Azerbaijan want to end up with zeroes on the board by disagreeing on where to hold their games, the West is not going to stand in their way).

Yet there is also something in the UEFA ruling that differs, if only accidentally, from what has emerged as Western policy toward the region. The UEFA ruling represented a principled position being enforced, and not only stated. In 2007, the West often tolerated what has been the norm in the behavior of the governments of the Southern Caucasus: an absolute unwillingness to compromise in conflict situations (both vis-à-vis the neighbors and domestically vis-à-vis the opposition) even if it leads to a lose-lose outcome for the parties concerned. As long as the opposing side gets no benefits, the Southern Caucasus states are willing to bypass compromise even if would have been to the mutual benefit. The UEFA's ruling was an exception to the Western acceptance of the *status quo* in the region. In general, the year 2007 could be described as the year of return of Western *realpolitik* towards the region and the countries of the region. Some observers and politicians in the region and in other CIS countries may have developed a belief that in recent years, democracy promotion and democratization have been becoming prominent in Western policies. The Western governments and Western-funded organizations have been seen giving inspiration to the "colour revolutions" in some of the former Soviet states. This paper examines the apparent tension between democracy-promotion and *realpolitik* considerations and argues that in 2007, in Western policy towards the three

countries of Southern Caucasus, the *realpolitik* view of stability – support, open or tacit to existing governments – has prevailed over other considerations such as support for democracy, let alone “colour revolutions.”⁴

ARMENIA

In 2007, Armenia was the primary example of the Western shift from democracy-promotion to the policy of emphasizing stability over other – democracy, human-rights, and even historical justice – considerations.

While there are many observers in the West who believe that Armenia can be more democratic, the reaction to the May 2007 parliamentary elections in the country showed that Western governments have taken a hands-off approach towards shortcomings in the country’s electoral processes. Some democracy-promotion organizations such as Freedom House have lobbied the US government to take a more critical look at the Armenian electoral processes and consider suspending the Millennium Challenge Account (MCA) program for the country. Ultimately, the OSCE’s line articulated in the statement of preliminary findings and conclusions made at a press conference on 13 May in Yerevan, some 24 hours after the holding of the elections, to the effect that the Armenian parliamentary elections “demonstrated improvement and were conducted largely in line with ... international standards for democratic elections” over past elections was sufficient for the US and European governments to refrain from the suspension of the MCA program or from other hard-line options. The post-election interim report of the OSCE/ODIHR that reported the resignation of three out of nine Central Election Commission members who refused to sign the protocol for the final results of these elections, citing violations that could put into question the accuracy of the results, was simply disregarded by the US and the EU.⁵

4 It should be noted the trend of democratization in the region coming to a grinding halt in the region was mentioned in some contributions to this volume’s predecessor of last year. See Muskhelishvili, Marina and Gia Zhorzholiani, “Gruziya i Rossiya v 2006 g.: novyye realii.” *Kavkaz – 2006: Yezhegodnik Kavkazskogo Instituta SMI* (“Georgia and Russia in 2006: New Realities”. *Caucasus 2006, CMI Yearbook*). Ed. Alexander Iskandaryan. – Yerevan: CMI, 2008 (in Russian). – Pp.33-56; and Yunusov, Arif. “Azerbaidzhan v 2006 g.: nekotorye itogi.” (“Azerbaijan in 2006: some conclusions”). Iskandaryan, Alexander (ed.), *op. cit.* – Pp. 7-32. Yunusov, in particular, writes about the political “Uzbekinization” of Azerbaijan’s domestic scene.

5 See OSCE/ODIHR *Election Observation Mission Republic of Armenia Parliamentary Elections 2007 Post-Election Interim Report No. 1*, 13-22 May, 2007.
<http://www.osce.org/odihr/elections/armenia/25337>

The Armenian government also benefited from the position of the West on the “frozen conflict” over Nagorno-Karabakh. The US and French co-chairmen of the OSCE Minsk Group agreed with Russia to thwart Azerbaijan’s efforts to move the negotiations over the Nagorno-Karabakh conflict from the OSCE to the UN, where Azerbaijan would likely enjoy the support of the Islamic countries and where the role of the West and Russia as mediators could be diluted.⁶ For Armenia, a move of Nagorno-Karabakh negotiations under the UN aegis could spell isolation and erosion of its negotiating position. Thus the position of the West supporting the *status quo*, namely, the role of the OSCE as the venue for the negotiations, while predictable, was also reassuring to Armenia.

Another element of *realpolitik* at play in the West’s relationship with Armenia is the Western acquiescence to the construction of the Iran-Armenia natural gas pipeline that was inaugurated by the Presidents Ahmadinejad and Kocharyan in March 2007 and discussions to build a second gas pipeline from Iran to Armenia. Despite the tension between Iran and the West, Armenia’s cordial relationship with Iran is not being contested by the West. It is clear to the West that Armenia needs this relationship in order to deal with its geographical realities of limited access to the outside world due to closed borders with Turkey and Azerbaijan. Curiously, informed observers believe that it was the Russian monopolist Gazprom, rather than the West, that insisted on the reduction of the diameter and, therefore, throughput of this Iran-Armenia pipeline.

If there is one element of Western *realpolitik* that may not satisfy Armenia, it is the politics surrounding efforts to gain recognition of the tragic 1915 events as genocide. This highly emotional issue continued to be an important agenda item for Armenia’s relations with the West. In 2007, this issue came to the forefront in the United States. Armenia and the Armenian diaspora were seemingly close to achieving US Congressional recognition of the genocide when the United States House Committee on Foreign Affairs approved House Resolution 106, a bill that categorized the 1915 as indeed genocide and condemned the Ottoman Empire for it, on October 10, 2007, by a 27-21 vote.⁷ However, some of the support for the bill

6 See *Joint Statement by the Minsk Group Co-Chairs*, February 15, 2007, in which they call on “the parties to avoid any action anywhere, including the United Nations General Assembly, that could undermine the positive developments of recent months.” <http://www.osce.org/mg/24049>

7 Incidentally, for the first time the American Jewish community showed cracks in 2007 over its heretofore stalwart opposition of the recognition of the Armenian genocide, motivated by many factors, including the fear of jeopardizing Turkey’s support for Israel and worsening the situation of Jews in Turkey. The Jewish Anti-Defamation League (ADL), for the first time in its history, issued a statement in which it admitted that “the consequences of those [1915 Ottoman] actions were indeed

from both Democrats and Republicans eroded after the White House and the State Department injected a dose of *realpolitik* into the issue by warning Congressmen about the possibility of Turkey restricting airspace as well as ground-route access for US military and humanitarian efforts in Iraq in response to the bill. It was simply not worth it for the US executive branch to spoil already damaged relations with a NATO ally, especially as Turkey made a strong signal – and the only one that Turkey could make – when ordering their ambassador to the United States to return to Ankara for “consultations.”

GEORGIA

In Georgia, geopolitics also came first, with US and some “new Europeans” being more “geopolitical” than the “old Europeans” and countering Russia’s hostile policies towards that country with virtually unconditional support of President Saakashvili. Among the new EU states, Estonia played a particularly active role, as the country’s former Prime Minister and current MP, Mart Laar, continued to be visible as Mikhail Saakashvili’s adviser. To put it simply, Georgia has been a beneficiary of its deteriorating relations with Russia, and Russia’s overt hostility towards Georgia essentially forces the West to embrace Georgia.⁸ For Tbilisi, the participation of Georgian soldiers as a part of the NATO contingent in Afghanistan is a very low price to pay for the favorable Western policy. NATO, in particular, has taken a number of steps in 2007 to demonstrate its support for Georgia. In October, a NATO week was held in Georgia. Also, then Acting President Burjanadze and Prime Minister Gurgenzidze paid successive visits to Brussels at the end of the year. Both visits seemed to symbolize EU and NATO acceptance of what many saw as a troubled and increasingly undemocratic domestic scent and a very stark example of a *realpolitik* response to the use of force to disperse the November 7 opposition rallies in Tbilisi and to the closing of the *Imedi* television station, the loudest voice of dissent among the Georgian media. For example, the US State Department’s reaction to the events of

tantamount to genocide,” but reaffirmed its opposition to the Congressional resolution on the issue claiming that the latter is “a counterproductive diversion and will not foster reconciliation between Turks and Armenians and may put at risk the Turkish Jewish community and the important multilateral relationship between Turkey, Israel and the United States.” See ADL *Statement on the Armenian Genocide*. New York, August 21, 2007. http://www.adl.org/PresRele/Mise_00/5114_00.htm

8 On the background of Russia-Georgia relations, see Muskhelishvili, Marina and Gia Zhorzholiani, *op. cit.*

November 7 was muted and the press statement of the State Department's spokesman on the following day was as follows:

"The United States welcomes the Georgian Government's decision to hold early presidential elections and a referendum on timing of parliamentary elections. At the same time, we continue to urge the Government of Georgia to lift the state of emergency and restore all media broadcasts. These are necessary steps to restore the democratic conditions for the election and referendum. We call on all parties to maintain calm, respect the rule of law, and address their differences through serious discussions to strengthen Georgia's democratic political system. These discussions should take place in a spirit of compromise and in support of Georgia's sovereignty, independence, territorial integrity, and commitment to human rights."⁹

The EU's report on the European Neighborhood Policy (ENP) mentioned the November 7 events only in passing and chose to highlight social problems. Nevertheless, the report is instructive in showing the EU's more critical stance towards the social policies of the Georgian government than that of the US on labor rights, lack of social dialogue, and women's rights. However, the report does not in any way suggest making the EU's assistance contingent on progress in those areas. Perhaps the more interesting aspect of the report – read between the lines – is its implicit criticism of the Georgian government's embrace of harsh market reform, which many Europeans see as "too American."¹⁰ In short, their minor differences on economic reform notwithstanding, the United States and the European Union made a *realpolitik* decision to disregard the erosion of democratic institutions in Georgia in 2007 and focus on other aspects of their relations with that country.

In 2007, Western views on the potential for a Georgian NATO Membership Action Plan, very much hoped for by the Georgian government, were not yet made clear by all members of the alliance. While a number of papers have been floated suggesting that Georgia could join NATO without solving its frozen conflicts, the *realpolitik* of 2007 led to the postponement of the debate until 2008.¹¹ This was

9 See *Press Statement: Georgia: Need for Restraint and Respect for Rule of Law*. Sean McCormack, Spokesman. November 8, 2007.

<http://statelists.state.gov/scripts/wa.exe?A2=ind0711b&L=dospress&D=1&P=209>. Reference by the US State Department's spokesman to Georgia's political system, believed by many experts to be super-presidential, as "democratic," is especially telling.

10 *Commission Staff Working Document Accompanying the Communication from the Commission to the Council and the European Parliament 'Implementation of the European Neighbourhood Policy in 2007' Progress Report Georgia*. http://ec.europa.eu/world/enp/pdf/progress2008/sec08_393_en.pdf

11 Yakobashvili, Temuri and Jonathan Kulick. *Can Georgia Join NATO Without Solving Conflicts in Abkhazia and South Ossetia?* The Black Sea Trust for Regional Cooperation, Black Sea Paper Series, No. 3.

possibly the only fallout of the new Western policy towards the Caucasus that affected Georgia negatively in the entire year.

AZERBAIJAN

Azerbaijan's relationship with the West in 2007 also fit the *realpolitik* model of the West's policy towards the region. Despite the concerns over the situation in the sphere of human rights and democracy, especially in the sphere of media freedom, Western states by and large refrained from criticizing the Azeri leadership. Notably, Azerbaijan is the only South Caucasus country to have gained membership in the UN Human Rights Council. And despite the repeated criticism of the Azeri authorities for restrictions of media freedoms by specialized international NGOs and inter-governmental bodies such as the OSCE Representative for Freedom of the Media, which have repeatedly brought to the international community's attention the problems in this sector, the response of the Western states has been muted.¹²

On the diplomatic front, 2007 was the year of business as usual and increasingly *realpolitik* as usual. In May 2007, the Foreign Minister of Azerbaijan, Elmar Mammadyarov, visited NATO headquarters in Brussels for what appeared to be routine talks on the partnership activities. 2007 was the first year of the implementation of the European Neighbourhood Policy Action Plan signed in late 2006.

In May 2007, a Caspian energy-focused summit of heads of states of Azerbaijan, Georgia, Ukraine, Poland, and Lithuania took place in Krakow. However, the summit appeared doomed to failure and served as a reminder that in the Caspian energy game, the West is very vulnerable to actions of other actors, as three other Caspian states – Kazakhstan, Russia and Turkmenistan – signed a joined agreement on the exploration of the Caspian just a few days before the Krakow gathering. And, if *realpolitik* was not evident in the very fact of holding an energy summit aimed at excluding Russia, it was manifested by the conspicuous silence of the summit conveners, Poland and Lithuania, both of which had been on the forefront of pointing to human rights and democracy problems in Belarus and the Russian Federation, on human rights issues in Azerbaijan (and Georgia) at the meeting. This silence was replicated at the October 2007 energy summit in Vilnius.

Finally, since June 2007, Azerbaijan – its problematic human record evidently ignored – was invited, just as its South Caucasus neighbours, to align itself on a

12 See, for example, *OSCE media freedom representative condemns sentencing of journalist, says Azerbaijan media under serious threat*. OSCE Representative on Freedom of the Media press release, Vienna, 23 April 2007. <http://www.osce.org/item/24113.html>.

case-by-case basis with the EU's Common Security and Foreign Policy statements. It should, however, be noted that since that time, Azerbaijan has aligned itself with about one half of those statements, a much smaller figure in comparison to the number of EU statements with which Armenia and Georgia aligned themselves.

The only fallout for Azerbaijan from the *realpolitik* approach of the West was the aforementioned refusal to the co-chairs of the OSCE Minsk Group to consider moving the Nagorno-Karabakh negotiations under the aegis of the UN. But, as for the other governments of the countries of the South Caucasus, the balance sheet of relations with the West was very positive for Baku.

NOT BY REALPOLITIK ALONE?

To complete an overview of Western policies towards the countries of the South Caucasus, the above arguments have to be qualified. Indeed, the Western approach is not as black and white or as simple as suggested by the above narrative. Issues of human rights, democracy, and rule of law occupy a prominent place in most EU and US policy documents related to the Southern Caucasus. Officials like Ambassador Peter Semneby, the EU Special Representative for the South Caucasus, have spoken out on the failures of the three countries to live up to expectations. Ambassador Semneby was one of the first outsiders to visit the closed *Imedi* TV station after it was raided by the authorities during the troubled parliamentary election campaign, and poignantly rejected the official explanation for the raid as did US officials.¹³ Compared to his colleague, Ambassador Pierre Morel, who holds the EU Special Representative post for Central Asia, Semneby is far more outspoken on democracy and fundamental freedoms issues, which suggests the entire Western agenda has not been fully captured by the *realpolitik* approach, at the very least on the rhetorical level.

Also, Western democracy-promotion programs continue, despite palpable “donor fatigue,” albeit perhaps with diminished expectations. The US State Department's human rights reports are still scathing of the records of the South Caucasus governments, and underneath the veneer of diplomatic formulations, the election reports of the OSCE/ODIHR reveal very troubled processes in Armenia and Georgia. The issue is more about emphasis and priorities, and in 2007, the priorities of the West appeared to drift away from pressing the countries of the South Caucasus

13 See “Georgia: Criticism Mounting Over Media Crackdown.” *Radio Free Europe/Radio Liberty*, November 13, 2007.

<http://www.rferl.org/featuresarticle/2007/11/0783d13c-3f59-4911-9509-c5ecd373b155.html>

on the need for greater individual freedoms and for truly democratic institutions, such as independent courts.

EVALUATION OF WESTERN POLICIES

How can Western policies towards the Caucasus in 2007 be evaluated? Western policies towards other post-Soviet countries could provide a useful measuring stick. By this standard, it is clear that the South Caucasus countries are enjoying very good relations with the West. The West is far more critical of electoral processes in countries such as Belarus and is much less engaged in Central Asia than in the South Caucasus (e.g. there are still only two Western embassies – of the U.S. and Germany – in Kyrgyzstan; and Uzbekistan is under sanctions from the Western community). One could compare the erosion of democratic principles and freedoms in Azerbaijan and Belarus and argue that the two countries have been moving in the same direction at approximately the same pace. For example, Freedom House's authoritative *Nations in Transit* study shows a nearly identical decline in Azerbaijan and Belarus (in Azerbaijan the Freedom House index shows a 0.42 deterioration between 1999 and 2007, from 5.58 to 6.00, and in Belarus, Freedom House shows a deterioration of 0.43, from 6.25 to 6.58.¹⁴ It is clear that Azerbaijan's democratic deficit is looked upon with a much less critical eye than other countries', given the country's oil and gas reserves and its cooperation with the West on the anti-terrorism front. Similarly, Armenia's and Georgia's declining democratic ratings are not an obstacle to the inflow of the Western assistance to these two countries. These amounts dwarf the assistance figures to all other post-Soviet states on the per capita basis, as shown in Table 1 and Chart 1.

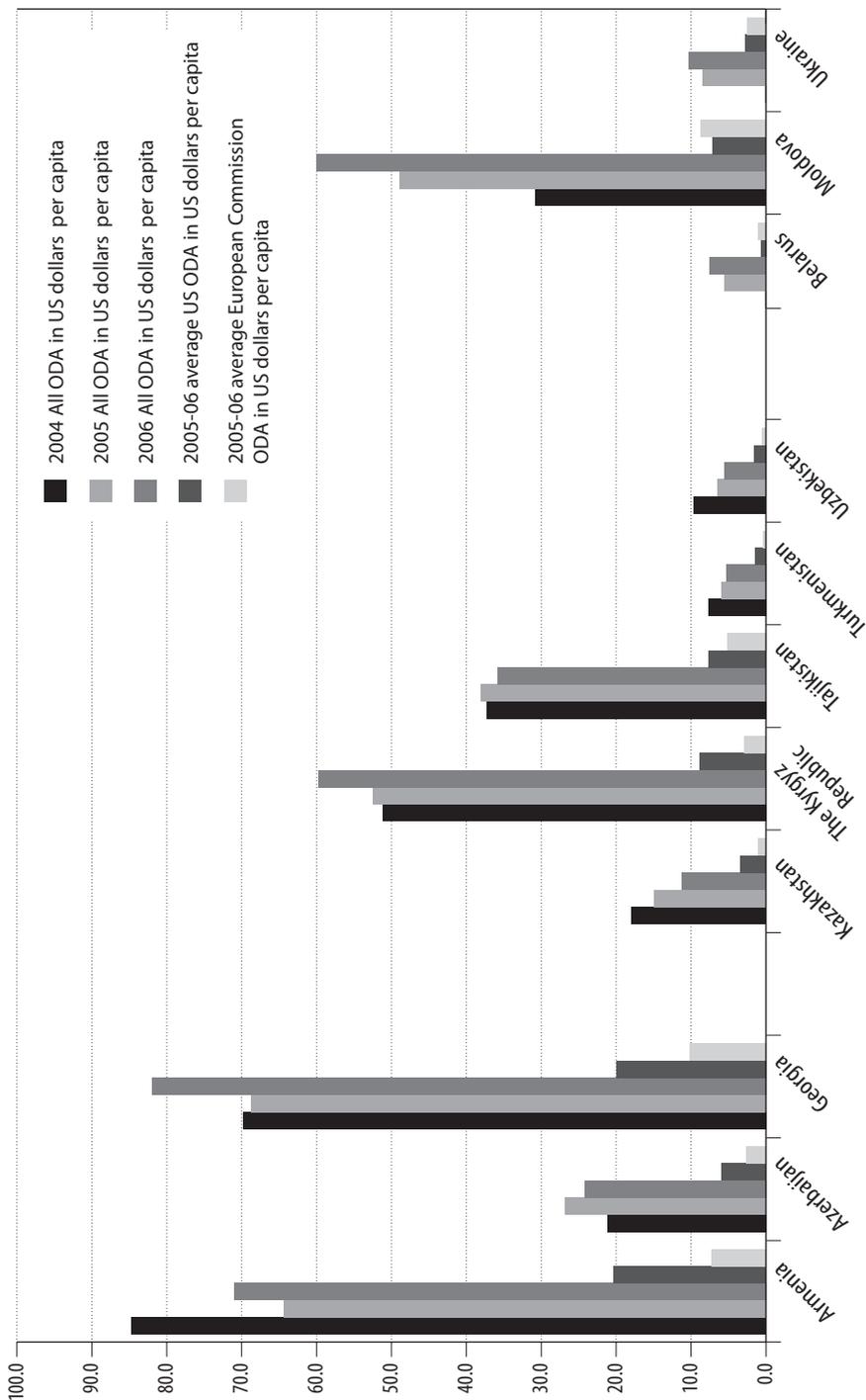
The Western aspirations for the region presented in the early years of independence provide another measuring stick. The year 2007 marked the ten-year anniversary of then U.S. Deputy Secretary of State Strobe Talbott's well-known "Farewell to Flashman" speech in which this high-level Clinton administration official laid out four pillars of US assistance to the countries of the Caucasus and Central Asia, where the promotion of democracy was the first, with others being the creation of free market economies, the sponsorship of peace and cooperation within and among the counties, and their integration with the larger international community. In this speech, Talbott decried the traditional "Great Game" in the Caucasus and

14 For Armenia, Freedom House shows a deterioration of 0.42 for the same period, from 4.79 to 5.21, while Georgia shows the worst backsliding in the region: from 4.17 to 4.68 or 0.51 on the Freedom House scale.

Table 1. Overseas Development Assistance (ODA) receipts by selected countries of the former Soviet Union (in US Dollars per capita)

Country	2004 All ODA in US dollars per capita	2005 All ODA in US dollars per capita	2006 All ODA in US dollars per capita	2005-06 average US ODA in US dollars per capita	2005-06 average European Commission ODA in US dollars per capita
Armenia	84.7	64.3	71.0	20.3	7.3
Azerbaijan	21.2	26.8	24.2	5.9	2.6
Georgia	69.8	68.7	82.0	20.0	10.2
Kazakhstan	17.9	14.9	11.2	3.4	0.7
The Kyrgyz Republic	51.2	52.5	59.8	8.8	2.9
Tajikistan	37.3	38.0	35.8	7.6	5.2
Turkmenistan	7.7	6.0	5.3	1.4	0.2
Uzbekistan	9.6	6.5	5.6	1.6	0.4
Belarus	N/A	5.5	7.5	0.7	1.1
Moldova	30.8	48.9	60.0	7.1	8.7
Ukraine	N/A	8.4	10.3	2.7	2.5

Chart 1. Overseas Development Assistance (ODA) receipts by selected countries of the former Soviet Union (in US Dollars per capita)



Central Asia where “the driving dynamic of the region, fueled and lubricated by oil, will be the competition of the great powers to the disadvantage of the people who live there.” Talbott went on to note US opposition to the “Great Game”-type of thinking and to stress that “our goal is to avoid, and actively to discourage, that atavistic outcome. In pondering and practicing the geopolitics of oil, let's make sure that we are thinking in terms appropriate to the 21st century and not the 19th. Let's leave Rudyard Kipling and George McDonald Fraser where they belong – on the shelves of historical fiction. The Great Game which starred Kipling's Kim and Fraser's Flashman was very much of the zero-sum variety. What we want to help bring about is just the opposite, we want to see all responsible players in the Caucasus and Central Asia be winners.”¹⁵ In 2007, not only the football calculus of Armenia, Azerbaijan and UEFA but the policy calculus of the actors in the Caucasus was sliding to the very zero-sum thinking that Talbott sought to avoid, and to the one with which Brigadier-General Sir Harry Paget Flashman, to whose spirit Talbott sought to bid farewell, could feel more comfortable with than the democracy-promotion and “colour-revolution” world of just a few years ago. In 2007, the Western actors did not give an appearance of being troubled by this trend.

Hence, from the point of view of the governments of Armenia, Azerbaijan, and Georgia, there was no reason, on balance, in 2007 for any of the South Caucasus states to complain about their relations with the West, save for the aforementioned decision of UEFA regarding Armenia and Azerbaijan. But, even regarding the latter, UEFA President Michel Platini is on the record as stating that in the future, Armenia and Azerbaijan would simply have to be placed in different qualification groups.¹⁶ And this statement is symbolic of the inclination by Western governments to accept things pretty much the way they are in the region. As already mentioned, one needs to see compelling long-term evidence to conclude definitely that the main Western actors will stick with *realpolitik* as their overarching approach to the region, but 2007 was certainly the year when the spirit of Flashman found its way back into the South Caucasus.

15 “A Farewell to Flashman: American Policy in the Caucasus and Central Asia.” *An Address by Deputy Secretary of State Strobe Talbott at the Johns Hopkins School of Advanced International Studies*. Baltimore, Maryland, July 21, 1997. <http://www.state.gov/www/regions/nis/970721talbott.html>

16 “UEFA and FIFA set to keep Armenia, Azerbaijan apart in future qualifying groups”, *International Herald Tribune*, October 17, 2007. <http://www.iht.com/articles/ap/2007/10/17/sports/EU-SPT-SOC-UEFA-Azerbaijan.php>

IMPLICATIONS

- The developments of 2007 suggest that the opposition forces in all three countries cannot expect Western support for other than capacity-building and training programs, some of which may have a long-run impact.
- At the same time, any actions of the region's leaders against the opposition forces invoking a threat of revolutions would seem fully unjustified. The "colour revolutions" are not on anyone's current agenda and raising their spectre would clearly be disingenuous.
- For the West, the pursuit of naked *realpolitik* is fraught with risks. The surrender of the moral high ground is a slippery slope. First, it will render obsolete the institutional frameworks, the conditionality and, thus, the political leverage of many of its assistance programs, such as the Millennium Challenge Account and the ENP. Consequently, the legitimacy of the West as an arbiter that can speak out on the democratic progress of states in the region will dwindle. This, in turn, may result in the disillusionment of the free-thinking part of the population with the West. In Georgia, for example, it could erode the prevailing pro-Western consensus.¹⁷ It may also lead to the erosion of the West's role as a mediator in the Nagorno-Karabakh conflict. It is worth remembering the lessons of US involvement in South America: the policy of supporting leaders lacking democratic credentials may have short-term benefits of stability but entails long-term costs as such policy risks engendering the popular resentment against external supporters of such leaders. Second, reflexive anti-Russian policies, especially in Georgia, may not be sustainable. As an Israeli expert on the Caucasus, Brenda Shaffer, has warned, "overall, Russia is strategically inferior to the U.S., but in the Caspian region, *Moscow retains levers of influence that the U.S. cannot, or is not, willing to apply: i.e., Russian "relevant" versus American "relative" power.* Moreover, some actions are available to Russia in the region at much lower costs than they are to the US, such as the use of military troops. Actions resulting from the US-Russian rivalry can be very destabilizing to the region and, as a result, contrary to US goals. Attempts by the US to push Russia out of the region would be equally destabilizing."¹⁸ This analysis suggests that the West's deficit of "hard power" in

17 On this point, see Ghia Nodia and Alvaro Pinto Scholtbach (eds.) *The Political Landscape of Georgia*. – Delft: Eburon, 2006. – Pp. 72-74.

18 "Prepared Statement of Brenda Shaffer, Ph.D., Research Director, Caspian Studies Program, Kennedy School of Government, Harvard University." *The Caucasus and Caspian Region: Understanding U.S. Interests and Policy*. Hearing before the Subcommittee on Europe of the Committee

the region could be compensated by “soft power” such as support for democracy. The Western *realpolitik* is clearly not the way to project “soft power.”

- Yet it should be kept in mind that the year 2007 was only one year. The year 2008 is scheduled to be rich with elections in the region to which the West may react by policy changes, especially if the elections are not seen as democratic. It will also be the year during which the Western countries have to make some sort of a decision on Georgia’s membership in NATO. All of these factors may put Western realism in the region to the test, and it is not inconceivable that by beginning of 2009, the policies of 2007 may be significantly altered.
- This implies that the leaders of the three countries of the region cannot take Western policies of 2007 as set in stone. They will have to be engaged and try to show progress within the Council of Europe, the OSCE and in bilateral programs. In other words, and somewhat paradoxically, to induce the West to maintain the general momentum of *realpolitik*, the leaders of the region will have to make steps towards democracy, even though these steps may go against their own instincts. This is because competition for Western assistance money is stiff. Western resources are moving to the Middle East and other regions of the world on which Western policymakers are currently focused, and if the countries of the South Caucasus do not want to jeopardize their current position as significant beneficiaries of Western assistance, they may actually need to pay attention to the conditions which have to be fulfilled for the funds to continue flowing. As the UEFA has demonstrated, the West is occasionally capable of sticking by principles – albeit inconsistently – and of putting zeroes on the scoreboards of the countries of the region.

on International Relations, U.S. House of Representatives, One Hundred Seventh Congress, First Session, October 10, 2001.

http://commdocs.house.gov/committees/intlrel/hfa75632.000/hfa75632_0.htm

ARMENIA – TURKEY: DIVIDED BY HISTORY, UNITED BY GEOGRAPHY¹

By Alexander Iskandaryan²

Memory of the Genocide has long held a dominant position in the Armenians' ethnic self-identification paradigm. Official history textbooks include chapters on the Genocide. Specialised encyclopaedic reference-books on the Genocide are published. The symbolic date of the Genocide is an official day of mourning. The Genocide is regularly covered in television programs, newspaper and magazine stories. There are also folk versions of the Genocide. A large share of Armenia's population consists of descendants of Genocide survivors, mainly those who managed to somehow flee to the Russian Empire. Therefore, oral family histories are shared with children.

The memory of the tragedy plays a very important role in the Armenian value system and, therefore, has become one of the pillars of the national idea, reflected in the policies of the newly independent Republic of Armenia. The events of the early 20th century remain an essential factor influencing relations between Turkey and Armenia. Against the backdrop of official Yerevan's intention to establish bilateral diplomatic ties with Ankara, this factor hardly plays a defining role, however, undoubtedly, the history of the Genocide has an enormous indirect influence on Armenia's attitude towards Turkey. The majority of Armenia's population consider Ankara's refusal to recognize the Genocide³ at least as a monstrous injustice and as a sign of hostility.

1 This article was originally published in 2006 in Turkey in the Turkish and German languages by the Istanbul Bureau of the Heinrich Böll Foundation, and was the first publication on the Genocide by a scientist from Armenia to see light in Turkish in Turkey. See: Iskandaryan, Alexander. "Armenien und die Türkei: Geographisch verbunden – durch die Geschichte getrennt." *Wenn Man die Armenienfrage diskutiert... / "Coğrafyanın Birleştirip Tarihini Ayırdığı İki Ülke: Ermenistan ve Türkiye." Ermeni Sorunu Tartışılırken ...* – Istanbul: Heinrich Böll Stiftung, 2006. – Pp.7-19/7-17. It was also published in Russian by the Caucasus Institute with minor amendments: Iskandaryan, Alexander. "Armenia-Turtsia: razdelennye istoriyei, splochyonnye geografiey." *Kavkaz – 2006. Yezhegodnik Instituta Kavkaza*. ("Armenia-Turkey: Divided by History, United by Geogaphy." *Caucasus Yearbook 2006*). Ed. by Alexander Iskandaryan. – Yerevan: Caucasus Institute, 2008. – Pp.228-242.

2 The author has been the director of the Yerevan-based Caucasus Institute since 2005.

3 According to Turkish scholars Bülent Aras and Havva Karakas-Keles, under the Kemalist system, which is based on the priority of the supranational, recognition of the Armenian Genocide is impossible for fear of losing its long-lasting domination. Consequently, denial of the Armenian Genocide

Though not caused by the Genocide, Ankara's adamant stance on the establishment of diplomatic ties and the opening of the Turkish-Armenian border, its continuing blockade of Armenia's overland communication and its tough stance on the Karabakh conflict all serve to reinforce the Armenians' perception of Turkey as heir to the Ottoman Empire.

However, in the foreign policy arena, the intensity of debates about recognition and condemnation of the Genocide is defined by additional factors, including the personal preferences of Armenian presidents. For example, the first president of the Republic of Armenia, Levon Ter-Petrosyan, did not push the topic of Genocide in his dealings with Turkey. Since 1998, when Armenia's second president was elected for his first term, the issue of the Genocide has played an increasingly important role in Armenia's foreign policy.⁴ After Robert Kocharyan's re-election, the issue of the Genocide was raised on numerous occasions by the president himself and by Armenia's Ministry of Foreign Affairs led at that time by Vardan Oskanyan.

The official position of the Armenian government was announced by then-President Kocharyan in his official address to the participants of an international conference on the 90th anniversary of the Genocide, held in Yerevan in April 2005. Kocharyan said, amongst other things, that "international recognition and condemnation of the Genocide of Armenians is not just Armenia's task. Today it has to be viewed in the context of regional and international politics. We have continually emphasised that Armenians don't seek vengeance. Even now, we state our determination to mend our relationship with Turkey. However, Turkey's negative attitude towards this issue perplexes the international community as well as Armenia."⁵

Additionally, the issue of Genocide recognition by Armenia is used by various actors as a bargaining chip while dealing with Turkey, regardless of the wishes of Armenia or its government.

In recent years, both the United States and the European Union have been actively involved in this. The use of the Genocide in the EU's policy towards Turkey is primarily defined by desire to exert pressure on Turkey, not by pursuit of justice

is based on historical and social premises connected with a nationalistic perception by Turkey of its state establishment, which in its turn causes concern for the Armenian establishment. See: Aras, Bülent, and Havva Karakas-Keles. "Armenyo-turetskie otnosheniya: kritichesky analiz." *Tsentral'naya Azia i Kavkaz*. ("Armenian-Turkish relationship: critical analysis." *Central Asia and the Caucasus*). – #4 (22), 2002 (in Russian). – Pp.125-129.

4 Safrastyan, Ruben. "Problema priznaniya genotsida vo vneshney politike Armenii: raznourovnevyy analiz." *21 vek* ("The Problem of Genocide Recognition in Armenia's Foreign Policy: Multi-Level Analysis." *21st Century*). – #1, 2005 (in Russian). – P.3.

5 The speech can be accessed at www.president.am.

or advancing Armenia's interests. The threat of American politicians and military to recognize the Armenian Genocide was primarily a response to Turkish leaders' unconventional and inappropriate behaviour during the military campaign in Iraq. Such US and EU policy, though not addressed to Armenia as a state or to Armenians as a nation, nevertheless influences the Armenian diasporas in the States and in European countries as well as the Republic of Armenia itself.

Moreover, an international campaign for the recognition of the Armenian Genocide was launched by the Armenian diaspora in 2000-2005 with some success. During these years, the Armenian Genocide was officially recognized in various formats by France, Sweden, Belgium, Switzerland, Slovakia and Poland, with the latter two countries starting a new trend of genocide recognition by new EU members. The German Bundestag also adopted an official document on the events of 1915; though it did not use the word *genocide*, the document still caused anxiety among Turkish leaders. The Hungarian parliament had also scheduled a bill on the recognition of the Armenian Genocide, which it postponed after a visit to Hungary of the then Turkish Foreign Minister Abdullah Gül.

All this had some impact on people living in Armenia. The drafting of recognition documents did not only involve diaspora Armenians but also historians specializing on Armenian-Turkish relations in the early 20th century. Since the collapse of the Soviet Union, Armenia and its diaspora have become a lot closer, and so have historians in Armenia and abroad. Consequently, the recognition of the Genocide by the parliaments and governments of various countries was perceived as victory by Armenia and the Armenian diaspora alike.

RECENT TRENDS

On April 24, 2005, Armenia and the numerous Armenian communities abroad commemorated the 90th anniversary of the Genocide. Mourning events were held in Armenia and in countries with influential Armenian communities. Closer to the anniversary, there was a surge in lobbying activity, ranging from placing the issue of the Genocide on the agenda of the US Congress and legislative bodies of other countries, to concerts by the famous American-Armenian rock band, *System of a Down*. Protest rallies and marches were held in front of Turkish embassies in many countries. In the run-up to April 24, 2005, Turkish Prime Minister Recep Tayyip Erdoğan sent an official written address to Armenian President Robert Kocharyan, with a suggestion "to set up a joint commission for studying the events of 1915."

A copy of the address was forwarded to US Congressmen in the Turkish-Ameri-

can friendship group. They, in turn, distributed it among other Congress members.⁶ Some of the provisions of the address were approved by officials in Washington.⁷ A statement by President George W. Bush, which, like all previous statements made on the occasion of the Genocide by US presidents, did not use the word “Genocide,” encouraged Armenia to accept the Turkish initiative, and so did a statement by Germany’s Chancellor Gerhard Schroder.

In his reply, President Kocharyan encouraged the Turkish Prime Minister to normalize relations between the two countries and to establish an intergovernmental commission on problematic issues. Virtually simultaneously, the Turkish parliament adopted a declaration condemning any accusations against Turkey regarding the Armenian Genocide. The declaration included the following paragraph: “Armenia has to unquestioningly accept Turkey’s offer to reassess mutual history if it is willing to establish good-neighbourly relations with Turkey.” The declaration also condemned the passing of resolutions on the Armenian Genocide by parliaments of foreign countries.⁸

In Armenia, the attitude towards the Genocide is not prone to change. No influential political actors in Armenia contest the need to recognize the Genocide. At the same time, the current regime’s attitude arouses criticism from members of the previous government who left politics after Ter-Petrosyan resigned from office. Usually, such statements cause backlash, but so far, the revisionists have not been labelled traitors.

A reaction towards a statement by Gurgun Arsenyan, the leader of the United Labour party, can be considered an example of domestic bickering. He spoke about the need to re-evaluate the traditional interpretation and assessment of the early 20th century events from the perspective of victimising Turkish people, including subsequent generations. Predictably, the Dashnaktsyutun Party (Armenian Revolutionary Federation) heavily criticized this statement, because international condemnation of the Armenian Genocide is one of this party’s key aims.

Despite permanent tension between Armenia and Turkey, the two countries have signed bilateral treaties on student exchange between universities. There are frequent performances by music and dance bands. For example, in the autumn of

6 Noyan Tapan, №20, 16.05.2005.

7 It cannot be ruled out that the wording of the address had been approved by Washington in advance.

8 Turkish Parliament Issues Declaration against Armenian Claims, <http://www.turkishpress.com/news.asp?id=40311>.

2002, the Turkish Presidential Quartet paid a visit to Yerevan. In the realm of tourism, there is a one-way flow, from Armenia to Turkey.

Turkish citizens are not particularly interested in visiting Armenia, perhaps to some extent due to the stereotype that it is not safe for Turks to visit Armenia. The influx of Armenian tourists to Turkish Mediterranean resorts is annually increasing. There are also large numbers of Armenian labour migrants in Turkey. In recent years, Kaan Soyak, the head of the Turkish-Armenian Business Development Council (TABDC) facilitated the organization of pilgrimages for Armenians from Armenia and diaspora to sacred sites on the territory of modern Turkey.

In Armenia, the far from perfect condition of Armenian historical heritage on Turkish territory is a hot topic for discussion. Against the backdrop of the tense relationship, the demolition of monuments of Armenian culture in Turkey is viewed as “cultural genocide” in Armenia. Some positive steps have been taken to improve the situation: Turkey thus spearheaded the reconstruction of Akhtamar Monastery, built in the 10th century A.D. on an island in Lake Van. However, Armenian experts were not allowed to take part in the reconstruction process, which caused a flurry of angry reports in the Armenian press. The monastery was opened in the spring of 2007 albeit without a cross on top.

Some Armenian nationalist youth groups organized protests aimed at banning Turkish goods from Armenia. However, this idea has not won popular support, and a wide range of Turkish goods is available from Yerevan’s shops and markets.

Changes in recent years in Turkey, especially where the publication of books is concerned, are widely discussed in Armenia. Books about the Genocide, including the work of Taner Akçam and Vahakn Dadrian, have seen light in Turkey, something which would have been unimaginable previously.

ECONOMIC DIMENSION

The almost 350-km-long Turkish-Armenian border was closed back in 1993 due to Ankara’s position in relation to the Karabakh issue. The only direct connection between Armenia and Turkey is the Istanbul-Yerevan flight operating since 1996. The flow of Turkish goods reaches Armenia mainly via Georgian territory. According to Kaan Soyak, the trade turnover between Armenia and Turkey reaches at least \$100-120 million annually.⁹ According to data collected by the US Embassy in Armenia, Turkey is Armenia’s seventh largest trade partner. Given the absence of official ties

⁹ *Azg*, 14.08.2005.

with Armenia, Turkish goods intended for Armenia either have Russia or Georgia shown as points of destination, or are exported via fake companies, most often registered in Switzerland, in which case Turkey is not shown as the country of origin.

The trade turnover can change drastically in case of the opening of Turkish-Armenian border and the unblocking of communication routes connecting the two countries. Members of the local government in the underdeveloped regions of Eastern Turkey have repeatedly advocated for the opening of the Armenian-Turkish border and for establishing trade and economic ties with the Armenian business community.

In Armenia itself, there is no consensus¹⁰ among officials and the general public on the opening the Turkish-Armenian border. The majority of analysts and politicians are in favour of opening the border; opponents motivate their position by the perceived necessity to protect domestic production from the influx of cheap Turkish goods and the risk of becoming overly dependent on exporting Armenian goods to Turkey. Businessmen mainly lobby for opening of the border, as they consider it an opportunity to export their goods at low tariffs through the territory of Turkey to international markets. In any case, this is largely an economic discourse with no connection to historical disagreements.¹¹

CONFERENCE ON THE GENOCIDE

In the run-up to the 90th anniversary of Genocide, several international conferences dedicated to the anniversary were convened in Armenia and abroad. On April 18, 2005, the Armenian National Academy of Sciences held a conference entitled “Genocide: Reality and Condemnation.” The then President of the Armenian National Academy of Sciences Fadey Sargsyan stated in his speech at the conference that “we are currently witnessing an unprecedented surge in the number of countries recognising Armenian genocide. Today the international community is more than ever inclined to recognising and condemning this monstrous crime against humanity. This is the reality, and Turkey cannot ignore it.”¹²

On April 20-21, 2005, a high-profile international conference entitled “A Grave Crime, an Extreme Challenge. Genocide and Human Rights” was held in Yerevan,

10 Officials in Yerevan consider the border to be closed on the Turkish side only, not on the Armenian side.

11 Gültekin, Burcu. “Cross-border Cooperation Between Turkey and the South Caucasus: Prospects for Sub-regional Integration.” *From Economy of War to Economy of Peace in the South Caucasus*. – London: International Alert, 2004. – P.47.

12 *Golos Armenii*, 19.05.2005.

attended by over 50 scholars from 20 countries. The conference's sessions were broadcast live on TV, and the conference was considered a very important event. In his opening speech, Armenian Foreign Minister Vardan Oskanyan said that "the demand to recognise Armenian genocide extends beyond the interest of Armenians, it is gaining international importance." Regarding a widespread allegation in Turkey that Armenia opposes Turkey's EU accession, Oskanyan added that "probably the best outcome for Armenia would be a European Turkey adhering to European standards. We would like Turkey to be our European neighbour and become a developed democracy that would ensure the preservation of our historical monuments and churches. The question is: Does Turkey adhere to European standards?"¹³

In his speech at the conference, President Kocharyan said that "we were the victims of the First World War, though we did not start it. Our right to remembrance fell victim to the Cold War, though we did not initiate it. The term "genocide" did not exist during the execution of a designed policy to exterminate Armenians. There was no definition of the term. It took time for underlying principles of humanity not to be sacrificed for geopolitical interests of world powers, and for morality to become an integral part of the policy of civilized countries. The path to this truth was tragic for many peoples. For Armenians this path cost the lives of 1.5 million people. However, the Armenian question continues to remain victim to geopolitical interests."¹⁴

Later in his speech, the president added that "recognition has a vast potential of counteraction. It is particularly important for preventing the crime. Condemnation of genocides that occurred in the past is essential. First of all it proves that the crime has no time limitation and that the perpetrators will be brought to justice anyways. This will have a restraining influence on and act as a preventing factor for those planning to commit genocide."¹⁵ Talking about the official stance of the republic of Armenia, Kocharyan noted that "the republic of Armenia as an independent state has clearly expressed its attitude: the recognition is equally essential for preventing future genocides. The recognition is important for Armenian-Turkish relations as it will answer numerous questions existing between our two peoples and will enable us to look into the future. Our memories of the past of full of bitterness but there is no hatred. We are struggling to understand negative reaction of the Turkish side which is manifested not only in denial of the past but also in the blockade of Armenia. We are facing a paradox which needs to be thought out. The side responsible for the crime bears malice and not the victim."

13 *Golos Armenii*, 23.05.2005.

14 www.yerkir.am, 20.04.2005.

15 www.yerkir.am, 20.04.2005.

The speech made by the president of the Republic of Nagorno-Karabakh, Arkady Ghukasyan, was quite a bit tougher. He drew parallels between the genocide of Armenians in the Ottoman Empire and Azerbaijan's policy with regard to the Armenian population during the conflict in Nagorno-Karabakh.¹⁶ Marie-Anne Isler-Béguin, the Chairwoman of EU-Armenia Parliamentary Cooperation Committee, also spoke at the conference, mentioning that "injustice can be eliminated by recognising injustice, it is necessary not only for the humankind, but for the executors of the injustice. Recognition is not easy, first of all emotions should be held back so that the Turkish state and the people could publicly recognize the event, in the way Germany did in relation to Jews."¹⁷

Among the guests of the conference there was a delegation of scientists and journalists from Turkey and a delegation from Israel. Interestingly, in the sidelines of the conference, a verbal dual took place between two Turkish scholars, Taner Akçam and Baksin Oran. Professor Akçam spoke in favour of the recognition and condemnation of the Armenian Genocide and put forward a range of brave propositions regarding the issue of Turkish identity and the source of development of the Turkish state, whereas Professor Oran claimed that Armenia's efforts to promote recognition on the international arena threaten the process of democratisation in Turkey. Professor Murad Belge from Bilgi University in Istanbul noted in his speech that only *force-majeure* circumstances could help Turkey to somehow delay the process of recognition of the Genocide by various countries including Turkey itself. Professor Oran warned Armenian scholars of "the threat of complete victory" and encouraged them not to use the term "genocide" to describe the events of the early 20th century.¹⁸ According to him, Turkish liberal intelligentsia needed time to prepare the Turkish society for recognition of the Armenian Genocide.

Yossi Sarid, a member of the Israeli Knesset, said in his speech at the conference that "condemnation of the crime will promote prevention of new cases of genocides and encourage reconciliation of the two peoples." Giving a speech on behalf of his colleagues, he expressed regret that he did not represent the government of Israel: "Being an opposition politician, I am giving a speech on behalf of the majority population of Israel and Jewish diasporas scattered all over the world."¹⁹ Mr Sarid called on the Turkish government to recognise the Armenian genocide, noting at the same

16 The speech by Arkady Ghukasyan: *Golos Armenii*, 23.05.2005.

17 *Golos Armenii*, 23.05.2005.

18 *Golos Armenii*, 23.04.2005.

19 "Yossi Sarid called on the Turkish government to assume responsibility for the Armenian Genocide." *Yerkir News*, www.yerkir.am, 21.04.2005.

time that current Turkish authorities do not bear direct responsibility for the tragic events of 1915. The Israeli politician also emphasised the need to join efforts in order to make Turkey to recognise the Genocide. Another participant of the conference from Israel, Yehuda Bauer, scientific consultant of the Jerusalem Commission of Holocaust Victims, noted in his speech that: “If the US recognises the genocide of 1915, Israel will follow suit thirty seconds later” According to Bauer, “Israel will not recognise the genocide of 1915 under the pressure from Turkey, however Turkish intelligentsia recognises this heinous crime.”²⁰

Juan Mendez, Special Adviser of the UN Secretary General, also participated in the conference. Although in his speech Mendez did not define the events that took place 90 years ago as “genocide,” in his interview to journalists he noted that, “should UN member states raise the issue of categorizing the events as genocide, it will definitely be considered.”²¹

The former president of Poland, Lech Wałęsa, was a guest of honour and a speaker at the conference. Regarding the denial of genocide by Turkey, Mr Wałęsa later said that “we believe that Turkey, rather than feel resentment towards us, should continue maintaining top-level friendly relations with Poland. Turkey should not pressure us into making a choice between Armenians and Turks. If Turkey claims that there are not enough documents, then an effort should be made to find more. Turks need to find documents about the dealings of their forefathers during the First World War in Anatolia.” Later on, during in the conference, he made the following remark, “Turks are unwilling to apologise to Armenians. Meanwhile Germans apologised to us thus resolving the problem.”²²

PUBLICATIONS

There are tens of thousands of publications on the Armenian Genocide. This paper will only look at the publications on the Armenian genocide that saw light in recent years and at the main topics they cover. Naturally, the majority of publications on the Armenian Genocide of course are produced in the Republic of Armenia, the bulk of them published by the Museum-Institute of the Genocide of Armenians, founded in Yerevan in 1995. Such publications cover a variety subjects including history and historiography of the Genocide,²³ the history and current status of Turkey-Armenia

20 www.yerkir.am, 21.04.2005.

21 www.yerkir.am, 21.04.2005.

22 *Golos Armenii*, 19.05.2005.

23 The Armenian Genocide Museum-Institute (AGMI) periodically issues a publication called

relations, the problems of historical memory and the Genocide, witness accounts of the Genocide²⁴ and the condition of the Armenian cultural and historical heritage on the territory of modern-day Turkey.²⁵

Collections of documents on the Genocide stored in archives in various countries²⁶ have also been published. Among recent publications, lists of the genocide victims and descriptions of property loss due to the Genocide,²⁷ and, notably, a body of research on mass harassment and genocide of other ethnic groups living on the territory of the Ottoman Empire.²⁸

Many research papers on the genocide are also published in the diaspora; some of those publications, notably, the work of Vahakn Dadrian, Ruben Adalian and Stepan Asturian, have also been reprinted in Armenia.²⁹ “The Burning Tigris: The Armenian Genocide and America’s Responses”³⁰ by Peter Balakian thus saw light

Issues of History and Historiography of the Armenian Genocide containing documents in Armenian, Russian and English. Documents on the history and historiography of the Armenian Genocide are also published separately. The following publication on the subject is also of interest: Hovhannisyán, Nikolay. *Arab Historiography on the Armenian Genocide*. – Yerevan: Institute of Oriental Studies and Zangak-97 Press, 2005 (in Armenian).

24 Gibbons, Herbert Adams. *The Blackest Page of Modern History. The Events of 1915 in Armenia. The Facts and the Responsibilities*. – Yerevan: AGMI, 2003 (in Armenian; UK edition – London: G. P. Putnam's sons, 1916); Lepsius, Johannes. *The Secret Report. The Massacres of the Armenian People*. – Yerevan: AGMI, 2003 (in Armenian); *Unknown Names: French Armenophiles (late 19th – early 20th century)*. Ed. by Marat Gharazyan. – Yerevan: AGMI, 2003.

25 Hovhannisyán, Anush. *Cultural Genocide on Turkish Territory*. – Yerevan: Institute of Oriental Studies, 2005; *The Armenian Architecture: a Cultural Genocide*. – Montreal: Armenian National Committee of Canada, 2005 (photo documentary).

26 *Russia and the Armenian Genocide in 1915-1917* (collection of documents). Translated and compiled by Arman Marukyan. – Yerevan: AGMI, 2004 (in Armenian); *Reports on the Armenian Genocide by Austro-Hungarian diplomats (1915-1918)*. Ed. by Artem Ohadjanian. – Yerevan: AGMI, 2004 (in Armenian); *The US Official Documents on the Armenian Genocide*. Compiled by Ara Sarafian, ed. by Lavrenty Barsegyan. – Yerevan: AGMI, 2004 (in Armenian.); *The Armenian Genocide in Reports by German Diplomats (1915-1918)*. Compiled by Vardges Mikaelyan. – Yerevan: AGMI, 2004 (in Armenian.); Ohadjanian, Artem. *1915 Irrefutable Evidence. Austrian Documents on the Armenian Genocide*. – Yerevan: AGMI, 2004.

27 *The List of Victims of the Armenian Genocide (1915-1923)*. Vol. I, Sebastia. – Yerevan: AGMI, 2004 (in Armenian).

28 Khosroeva, Anahit. *The Assyrian Genocide in the Ottoman Turkey and The Neighbouring Territories Populated by Turks (late 19th – early 20th)*. – Yerevan, 2004 (in Armenian).

29 Adalian, Rouben Paul. *Remembering and Understanding the Armenian Genocide*. – Yerevan: AGMI, 2004; Astourian, Stephan H. *Modern Turkish Identity and the Armenian Genocide. From Prejudice to Racist Nationalism*. – Yerevan: AGMI, 2004.

30 Balakian, Peter. *The Burning Tigris, The Armenian Genocide and America’s Response*. – HarperCollins, 2003.

in 2003. Among recent publications on the subject, there is a study by Verjine Svazlian, “The Armenian Genocide and Historic Memory,” which saw light in several languages.³¹

In her work, Svazlian describes the events of 1915 based on witness accounts of over 650 Genocide survivors and relatives of Genocide victims. A voluminous work by Hayk Ghazaryan, “The Genocide of the Armenian People in the Ottoman Empire,” was also published in several languages. Other publications focus on support offered to Genocide survivors, the policy of particular states with regards to the Armenian Genocide, and the human rights’ perspective on the Genocide.³²

TRIAL OF A TURKISH SCHOLAR

The case of a Turkish researcher, which was not directly connected to the subject of the Genocide, evoked a wide response in Armenia. Turkish scholar Yektan Türkyilmaz, who had been visiting Armenia since 2003, was detained on June 17, 2005, at Zvartnots airport in Yerevan.

A large collection of 17th to 20th century books of cultural and historical value was found in his baggage while he was attempting to take it out of the country. The books were confiscated, and the Turkish citizen was charged with smuggling under article 215 of the Penal Code of the Republic of Armenia. Several features make this case unprecedented. First, Türkyilmaz was the first Turkish scientist who applied for and was granted permission to work in Armenian archives. Second, his scientific views include recognition of the Armenian Genocide, in opposition to official Turkish historiography. Third, his arrest caused a stir among the general public and not just the scientific community. Predictably, the case of Türkyilmaz was politicised. The Penal Code of Armenia, a legacy of the Soviet Penal Code, prescribed a disproportionately severe punishment for the scientist’s offense; in fact, that particular article of the code had never been administered in independent Armenia.

31 Svazlian, Verjine. *The Armenian Genocide and Historical Memory*. – Yerevan: AGMI, 2004.

32 Egge, Bjørn. *Fridtjof Nansen’s Struggle for Human Rights and Human Dignity*. – Yerevan: AGMI, 2003 (in Armenian); Bagdasaryan, Robert. *The Genocide and the Armenian Intelligentsia of Russia*. – Yerevan: AGMI, 2003 (in Russian); Oghanyan, Pascual Carlos. “*The Genocide of the Armenian Nation and the Protection of Human Rights*.” – Yerevan: AGMI, 2003 (in Russian); Ternon, Yves. *Impunity, Revenge and Denial. The Armenian Genocide in International Courts*. – Yerevan: AGMI, 2003 (in Armenian); Marukyan, Armen. *The Armenian Question and Russia’s Policy (1915-1917)*. – Yerevan: AGMI, 2003 (in Russian); Tunyan, Valeriy. *Young Turks and the Armenian Question (1908-1912). Part I*. – Yerevan: AGMI, 2004 (in Russian).

Türkyilmaz was held in detention which was obviously an excessive measure. It was understood in Armenia that keeping a Turkish scientist under arrest could cause repercussions; in this context Foreign Minister Oskanyan's statement should be noted, in particular the following sentence: "it does not matter how you justify this incident, the international community will turn it into a political issue and will view it in the context of Armenian-Turkish relations, in particular, where the archives and recognition of the Genocide are concerned."³³ In Armenia, a campaign to free Türkyilmaz was launched; human rights and civil society activists were fighting for a minimal sentence to be passed on Türkyilmaz.

Additionally, according to Hrant Dink,³⁴ who was from 1996 to 2007 editor-in-chief of the Armenian newspaper *Agos* published in Turkey, Türkyilmaz's trip to Armenia was considered controversial by the public in Turkey, as he was one of the scientists implicitly recognizing the 1915-1923 Genocide of Armenians in the Ottoman Empire. The arrest of the Turkish scholar was condemned by some Western mass media, which viewed it as reflecting the tough stance of Armenian authorities. Turkish experts in Armenian studies petitioned Armenian President Robert Kocharyan on behalf of Türkyilmaz. Armenian media published statements by members of the Armenian scholarly community, calling for the most lenient sentence.

During both the investigation and the trial, the detainee insisted that the offence was committed by him inadvertently. The court sentenced Yektan Türkyilmaz to a two-year suspended jail term. He was released from custody in the courtroom. The court also ordered the confiscation of the books Türkyilmaz had attempted to take out of Armenia.³⁵ The sentence can be considered symbolic given that, according to the Armenian Penal Code, the Turkish scholar was facing up to eight years in prison. After the court ruling, Türkyilmaz did not raise any claims against law enforcement authorities or the government of the Republic of Armenia, and said that he would continue research in the scientific field of his choice.

33 Danielyan, Emil. "Oskanian Hails Turkish Scholar's Release". RFE/RL, 29.08.2005.

34 Hrant Dink was murdered in January 2007 by Ogün Samast, a 19-year old Turkish nationalist. The murder caused frenzy both in Armenia and in the world. The killing gave rise to mass protests in Turkey itself and became an important event in its public life.

35 Danielyan, Emil, *op.cit.*

CONCLUSION

Overall, we can conclude that, with regard to the Genocide, there is a public consensus in Armenia, involving the elites and the society at large. The general public as well the professional community of historians and historiographers rules out the very possibility to contest the fact of the Genocide. There are numerous documents, studies, books and historical data on the Genocide. According to professional historians, the fact of Genocide was proven a long time ago, and no new evidence is needed.³⁶ Moreover, the Genocide affected so many Armenians that the memory is still alive in people's minds; children learn about the Genocide from family stories as well as from history books. Any attempt to debate the fact of Genocide is perceived as sacrilege, and initiating a discussion on the subject is viewed as blasphemous.

The very idea to set up a commission, made up of historians of any nationality, that would verify *the fact* of the Genocide, is totally unacceptable in Armenia.³⁷ It would be similar to starting a discussion in Israel on whether or not the Holocaust actually took place. A scholar (or any other person for that matter) doubting the fact of Genocide would be viewed in Armenia not so much as a traitor but as a lunatic. Consequently, in the Armenians' public perception, the ball is in Turkey's court. Turkey's non-recognition of the Genocide is seen a manifestation of hostility that has no relevance to history.

In addition, the topic is highly politicised. The Genocide issue is to some degree hostage to the troubled Armenia-Turkey relationship, which was shaped not only by history, but by a tangle of problems in the Armenia-Azerbaijan-Turkey triangle.

36 Armenian archives have been open for a long time to any country and researchers of any nationality, Hamlet Gasparyan, Press Secretary of Armenia's Ministry of Foreign Affairs, told *Armenpress* news agency, commenting on a statement made by Turkish Prime Minister Recep Tayyip Erdoğan to the effect that Turkish archives were open whereas Armenian ones were closed. According to Gasparyan, "where there is true willingness and courage to improve a relationship, pretexts become irrelevant." "So far, many international scholars, except for Turkish ones, have worked in our archives. Scholars from Turkey are welcome to come here and see for themselves," said Gasparyan, adding that "everyone has known the truth for a long time, let us leave propaganda aside and sit down to negotiations."

37 "Historians have researched the Genocide of Armenians in Turkey and given their opinion a long time ago. Turkey should base its policy on this body of research, historians do not have anything to add to this issue," said Minister of Foreign Affairs of Armenia Vardan Oskanyan in his comment to a statement by Turkish Prime-Minister Recep Tayyip Erdoğan who suggested that scholars "research the issue of the alleged genocide of over a million Armenians who lived in the Ottoman Empire during World War One." Erdoğan said that Turkey was ready to open its archives and called on Armenia to follow suit.

With regard to the Genocide, Armenia's only expectation from Turkey is the recognition of the historical fact, and certainly not the setting up of "research commissions." Meanwhile, an overall political improvement of Armenian-Turkish relations (opening of the border, establishment of diplomatic ties etc.) can serve to mitigate tensions and pave the ground for attempts to find mutually beneficial solutions. Admittedly, the Armenian public will simply not accept any solutions until the Genocide is recognised. Complicated as the situation is, one must bear in mind that the frustration of Armenian society can only be overcome by attempts at resolving the problem, whereas efforts to hush it up are perceived by Armenians as a manifestation of hostility.

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NOT A SINGLE STEP AHEAD: TURKEY AND THE SOUTH CAUCASUS IN 2009¹

By Mitat Çelikpala²

INTRODUCTION

The consequences of the Russian-Georgian War in August 2008 have affected not only the Caucasus, but almost the entire global equilibrium deeply. The chain of events initiated by this war directly affected Turkey as well: as a regional power, Turkey has recently been pursuing an active and assertive foreign policy throughout the geographies that it belongs to. Responses to the attempted adoption of a “new” perspective generated discussions about the policies of Turkey, a country that struggles to assure stability and produce solutions for problems as a regional actor. In this sense, the South Caucasus has been an attractive model in order to monitor the newly developing foreign policy course of Turkey through a set of political narratives such as “zero problem with neighbors,” a “problem solving country,” “rhythmic diplomacy,” and the effectiveness of it as well. The policies Turkey pursues with respect to the developments in Caucasus would make it possible to understand not only the course of Turkish foreign policy, but also the goals and policy-making process in general. This kind of analysis would be enlightening to evaluate Turkey’s effectiveness as a regional power.

This paper aims at a comprehensive evaluation of Turkey’s foreign policy in the South Caucasus in 2009. An assessment related to the responses given and the steps taken by Turkey with respect to the emergent events would facilitate the comprehension of Turkish foreign policy parameters in general. Throughout the paper, Turkey’s foreign policy in the South Caucasus will be discussed under topics such as Caucasus Stability and Cooperation Platform, which was proposed by Turkey with an attempt to restore the regional order and stability, the Armenian Opening, Turkey-Azerbaijan relations, commercial and economic ties, and energy cooperation.

1 This paper was published by CI as: Çelikpala, Mitat. “Turtsiya i Yuzhnyi Kavkaz v 2009 g.” *Kavkaz – 2009. Yezhegodnik Instituta Kavkaza* (“Turkey and the South Caucasus in 2009.” *Caucasus 2009. CI Yearbook*). Ed. Alexander Iskandaryan. – Yerevan: Caucasus Institute, 2011 (in Russian). – Pp.172-190.

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August 2008 and Turkey: Regional Solutions for Regional Issues

At midnight on August 7-8, 2008 Georgian troops entered South Ossetia to “restore the constitutional order” in Georgia. As Russian troops crossed through the Roki Tunnel and simultaneously entered South Ossetia to prevent an alleged “genocide,” the tension between the two countries turned into a war. Since Georgian troops had been obliged to retreat at the face of Russian military power, the war rapidly spread to Georgian territories. When Russian troops invaded Georgian cities such as Zugdidi and Gori, and reached 40 kilometers outside of Tbilisi, the situation had turned into an international crisis.³ Armed conflicts that brought two parties towards the edge of a total war came to an end by a ceasefire agreement mediated by France, which held the presidency of the EU.⁴

The primary expectation of the international community was the adherence to the agreement and Russia’s *withdrawal* to positions held *before the conflict* began. Conflicts were expected not to be repeated, and an acceptable solution for regional problems was sought to be agreed upon with the attendance of the international community. However, Russia stated that the status of Abkhazia and South Ossetia could not be a matter of negotiation/bargain, and emphasized that the territorial integrity of Georgia was out of the question. Therefore, Russia officially recognized both Abkhazia and South Ossetia as independent states. Due to this decision, the Caucasus turned into a complicated international issue. Following this decision, not only the political map of Caucasus changed, but also the territorial integrity of Georgia became a highly controversial issue. Moreover, because of rigid policies that the parties could adopt regarding other disagreements like Nagorno-Karabakh, tension and insecurity in the region increased even more.

In line with these developments, questions like “Is Russia going to be a global pole again” or “Is there any possibility of a new cold war” occupied the international agenda during the second half of 2008. While EU countries handled their energy-centered relations with Russia even more carefully, the United States (US) signaled that it was going to reshape its Europe-Atlantic security perception in which Russia

3 Report of the Independent International Fact-Finding Mission on the Conflict in Georgia, September, 2009. <http://www.ceiig.ch/Report.html>; *Civilians in the Line of Fire: The Georgia-Russia Conflict*. London: Amnesty International, 2008.

4 For the letter of agreement see “15-16 August Ceasefire Agreement and Side-Letter”, Appendix B, ICG. *Russia vs Georgia: The Fallout*. Europe Report No 195, August 22, 2008, pp. 32-35. <http://www.crisisgroup.org/home/index.cfm?id=5636&CFID=19608001&CFTOKEN=59208996>

will be placed at the center. Redefining relations with Russia had been the main discussion of this period.

The short-term impacts of these developments in the South Caucasus are dramatic. Not only the infrastructure of Georgia, which was established with great efforts in recent years, was destroyed; but also the reputation and self-confidence of the reconstituted military had substantial damages and national moral was ruined. In addition to a set of military establishments, including Vaziani and Marneuli which were modernized with Turkey's support, the commercially important Poti port was also heavily damaged. As a result of the bombardments of bridges and communication facilities, most of the highways and railways became unusable and serious difficulties were encountered through energy transmission lines. In terms of economy, this situation directly affected not only Georgia, but also neighboring countries and regions, Turkey in the first place. Due to this situation, the Baku-Tbilisi-Ceyhan (BTC) oil pipeline become unusable and the gas flow of the Baku-Tbilisi-Kars (BTK) natural gas pipeline was disrupted for security reasons. In addition, commercial ties with Armenia were blocked, and a substantial portion of Azerbaijani national income was lost.

Turkey, due to its regional position, its relationship with Russia and its historical alliance/partnership with the Western World and its institutions, was directly affected by these developments.⁵ In the first stage, Turkey's economy and commercial ties were damaged. Following this, the new strategic condition started to be debated along with its political impacts. Turkey's attempts to develop relations with Azerbaijan and her presence in Central Asia were paralyzed, and a set of serious infrastructure investments were required to reach the pre-war position. In this framework, cooperation with Russia, territorial integrity of Georgia, attitudes toward Abkhazia, relations with Azerbaijan, trajectory of Nagorno-Karabakh issue, and Turkish-Armenian relations were brought up in the agenda as topics needing to be readdressed. Besides, it has been observed that the rupture of Georgian-Russian relations and the uncompromising situation that two parties came up with after the war had the potential to destroy Turkey's Black Sea-centred policies, regional security initiatives like BLACKSEAFOR and Operation Black Sea Harmony, and economic and

5 Çelikpala, Mitat. "Kafkasya'daki Son Gelişmeler: Küresel Hakimiyet Mücadelesi ve Türkiye." *Stratejik Analiz*, No.101, ASAM, Ankara, September 2008; Karasar, Hasan Ali. *Saakashvili Pulled the Trigger: Turkey between Russia and Georgia*. SETA Policy Brief, No.20, Ankara, 2008; Torbakov, Igor. *The Georgia Crisis and Russia-Turkey Relations*. – Washington, DC: Jamestown Foundation, November 2008; Winrow, Gareth. *Turkey, Russia and the Caucasus: Common and Diverging Interests*. – Chatham House Briefing Paper, November 2009.

politic projects such as BTC/BTE pipelines and BTK railway line. Furthermore, in the context of global rivalry and transportation of Western aid to Georgia, even the Montreux Convention itself and the conditions it demands for the Straits and the Black Sea have become contentious. Due to these developments, Turkey has been taking important steps which deeply influenced her Caucasian policy that was established approximately in the last fifteen years.

Caucasus Security and Cooperation Platform

Turkey's first reaction to the atmosphere of uncertainty and chaos generated by war had been the proposal for the formation of the Caucasus Security and Cooperation Platform (CSCP), which aimed at ending the war promptly and finding solutions to the issues on the regional level.⁶

The proposal was brought into agenda when Prime Minister Erdoğan stated that Turkey might attempt to constitute a "Caucasian Alliance." The proposal came to light when Prime Minister Recep Tayyip Erdoğan said on August 11 that Ankara may launch an initiative for the formation of a "Caucasus Alliance," following the Balkan model, adding that the Russian Federation should be part of it.⁷ When Abdullah Gül announced support for this project, the process gained acceleration. The CSCP proposal became official during Prime Minister Erdoğan's Moscow and Tbilisi visits on August 13-14.⁸ The first preliminary meeting, in which the organizational and operational structure of CSCP was addressed, was held in Helsinki on December 4-5, 2008, and the second, in Istanbul on January 26, 2009.⁹

6 About Platform see: Fotiou, Eleni. *Caucasus Stability and Cooperation Platform*: What is at Stake for Regional Cooperation. ICBSS Policy Brief, No.16, June, 2009; Gültekin Punsmann, Burcu. *The Caucasus Stability and Cooperation Platform: An Attempt to Foster Regional Accountability*. ICBSS Policy Brief, No.13, April, 2009.

7 The CSCP can be qualified as an updated version of the Caucasus Stability Pact (CSP) which was brought onto the agenda by President Süleyman Demirel in January 2000 as a response to the outbreak of the Second Chechen War and the risks of it. Although the CSP, which was proposed to be formalized under the auspices of OSCE, was supported by the leaders of Caucasus republics, a successful outcome has not been obtained. See Celac, Sergiu, Michael Emerson and Nathalie Tocci. *A Stability Pact for Caucasus*. CEPS Working Document 145, Brussels, CEPS, 2000. For the Prime Minister's statement, see "Prime Minister: We can form a Caucasian alliance," *Hürriyet*, August 11, 2008. <http://hurarsiv.hurriyet.com.tr/goster/haber.aspx?id=9634950&tarih=2008-08-11>.

8 "Erdoğan'ın 'İstikrar Platformu' Önerisine Saakaşvili'den Destek," *Referans*, August 15, 2008, p. 15.

9 The first preliminary meeting for the platform was held during the OSCE Council of Ministers in Helsinki. Azerbaijan, Turkey and Russian Federation attended to the CSCP meeting with Deputy Ministers (Deputy Undersecretary), on the other hand, Armenia and Georgia attended with Deputy Directors. See "Caucasus Stability and Cooperation Platform's first meeting will be held in Helsinki."

The fundamental purpose of the CSCP is to contribute to the establishment of peace and stability in the region through dialogue. In this context, it aims to remove the tension with war-like tendencies among these countries by means of a settlement that puts economic and commercial relations at the center. It had been thought that this initiative might serve as a cooperation platform which would bring South Caucasus countries and Russia together within the framework of OSCE principles and give priority to the establishment of security, stability and prosperity in the region. The platform was not intended to become an alternative to any institution, mechanism or any international organization that deals with the problems of the Caucasus; but rather, it was perceived as an additional platform to facilitate the communication between the countries of the region.¹⁰ The main areas of concern for this pact are determined as restructuring of the Caucasian economies, ensuring development and cooperation, boosting economic cooperation with the world, fostering free trade, supporting the private sector, ensuring environmental protection, putting to use the existing and future energy and transportation lines extending from the east to the west, regulating the administrative structure, ensuring administrative transparency, tackling refugee issues and ensuring their integration.

Although the CSCP proposal was officially delivered to all of these countries, no institutionalization was achieved until the spring of 2010. It seems that the biggest problem haunting the search for cooperation in the Caucasus is the lack of sufficient social, political or economic institutions. Plus, an atmosphere of distrust still prevails among Caucasus countries.

During the meetings held through the Turkish initiative, the parties declared their commitment to common efforts and cooperation for solving the disagreements in the region; however, the negative atmosphere created by bilateral problems prevented the formation of the CSCP. The idea for the formation of a regional platform had come up due to the inadequacy and ineffectiveness of extra-regional solution suggestions; however, countries like Georgia stood aloof from the proposal due to the importance they attached to the role of non-regional political actors such as the US and the EU. On the other hand, the suggestion to institutionalize the CSCP according to the principles of the OSCE meant the exclusion of regional ac-

Haberler, November 30, 2008, <http://www.haberler.com/kafkasya-istikrar-ve-isbirligi-platformunun-ilk-haberi/>. The second preliminary meeting was held in Istanbul with the attendance of Foreign Affairs Ministers/Deputy Undersecretaries. <http://www.mfa.gov.tr/ocak2009.tr.mfa>

¹⁰ For the assessment of Ali Babacan, who was the Minister of Foreign Affairs at that time, see, Babacan, Ali. "Calming the Caucasus." *International Herald Tribune*, September 23, 2008.

tors such as Iran from the process and put parties like Abkhazia and South Ossetia into an ambiguous position.

Moreover, Turkey's CSCP proposal caused suspicion, even a reaction, among Western allies, most obviously in the case of the US. The reason for this reaction rested in the suspicion that Turkey might be taking steps independent of its allies, while the allies in the West were trying to build a common stance against the Russian Federation within the framework of the EU and NATO.¹¹ It should be noted that the suspicious outlook at the initial stages of the proposal was fundamentally caused by the exclusion possibilities due to the stress on regionality and the unease generated by the fact that the first negotiations were carried out with Moscow.¹²

In addition to the Russian Federation, Azerbaijan and Armenia also supported the CSCP proposal. During Russian Foreign Minister Sergey Lavrov's official visit to Turkey on September 2, 2008, the subject of the CSCP proposal was also addressed along with matters of bilateral cooperation. At the joint press conference with Foreign Minister Ali Babacan, Lavrov stated that the CSCP was an embodiment of common sense since it dwelled on prompting the countries of the region to solve their own problems, and defined it as a settlement that would increase regional stability and decrease any potential for conflict.¹³ The "exclusion" of non-regional actors, primarily the US, was at the basis of Russia's quick and positive response. Against the backdrop of positively developing relations between Russia and Turkey,

11 Baran, Zeyno. "Will Turkey Abandon NATO?" *Wall Street Journal*, August 29, 2008, <http://online.wsj.com/article/SB121997087258381935.html>; Laçiner, Sedat. "Is Turkey Getting Away from the US in Caucasus?" *The Journal of Turkish Weekly*, August 31, 2008. <http://www.turkishweekly.net/comments.php?id=2973>

12 In this context, Turkey, while shaping initiatives in the region and establishing policies, has to consider its relations with Russia and Russia's perceptions of interest as well. Several incidents show Turkey is aware of this situation. For example, Prime Minister Erdoğan made his first visit for platform to Moscow; Russia was asked for mediation in order to include Armenia in to the process; the Commander of the Turkish Naval Forces held consultations with his Russian counterpart.

13 "Transcript of Remarks and Response to Media Questions by Russian Minister of Foreign Affairs Sergey Lavrov at Joint Press Conference with Turkish Minister for Foreign Affairs Ali Babacan." September 2, 2008, İstanbul, http://www.turkey.mid.ru/hron/hron_e_19.html. Similar assessments can be seen in all of the visits/meetings that Turkish-Russian high-level officers attended, and in the texts of the agreements as well. For example, see: Joint Declaration between the Republic of Turkey and the Russian Federation on Progress towards a New Stage in Relations and Further Deepening of Friendship and Multidimensional Partnership. Moscow, 13 February 2009, http://www.mfa.gov.tr/joint-declaration-between-the-republic-of-turkey-and-the-russian-federation-on-progress-towards-a-new-stage-in-relations-and-further-deepening-of-friendship-and-multidimensional-partnership_-moscow_-13-february-2009.en.mfa

the CSCP was perceived in the Caucasus as a settlement that would ensure the influential position of Russia in the region.

The Azerbaijani perspective on the CSCP was that in this format, the solution of the Nagorno-Karabakh issue could be discussed by taking Azerbaijan's arguments into consideration. In addition to the prospect of discussing and solving the issue on a regional platform including Turkey, the forging of a mechanism that would prevent the spread of conflict into the broader Caucasus region was regarded as reasonable. Armenia, meanwhile, showed a tendency to consider the CSCP a mechanism that would satisfy its own expectations. The primary expectations of Armenia concerned the opening of the Turkey-Armenia border, the possibility to negotiate with Turkey on new grounds, the solution of the Nagorno-Karabakh issue in a satisfactory manner for Armenia, and using the CSCP as a supporting/complementary platform for the OSCE Minsk Group. Furthermore, there was the expectation that the CSCP would be a new and efficient mechanism in overcoming the economic and commercial damage caused by the Georgian war.¹⁴ When it comes to Georgia, it could be argued that it was inclined to see the CSCP as a settlement format that would prevent aggressive Russian attitudes and, especially, help in the process of Georgia's EU accession. However, Georgia had its reservations with regard to the CSCP to the extent that it could potentially exclude the EU and hence fail to meet Georgia's expectations in that respect. Even though Saakashvili declared his support for the CSCP during Prime Minister Erdoğan's visit to Tbilisi on August 14, Georgia's overall tendency is not to take place in any common platform with Russia as long as it has not proven its trustworthiness.¹⁵

In the end, the CSCP is still on the table as a proposal that has not been openly rejected by any of the parties in the Caucasus but proves that institutionalization is dependent on the solution of the region's problems and that regional competition is the biggest obstacle to cooperation and stability. The CSCP, which has been a regional settlement idea with the claim to solve the region's problems, has become the victim of those very same problems. The parties are continuing to pursue sort of a "wait and see" policy.

14 "Armenian Prime Minister: The Really 'Vitaly Important Issue' is the Establishment of Good Neighbor Relations with All the Countries of the Region, Primarily, Azerbaijan," October 7, 2008, <http://www.today.az/print/news/politics/48009.html>.

15 "Erdoğan'ın 'İstikrar Platformu' Önerisine Saakaşvili'den Destek," *Referans*, August 15, 2008, p. 15; "Rusya Varsa Biz Yokuz," *Hürriyet*, September 1, 2008; "Saakashvili on Turkish-proposed Caucasus Stability Platform," *Civil.ge Daily News Online*, 22 Mart 2009, http://www.civil.ge/eng/_print.php?id=20593.

Armenian Opening

The most significant change that August 2008 has brought to the Turkish Caucasus policy and general foreign policy as well, is the initiation of the process which is called the "Armenian Opening." The interaction between Turkey and Armenia, which has been maintained either openly or covertly since the beginnings of the 1990s, has become increasingly apparent. A series of meetings between Turkey and Armenia became concrete with two protocols signed in October 10, 2009, and reached a critical threshold. However, the beginning of the meetings actually goes back to the Armenian presidential election which was held on February 19, 2008. Following the eventful elections which gave the presidency to Serzh Sargsyan, Yerevan's positive responses to high-level felicitations on the part of Turkey brought the two parties to the negotiation process.¹⁶ Turkish President Abdullah Gül's positive response to Armenian President Serzh Sargsyan's invitation in order to attend an Armenia-Turkey qualifying match of the 2010 World Cup in Yerevan has started the process which is called "Football Diplomacy."¹⁷ The military operation that Russia mounted against Georgia at the beginning of August accelerated the Turkish-Armenian rapprochement. In this respect, one must draw attention to Turkey's proposal for the CSCP which would also comprise Armenia and its efforts.¹⁸ As a result, Gül's Yerevan visit, which he made on the occasion of the football game on September 6,

16 In their felicitation messages to Sargsyan, President Gül and Prime Minister Erdoğan stated that solving the problems between Armenia and Turkey in the framework of good neighborhood and through dialogue is the responsibility for both sides. President Gül and Prime Minister Erdoğan emphasized that they expect, during Sargsyan's administration, that relations between two countries will enter a new phase which will "contribute to the peace, stability and welfare in the region." President Gül, in his message, said "I hope that election of Sargsyan will give the opportunity to create the environment for normalizing the relationship between Turkish and Armenian societies, who had already proved that they can live together with peace and harmony for centuries." Moreover, he emphasized that he expects the joint efforts of the two countries will create an atmosphere based on mutual trust and cooperation which contribute to the peace and welfare in the region. In his responses, Sargsyan said he believed "the direct bilateral meetings will contribute to the solution of all problems that the two countries are related." See, "Sarkisyan'a Kutlama." *Milliyet*, April 28, 2008; "Gül'den Sarkisyan'a Kutlama." *Yeni Şafak*, February 21, 2008.

17 For "Sargsyan's assessment in which the invitation that has initiated the process of "a new start" between Turkey and Armenia has also been mentioned, see: Sargsyan, Serzh. "We Are Ready to Talk to Turkey." *The Wall Street Journal Online*, July 9, 2008, http://www.wsj.com/public/article_printSB121555668872637291.html

18 For example, Turkey allowed the planes flying along the Armenian flight course to pass through its national air space, since transit between Armenia and Georgia were blocked because of the war. "Ankara ve Erivan Karşılıklı Kafkas Krizi Jestinde." *Radikal*, August 9, 2008. – P. 9.

2008, has created a fresh and hopeful political atmosphere that is closely followed by the entire world.¹⁹

Following their bilateral discussion, Sargsyan and Gül declared that they had manifested mutual will in order to establish a political environment through which the issues between Turkey and Armenia would be solved. Gül stated that his visit meant the collapse of psychological walls between the two countries.²⁰ In addition to Gül's "I hope that this visit will create the possibility to improve bilateral relations" statement, Sargsyan's declaration that the two countries showed common political will to solve the issues between them was regarded as a good start. Moreover, Sargsyan's statement on Armenia's support to the CSCP gave Turkey hope that the relations would develop in the general context of the Caucasus dimension. In short, this visit is evaluated as the de-freezing of the ice between two countries.²¹ It has been observed that both parties assess this visit as a "good start" for a fast normalization, and the developments about this issue have created a positive atmosphere in terms of international public opinion.²²

It has to be emphasized that Turkey's concerns about this opening process not only include restoring relations with Armenia and reopening the borders, but also comprise contributing to the solution of other issues as well, with Nagorno-Karabakh in the first place, and thereby restoring order and stability in the Caucasus. In the wake of these developments, Gül's Baku visit that sought to accelerate the process and reach a consensus with Azerbaijan signalled Turkey's efforts to develop this new opening process without damaging the delicate balance in the South Caucasus.²³ Since Baku did not openly criticize Turkey's approach, it was regarded as

19 Gül's visit got a positive reaction in the Armenian and Turkish public, though certain opposition groups criticized it. The general atmosphere of the trip was encouraging. Turkish media also took a positive attitude and encouraged the trip. Moreover, Azerbaijan did not take a very negative stand either. This situation enhanced the hopes for the resolution of problems.

20 "Psikolojik Duvarlar Yıkıldı, Umutluyum." *Taraf Gazetesi*, September 8, 2008.

21 "Bir Maç Çok Umut Verdi." *Milliyet*, September 7, 2008. – P.23; Cemal, Hasan. "Gül ve Sarkisyan: İyi Bir Başlangıç Yaptık." *Milliyet*, September 7, 2008. – P.23; Çandar, Cengiz. "Gül'ün Ardından Erivan: Yolun Yarısı Geçildi." *Hürriyet*, September 8, 2008.

22 Gül's visit was addressed in the non-official meeting of EU Foreign Affairs Ministers which was carried out on the same days in Avignon, France. The EU Term President and French Foreign Minister Bernard Kouchner indicated that this visit should be considered "beyond watching a football match." "EU is glad about the visit." *Milliyet*, September 7, 2008. – P.23.

23 President Gül, during his visit to Baku, informed Azerbaijan President İlham Aliyev about his Yerevan trip and shared his observations. Gül indicated that during the visit he mostly highlighted the issues related with the Caucasus, Azerbaijan and Nagorno-Karabakh. He said that Sargsyan also recognized that the issues with Azerbaijan should be solved. In this context, the most important

a kind of an approval. Gül, in Baku, indicated that instability of Caucasus could be considered as a “wall” and threatened everybody’s peace and security. He assessed that “if security, peace and stability is provided in the Caucasus, this place will be a highway that bring us to Central Asia, to China.”²⁴ This assessment clearly indicates that Turkey perceives the Armenian opening as a concrete implementation of Turkey’s “zero problems with neighbours” policy. Besides, it is also an evidence of Turkey’s attempts to establish a policy in economic and commercial areas that are related to common interests. Almost in the same period, on November 2, 2008, near Moscow, Armenia and Azerbaijan signed a five-point joint declaration aimed at resolving their dispute over Nagorno-Karabakh. This declaration made Turkey think that the parties were making progress towards a solution, and that the talks between Turkey and Armenia would support this process.²⁵ Since the developments provoked political discussions in Turkey about the 1915 events and Turkish-Armenian relations, the issue became a topic of domestic politics as much as foreign policy.²⁶

message Gül gave to Aliyev was that Armenia was willing to withdraw from the occupied territories. He noted, “that’s what I have seen in my meeting with Sargsyan.” Gül also stated that Armenia should withdraw from the territories of Azerbaijan and said that “refugees will return to their country, of course. The occupation will end.” He repeated that the Yerevan trip did not change Turkey’s political stand in respect to the situation in the Caucasus; on the contrary, he stressed that Turkey evaluated the solutions of the regional problems in the framework of Azerbaijan’s territorial integrity.

24 President Gül stated that he was very satisfied by Aliyev’s attitude and did not meet with any remonstrations. He expressed that, similar to Armenian President Sargsyan, Azerbaijan President also has a considerate optimism against his opponent. Gül said that “the disturbance of the stability in Caucasus should be pacified immediately, otherwise, the integrity of Caucasus will be challenged” and stated that, fortunately, both Armenia and Azerbaijan adopt confident attitudes in regard to the solutions of the problems.

25 For the letter of agreement see, “Declaration between the Republic of Azerbaijan, the Republic of Armenia and the Russian Federation”

<http://archive.kremlin.ru/eng/text/docs/2008/11/208708.shtml>; “Armenia, Azerbaijan Sign Joint Declaration Over Nagorno-Karabakh,” *Radio Free Europe/Radio Liberty*, November 2, 2008. http://www.rferl.org/content/Kremlin_Hosts_Peace_Talks_Over_NagornoKarabakh/1337420.html; Fuller, Liz. “Moscow Declaration’ A Victory for Armenia.” *Radio Free Europe/Radio Liberty*, November 3, 2008.

http://www.rferl.org/content/Moscow_Declaration_A_Victory_For_Armenia/1337592.html.

26 The most apparent and intense debate of this period was generated in the framework of “Armenian Apology Campaign.” On the one hand, more than 200 signatories, including academicians, journalists, authors, and ambassadors, have initiated a petition campaign named “Armenian Apology Campaign.” On the other hand, a group of reactionists, including approximately 50 retired ambassadors, harshly criticized this campaign: “Büyükelçiler isyan etti.” *Hürriyet*, December 16, 2008. In spite of the harsh criticisms of the opposition groups, certain positive developments have also been experienced. For example; a growing number of Armenian tourists come to Turkey; Turkey

Following these visits and the CSCP summit held in Helsinki in December, high-level talks between Turkey and Armenia became frequent.²⁷ During the talks, which were mediated by Switzerland, the grounds of Turkish-Armenian normalization were reviewed and the course of this process was addressed. The comment “normalization of Turkish-Armenian relations are not a dream anymore” was made by national and international newsmakers at every stage of this process, instilling the public on both sides with hope, although sparking debate as well. Turkey, taking Azerbaijan’s reservations into consideration, informed Baku about all meetings and tried to include Azerbaijan into the process through bringing the meetings onto a trilateral level in certain ways. This situation is a sign of Turkey’s awareness about the delicacy that the developments would spawn in the Caucasus. Ankara anticipated that the normalization between Turkey and Armenia would contribute to the resolution of Nagorno-Karabakh issue and Armenia’s withdrawal from occupied territories. It should be noted that these developments correspond with the assessments of Davutoğlu which he made about Nagorno-Karabakh and the policies that Turkey is required to adopt in his book *Stratejik Derinlik (Strategic Depth)*. Yet another cause of foreign policy concerns for Turkey is the lobbying activity of the Armenian diaspora aimed at urging parliaments to adopt documents in which the 1915 events are described as “genocide.” The course and density of the lobbying traffic show parallelism with April 24, namely a targeted date of these activities.²⁸ What makes 2009 different from the previous years is the attitude of Barack H. Obama, who assumed the presidency in the US. Obama’s political stance, which stands close to Armenian arguments, contains elements that urge Turkey to pursue active policies about rapprochement with Armenia.

In addition to President Obama’s speech that he gave at the Grand National Assembly during his official visit to Turkey, his first transoceanic visit on April 5-6,

condoned illegal Armenian labor force in Turkey; even though indirect, the trade volume between Armenia and Turkey has increased; interactions in cultural-academic fields have become frequent.

27 For example; then-Foreign Minister Ali Babacan held a meeting with the Foreign Ministers of Azerbaijan and Armenia on September 26; Babacan and Nalbandian came together on the occasion of BSEC summit held in Istanbul on November 24; a meeting was held in Helsinki on December 4; in addition to the Ministers of Foreign Affairs, Erdoğan conducted a meeting with Sargsyan in Davos at the end of January; a meeting was held in Munich on the occasion of International Security Conference in February; Babacan visited Yerevan on April 16 to attend BSEC summit.

28 Up until now, “Genocide bills” have been approved by the parliaments of 21 countries: Argentina, Armenia, Belgium, Canada, Chile, Greek Cypriot administration of Southern Cyprus, France, Germany, Greece, Italy, Lebanon, Lithuania, Netherlands, Poland, Russia, Slovakia, Sweden, Switzerland, Uruguay, Vatican and Venezuela. In the USA, the genocide bill has been brought on the agenda several times.

2009, his various statements at press conferences have aroused some suspicion in Turkish public opinion about the president's April 24 statement.²⁹ In this period, it was argued that Turkey was going to open the Armenian border as a gesture during Obama's visit. However, Prime Minister Erdoğan decisively stated that it is impossible to open the border unless some steps are taken toward the resolution of the Karabakh issue and Armenia withdraws from occupied Azerbaijani territories. Since then, Turkey's political stance, clearly expressed in Erdoğan's statement, has not changed. During the period between Obama's April 6 visit until April 24, a strained atmosphere prevailed, both because of the uncertainty of the language that President Obama was going to use in his April 24 statement and the ambiguities surrounding the Turkey-Armenia initiative. This atmosphere entered a new dimension on April 22, when the Ministries of Foreign Affairs of the Republic of Armenia, the Republic of Turkey and the Swiss Federal Department of Foreign Affairs issued a joint statement announcing that a road map of normalizing relations has been identified. The statements announced that:

“Turkey and Armenia, together with Switzerland as mediator, have been working intensively with a view to normalizing their bilateral relations and developing them in a spirit of good-neighborliness, and mutual respect, and thus to promoting peace, security and stability in the whole region.

The two parties have achieved tangible progress and mutual understanding in this process and they have agreed on a comprehensive framework for the normalization of their bilateral relations in a mutually satisfactory manner. In this context, a road-map has been identified.

This agreed basis provides a positive prospect for the on-going process.”³⁰

Although the details of the “Road Map” were not clarified in the announcement, it has been thought that the map involved the steps towards resolution of the Turkey-Armenia and Azerbaijan-Armenia issues. The announcement was released at midnight, its timing directly related to the approaching April 24. As a result, in his annual commemoration statement, President Obama avoided using the word “genocide” and pronounced the Armenian “Meds Yeghern” word which means

29 “Remarks by President Obama to the Turkish Parliament.” April 6, 2009, http://www.whitehouse.gov/the_press_office/Remarks-By-President-Obama-To-The-Turkish-Parliament/

30 “Joint Statement of The Ministries of Foreign Affairs of The Republic of Turkey, The Republic of Armenia and The Swiss Federal Department of Foreign Affairs.” No: 56, April 22, 2009. http://www.mfa.gov.tr/no_-56_-22-april-2009_-press-release-regarding-the-turkish-armenian-relations.en.mfa

“The Great Calamity.” Obama’s words did not satisfy the Armenian diaspora and provoked various thoughts and discussions in Turkey.³¹

Observations indicate that Azerbaijan feels as uncomfortable about the developments as the Armenian diaspora does. The likelihood of an obligation that may arise from the “Road Map,” which compels Turkey to open the border before a solution is provided about Nagorno-Karabakh issue, provoked a reaction in Azerbaijan. President Gül, in order to reassure and calm Azerbaijan, telephoned Ilham Aliyev and emphasized the “significance of traditional sympathy, solidarity and cooperation between two countries.” He reaffirmed that this development would contribute to the stability and welfare of the region. In spite of this clarification, relations became strained and the debates got tougher. In order to settle the reactions, Prime Minister Erdoğan paid an official visit to Azerbaijan on May 13. Following the private meeting with Aliyev, Erdoğan, in the speech he delivered in the Azerbaijani parliament, said that Turkey’s policies on Nagorno-Karabakh issue had not changed and strongly emphasized the “exact continuity” of the “one nation, two states” approach. He stressed that the opening of the Armenian border depended on the resolution of the Nagorno-Karabakh issue and said “unless the occupation ends, opening the borders will be unlikely.”³² Since the most emphasized phenomenon had been solidarity and fraternity, and Erdoğan tied the border’s opening to the consequence of Aliyev-Sargsyan meetings, some suspicions came up about the applicability and sincerity of the “Road Map” discourse. Although Azerbaijan proclaimed that it was satisfied and “no suspicion remained among the Azerbaijani public,” the course of events proved that the “issue” had not been clarified.³³ From the announcement of the “Road Map” until the signing of the protocols, Turkey constantly highlighted that “Azerbaijan should trust Turkey.” However, evidence shows that Azerbaijan was

31 “Statement of President Barack Obama on Armenian Remembrance Day.” 24 Nisan 2009, http://www.whitehouse.gov/the_press_office/Statement-of-President-Barack-Obama-on-Armenian-Remembrance-Day; Kınıklıoğlu, Suat. “Meds Yeghern.” *Zaman*, April 27, 2008; Dişli, Fatma. “Obama and Meds Yeghern.” *Zaman*, April 27, 2008; Ekşi, Oktay. “Laf Cambazı”, *Hürriyet*, April 25, 2009; Çandar, Cengiz. “Büyük Felakette Buluşma: Obama, 30 Bin, Hrant...” *Hürriyet*, April 25, 2009.

32 “Başbakan Erdoğan Bakü’de.” *Sabah*, May 13, 2009; “Prime Minister Erdoğan Puts Baku’s Armenia Concerns Rest”, *Today’s Zaman*, May 14, 2009.

33 Erdoğan, in the speech he delivered at the Parliament, said “Recently, our fraternity is being attacked by certain lies; Turkey would never turn its back to the Nagorno-Karabakh issue.” He emphasized that Turkey’s recent silence about the Armenian opening is caused by the nature of diplomacy and indicated that Azerbaijan should trust Turkey. Karan, Ceyda. “Aliyev Şüphem Kalmadı, İçim Rahat.” *Radikal*, May 14, 2009, <http://www.radikal.com.tr/Default.aspx?aType=RadikalYazarYazisi&ArticleID=935831&Yazar=CEYDA KARAN&Date=14.05.2009&CategoryID=100>

not really satisfied in one way or another. During this time, issues that were not expressed loudly in previous periods began to be raised: they centred around subjects like the Azerbaijani bind on Turkey's Caucasus policy, the existence of both countries' own interests and the pricing of natural gas. This situation indicates that the two parties shifted their grounds in their mutual relationship.

Yet another consequence of the parties' agreement on a road map is the impact seen in Armenia. Apart from the strong reaction of the diaspora, the agreement also upset the balance of Armenia's domestic affairs and brought about a large-scale policy discussion. The strongest reaction in domestic politics has been the withdrawal of the Armenian Revolutionary Federation's (ARF) from the government coalition on April 27.

The ambiguous content of the "road map" was clarified by two protocols which were announced on August 31. The foreign ministries of Turkey, Armenia and Switzerland simultaneously declared that the two parties have initialized two separate protocols.³⁴ The declarations stated that the parties initialized the protocols as part of endeavours pursued under the mediation of Switzerland. The parties announced that they have agreed on initiating domestic political consultations with respect to the "Protocol on the Establishment of Diplomatic Relations" and the "Protocol on the Development of Bilateral Relations." The announcement concluded with a sentence which emphasized that the normalization of bilateral relations would contribute to the peace and stability in the region, and Turkey and Armenia, with the assistance of Switzerland, were determined to pursue their joint efforts.

The protocols detail the definition of normalization between the two countries and explain the time schedule of the steps that need to be taken. The announcement indicated that the protocols proposed a general framework in order to achieve normalization within a reasonable time frame and specified that political consultations would be completed in six weeks. Following this process, the protocols would be submitted to the parliaments of the two countries for ratification. Besides, the announcement stated that the parties were expected to venture to complete the ratification process promptly and adequately in their legal and constitutional procedure. In addition to that, protocols also revealed the calendar that the two countries would have to follow after the ratification by the parliaments.³⁵

34 Press Release of The Ministries of Foreign Affairs of The Republic of Turkey, The Republic of Armenia and The Swiss Federal Department of Foreign Affairs. No: 153, August 31, 2009. http://www.mfa.gov.tr/no_-153-turkiye-cumhuriyeti-ve-ermenistan-cumhuriyeti-disisleri-bakanliklari-ile.en.mfa (Accessed on September 1, 2009)

35 See, "Protocol on the Establishment of Diplomatic Relations Between the Republic of Armenia

The “Protocol on the Development of Bilateral Relations” reconfirmed the parties’ commitment, in their bilateral and international relations, to ensure respect for the principles of equality, sovereignty, non-intervention in internal affairs of the other states, territorial integrity and inviolability of frontiers. The Protocol also indicated that the parties confirmed the mutual recognition of the existing border between the two countries as defined by the relevant treaties of international law. According to Turkey, this article meant that Armenia officially recognized the border between two countries. In the “Protocol on the Development of Bilateral Relations” the common borders were projected to be opened within two months after the entry of this protocol into force. The protocol also projected to prepare the working modalities of the intergovernmental commission and its sub-commissions, a working group headed by the two Ministers of Foreign Affairs to be created two months after the day following the entry of this protocol into force. According to the timetable, the intergovernmental commission and its sub-commissions were planned to organize their first meeting immediately after the adoption of the working modalities. In addition, the protocol also projected to operate sub-commissions regarding political consultation, transport, communications, energy infrastructure and networks, legal matters, science and education, trade, tourism, and economic cooperation, historical dimension, and environmental issues.

Among these commissions, the sub-commission on international history was the most striking one. The parties stated that this commission was intended to implement a dialogue on the historical dimension with the aim to restore mutual trust between the two nations, including an impartial and scientific examination of the historical records and archives to define existing problems and formulate recommendations. It has been emphasized that representatives from Turkey, Armenia and Switzerland, together with other international experts, would take part in the dialogue. The Turkish side perceived this dialogue as a mechanism which would prevent the 1915 events from being regarded as a political issue and enable them to be assessed by historians; on the other hand, the Armenian side emphasized that the commission would not research the nature of the 1915 events but would rather explore the traces of Armenian presence in Anatolia. The course of events and the signing process clearly showed how differently the parties evaluated the protocols.

Since Nagorno-Karabakh was not mentioned in the protocols, the discontent between Azerbaijan and Turkey, which was said to be settled in May, revived without delay. The announcement of the protocols caused great dissatisfaction among

and the Republic Of Turkey” and “Protocol on the Development of Bilateral Relations Between the Republic of Armenia and the Republic of Turkey.”

the Azerbaijani public. The Foreign Ministry of Azerbaijan announced that the opening of the border before Armenia ends occupation was not compatible with the interests of Baku.³⁶ Although Foreign Minister Davutoğlu said that the Azerbaijani government had been informed in every respect and Baku should trust Turkey's steps, Aliyev refused to attend the UN Alliance of Civilizations summit which was held in Istanbul on September 6-7. Aliyev's attitude was appraised as a reaction to the process.³⁷

The protocols were signed by the Foreign Ministers of Turkey and Armenia in Zurich, Switzerland on October 10, although great debates prevailed in both countries and Armenian diaspora with Azerbaijan's strong reaction.³⁸ Since the Treaty of Kars, these protocols have been the first documents that the two countries bilaterally signed. However, it could not be said that the signatures were appended smoothly. Certain statements in the texts of speeches that the parties planned to deliver after the ceremony induced a crisis, resolved with the mediation of the foreign ministers of the US and Switzerland.³⁹ The ensuing process has not been as swift and smooth as it was expected either.

After both parties started the ratification process in conformity with their own legal and constitutional procedures, the protocols were brought before the Grand National Assembly of Turkey by the Prime Ministry on October 21. The Turkish government believed that these protocols were documents which would shape history and strengthen the Treaty of Lausanne.⁴⁰ According to Turkey, the protocols

36 "Azerbaycan'ın Çıkarlarına Aykırı." *Haber Türk*, September 2, 2009, p.15; Bardakçı, Murat. "Sırada Şimdi Karabağ Kazığı mı Var?" *Haber Türk*, September 2, 2009. – P.9.

37 "Sadece Türk-Ermeni Sınırı Değil Azeri-Ermeni Sınırı da Açılacak." *Radikal*, September 2, 2009. – P.13; "Ankara'dan Bakü'ye: Hiçbir Süreç Azerbaycan Dostluğundan Önemli Değil." *Sabah*, September 2, 2009. – P.19.

38 In addition to the foreign ministers of the US, France, and Switzerland, the foreign minister of Slovenia as the president of the EU Council of Ministers and EU High Representative for Foreign Affairs and Security Javier Solana attended to the "historic" signing ceremony. The large scope of the attendance proved the importance that the world community attached to the event.

39 On the one hand, Armenian Minister of Foreign Affairs Nalbandyan planned to emphasize that the protocols could not be linked with the Nagorno-Karabakh issue and would be signed without any prerequisites. On the other hand, Turkish Foreign Minister Ahmet Davutoğlu planned to state that the protocols would only be implemented after the Nagorno-Karabakh issue would have been solved. Besides, the parties' perceptions about the history commission also caused trouble. In the end, the protocols were agreed to be directly signed without any speeches, except for a brief talk by the foreign minister of Switzerland, and thereby, the signatures were appended with a 3-hour delay.

40 For the text of Ahmet Davutoğlu's speech he delivered in the Grand National Assembly of Turkey see: "Ermeni Protokolü Meclis'te." *Hürriyet*, October 21, 2009.

referred to the Treaties of Moscow and Kars, in which the Turkey-Armenia borders were settled, and thereby reconfirmed the Turkish-Armenian common border. As Davutoğlu asserted, by means of these protocols, “Armenia also confirms that any claims about border disputes with Armenia or Armenia’s territorial claims become legally invalid.” In this context, the protocols were aimed at “reshaping the one-sided memory which is biased against Turkey” and constituting a just memory. While this was being worked on, Azerbaijan was being treated delicately and given importance. Turkey, in every phase of the process, emphasized that the resolution of Nagorno-Karabakh issue did not lie beyond the scope of this process. Such explanations did not affect the normalization process that was projected by the protocols in a positive way.⁴¹ As a result, the reaction of Azerbaijan could not be eradicated.⁴²

The protocols sparked certain debates in Armenia as well. Apart from the dispute between the government and opposition, the diaspora also criticized the protocols severely. The protocols, by force of the procedure in Armenia, have been waiting in the Armenian parliament to be put onto the agenda after being evaluated and approved by the Armenian Constitutional Court.

CONCLUSION

Observations indicate that Turkey’s Caucasus policy, which it attempted to establish after the collapse of the Soviet Union, has shown some vitality after August 2008. This activation has been associated with the proactive and problem-solving new foreign policy discourse which has become prominent with the “zero problems with neighbours” statement. The present situation shows that recent openings

41 Davutoğlu, in the speech he delivered at the session of the parliament, said “The territorial integrity of Azerbaijan is as valuable as our territorial integrity”; on the other hand, the criticisms of the opposition were shaped on the basis of Nagorno-Karabakh issue. Şükrü Elekdag, who has addressed a speech in behalf of Republican People’s Party (CHP), argued that since the protocols were brought into the Assembly before a resolution was reached on the Nagorno-Karabakh issue, the timing was wrong. Oktay Vural, in a speech on behalf of the Nationalist Movement Party (MHP), stated that his party opposed the establishment of diplomatic relations with Armenia unless this country gives up its hostile policy and actions that challenge the territorial integrity of Turkey. He added that his party also opposed the opening of the borders before the occupation in Azerbaijani territories is ended. *Ibid.*

42 After Sargsyan announced that he would be present at the football match between Turkish-Armenian national teams in Bursa on October 14, forbidding the audience to bring Azerbaijani flags into the stadium generated a new tension. When 12 flagpoles at the Turkish Martyr’s Cemetery in Baku were ripped out, and the Turkish flag in front of the Azerbaijani Embassy Religious Services Consultancy was hauled down, Turkey sent a diplomatic note to Azerbaijan. The tension between the two countries shifted into a new dimension; efforts to appease it were made through high-level meetings.

include routines in the traditional line. Solving problems by peaceful means and dialogue through the processes that comprise all parties is one of these routines. The fundamental principle is protecting the territorial integrity of nations and providing the continuity of their independence. Turkey expects from all parties to seek solution for their problems in the context of this approach. It has been thought that permanent and healthy solutions for the problems in the region could only be found through regional initiatives such as the CSCP. Turkish foreign policy makers perceive Turkey as the unique Western actor who has balanced relations with Russia and is able to determine a vision for the countries of the region. It is also believed that the economic and commercial power of Turkey would accelerate and enhance this process.

In addition to the extent and depth of the disputes among regional countries, the nature of the problems and the influence of international actors prevent the solutions from being produced locally. Where the process that began after August 2008 is concerned, the current situation indicates that Azerbaijan keeps its prominent position for Turkey. The normalization process which was jointly initiated with Armenia was aimed at convincing Armenia to seek a compromise solution of regional issues and urge the diaspora to ease the pressure on Turkey. However, the current situation also shows that this policy does not contribute to the resolution of Nagorno-Karabakh issue and the prevention of initiatives on “genocide bills.”

At least where public debates are concerned, Turkey’s attitude disturbs Azerbaijan and thereby causes tension between these two countries. While there have been no successful outcomes in relations with Armenia, relations with Azerbaijan have also become troubled. During this process, relations with Georgia remained in the background, though Georgia has a central place in Caucasus politics. Georgia, without doubt, holds the central position in Turkey’s Caucasus policy. However, the impression that Turkish diplomacy has given weight to the normalization with Armenia after August 2008, created the perception that Georgia was pushed into the background. It is also evident that Turkey, with respect to the solution of Abkhazia and South Ossetia issues, did not adopt an attitude that was essentially different from the previous periods. This situation occasionally causes trouble with Tbilisi and Abkhazia as well. In this respect, some incidents draw attention, such as the seizure of Turkish ships on their way to Abkhazia and the arrest of the crew, and the avoidance of the issue of Meskhetian Turks (Ahiska Turks).

Among these complicated relationships, the active foreign policy in Caucasus, which was initiated by Turkey under the name of “football diplomacy,” has not brought Turkey a step further from the pre-2008 period.

DRIFTING APART? THE WEST AND SOUTH CAUCASUS IN 2009¹

By Vladimir D. Shkolnikov²

INTRODUCTION: EXIT BUSH, ENTER OBAMA

The year 2009 was a year of both change and continuity in Western policies toward the countries of the South Caucasus. The Western policies toward the region were only partially influenced by developments in and around the South Caucasus. Rather, domestic changes in the US and the EU were the key factors behind modifications that took place regarding the West's foreign policy, including policy towards the South Caucasus.

The inauguration of Barack Obama as the 44th President of the United States had global ramifications. Partially it was because the new president represented a hope for change in the US domestic and foreign policies. Perhaps even more significantly, Obama's ascent marked the departure of an internationally unpopular George W. Bush and his team, who were seen as averse to multilateral action, responsible for starting a war in Iraq under a false pretext, and pursuing activities which they viewed as democracy promotion, but which many, including the EU, saw as naïve and destabilizing. More specifically in the South Caucasus context, the Bush administration was seen as giving unconditional and uncritical support to Georgian President Mikhail Saakashvili, including to Georgia's (as well as Ukraine's) ill-prepared bid for NATO membership, which may have contributed to antagonizing Russia and the ultimate start of the 2008 Russian-Georgia August War. Other Bush policies included the expanded competition with Russia on energy issues under the banner of diversification of energy sources to Europe. This, in particular, included providing political support to a speculative *Nabucco* oil pipeline, which assigned a significant role to Azerbaijan as a source country. Given that the *Nabucco* project seemed to lack the requisite backing of the private sector, and came into direct competition

1 This paper was published by the Caucasus Institute in Russian as: Shkolnikov, Vladimir. "Zapad i Yuzhny Kavkaz v 2009 g.: otdalenie?" *Kavkaz – 2009. Yezhegodnik Instituta Kavkaza* ("The West and South Caucasus in 2009: Drifting Apart?" *Caucasus 2009. CI Yearbook*). Ed. Alexander Iskandaryan. – Yerevan: 2011 (in Russian). – Pp. 152-171.

2 At the time of writing of this paper, the author was an independent analyst based in Warsaw, Poland.

with Russia's *South Stream* project, Bush policies in the energy sphere were seen by some policy circles in the EU and in Russia as provocative.

Writing in a different context, a European observer has summarized Bush's foreign policies and the realities inherited by the Obama Administration as follows: "The Bush administration's signature attempts to harmonize interests and values in foreign policy – the invasion and occupation of Iraq – has been a failure mainly because the interest (counter-proliferation) was illusory and the value (democracy promotion) unavailing. One consequence has been the palpable desire to a more realist foreign policy tailored to vital interests and sceptical of grand ideological solutions. Another has been the recognition that America's unipolar moment has passed – or has been squandered – and that US policy therefore must be implemented with a lighter touch."³

It was argued by this author in the *Caucasus Yearbook* of last year that in light of the US's shift of interest and priorities, and due to the decline in the US reputation and the European Union's energetic diplomacy in the aftermath of the Russian-Georgian war, the EU has become an indispensable actor in the Caucasus.⁴ The EU, however, also had its own domestic distractions that kept it from a greater focus on foreign policy. These, first and foremost, included the process of referenda and the beginning of eventual implementation of the Lisbon Treaty, which, historically, created the position of the European Council's President and High Representative for Foreign and Security Policy of the European Union (commonly referred to as "EU's foreign minister"). These changes led to tactical delays due to the "reshuffling of chairs" in the Brussels foreign policy apparatus and uncertainty over the transition of foreign policy institutions.

In short, 2009 was a year when two main international actors had plenty on their plates. The US and European leaders had to deal with the global economic crisis. And, on the foreign policy side, the new US president and European policymakers had among their priorities the continuing military presence of the US in Iraq and the US-led NATO contingent in Afghanistan, active Russian energy policy on both *North Stream* and *South Stream* directions, as well as ongoing concerns with the Middle East, and Iran's nuclear program. Also, due to the US "reset" of relations

3 Stevenson, Jonathan. "African American." *Survival*, Vol. 51, No.1, February-March 2009. – Pp. 251-252.

4 Shkolnikov, Vladimir. "2008 god: neobratimoe vovlechenie Evropy v dela Kavkaza?" *Kavkaz – 2008. Yezhegodnik Instituta Kavkaza* ("Europe and the Caucasus in 2008: The year of irreversible engagement?" *Caucasus Yearbook 2008*). Ed. Alexander Iskandaryan.– CI, Yerevan, 2010 (in Russian). – Pp. 188-201.

with Russia, and importantly for the region, the gradual absorption of the lessons of the 2008 August War by the West, the South Caucasus naturally moved to the periphery of Western foreign policy. However, some evolving trends in the West's relations with the countries of the region deserve attention. In addition, an analysis of new realities in these relations and what these new realities may imply for the countries of Southern Caucasus is in order.

DEALING WITH THE AFTERMATH OF THE 2008 AUGUST WAR AND BUSH'S LEGACY

The relationship with Georgia arguably represented one of the most serious over-stretches of the Bush administration. As one observer of Georgia and the US policy towards that country remarks, "one could be forgiven, if one spent a lot of time in Washington, for thinking that the official name of the country was 'the Strategically Vital Republic of Georgia.'"⁵ In recent years, the EU has taken a more clear-eyed view towards Georgia, especially in light of questionable actions of Saakashvili's administration toward the political opposition and independent media. In addition, Saakashvili's close relationship with the internationally unpopular George W. Bush was seen as a liability by most European leaders who were preparing for a fresh start with Bush's popular successor.

The Bush Administration decided to leave its stamp on US-Georgia relations in its last days by signing on January 9, 2009 the US-Georgia Strategic Partnership Charter, which in particular seemed to emphasize the democratic nature of Georgia's government and Georgia's NATO candidacy; that is, notions which were viewed in Europe with a high degree of scepticism.⁶ When US Vice President Joseph Biden arrived in Georgia in late July 2009, Georgian President Saakashvili had reasons to expect the worst from this visit due to his closeness to former President Bush and Obama's Republican challenger in the 2008 US Elections, Arizona Senator John McCain, who hurriedly sided with the Georgians and their (untruthful, according to the EU-commissioned Tagliavini Report) narrative during the August war. However, the US vice president gave Saakashvili a show of support, which did not reach the same level of the Bush Administration, but was sufficient to irritate

5 Mitchell, Lincoln. "Georgia's Story: Competing Narratives since the War." *Survival*, vol. 51, no. 4, August–September 2009. – P. 88.

6 United States-Georgia Charter on Strategic Partnership. 9 January 2009.

<http://www.america.gov/st/texttrans-english/2009/January/20090109145313eaifas0.2139093.html>

Russia. Yet Biden sounded notes of veiled criticism of Georgia's domestic arrangements, calling for more parliamentary powers and also made a point to meet with Saakashvili's political opponents.⁷

In the aftermath of the Georgian War, in December 2008, the EU commissioned a report on the beginning of the war and appointed an experienced Russia and Georgia "hand," the former head of the United Nations Observer Mission to Georgia Heidi Tagliavini, an accomplished Swiss diplomat, to head the group of scholars and international lawyers writing the report. "The Tagliavini Report," a weighty three-volume study, was published in September 2009.⁸ Its main conclusions were unsurprising to those who followed the build-up to the war with a close and unbiased eye. The report was not meant to result in any action, but the European Parliament took it up as a subject of debate. More importantly, the Tagliavini Report defined the EU's understanding of what happened in the summer between Russia and Georgia. Tagliavini's International Commission, which was careful to disavow any functions of a tribunal, made key assessments of actions of Russia and Georgia with regard to the international law. The Tagliavini Report contained the following five important findings:⁹

1. *The use of force by Georgia in South Ossetia, beginning with the shelling of Tskhinvali during the night of 7/8 August 2008, was not justifiable under international law.* The report noted that "even if it was assumed that Georgia was repelling an attack, e.g. in response to South Ossetian attacks against Georgian populated 23 villages in the region, according to international law, its armed response would have to be both necessary and proportional. It is not possible to accept that the shelling of Tskhinvali during much of the night with GRAD multiple rocket launchers (MRLS) and heavy artillery would satisfy the requirements of having been necessary and proportionate in order to defend those villages."
2. While the Tagliavini Report absolved South Ossetian forces of any blame in purely defensive action (i.e., during the first stage of the conflict), it stated that "any operations of South Ossetian forces outside of the purpose of repelling the Georgian armed attack, in particular *acts perpetrated against ethnic Georgians inside and outside South Ossetia, must be considered as having violated International Humanitarian Law and in many cases also Human Rights Law.*"

7 Barry, Ellen. "Georgia's Leader Escapes Damage in Biden Visit." *The New York Times*, July 26, 2009.

8 *Report of the Independent International Fact-Finding Mission on the Conflict in Georgia.* <http://www.ceiig.ch/Report.html>

9 *Ibid.* Volume 1. – Pp. 22-27. http://www.ceiig.ch/pdf/IIFFMCG_Volume_1.pdf

3. Most significantly, the Tagliavini Report dispels the narrative that the Georgian side actively advanced in the Western media, in particular on CNN, including by President Saakashvili personally, that Georgia's attack on Tskhinvali was necessary to repel an impending Russian attack and found the Georgian actions against the Russian peacekeepers during the initial stages of the conflict illegal. The report plainly states, that "there was no ongoing armed attack by Russia before the start of the Georgian operation. Georgian claims of a large-scale presence of Russian armed forces in South Ossetia prior to the Georgian offensive on 7/8 August could not be substantiated by the Mission. It could also not be verified that Russia was on the verge of such a major attack, in spite of certain elements and equipment having been made readily available. There is also no evidence to support any claims that Russian peacekeeping units in South Ossetia were in flagrant breach of their obligations under relevant international agreements such as the Sochi Agreement and thus may have forfeited their international legal status. Consequently, *the use of force by Georgia against Russian peacekeeping forces in Tskhinvali in the night of 7/8 August 2008 was contrary to international law.*"
4. Russia's actions were divided in the report into two phases: first, the immediate reaction in order to defend Russian peacekeepers, and second, the invasion of Georgia by Russian armed forces reaching far beyond the administrative boundary of South Ossetia. The Report states: "in the first instance, there seems to be little doubt that if the Russian peacekeepers were attacked, Russia had the right to defend them using military means proportionate to the attack. Hence the Russian use of force for defensive purposes during the first phase of the conflict would be legal. On the second item, ... *much of the Russian military action went far beyond the reasonable limits of defence.* ... Furthermore, continued destruction which came after the ceasefire agreement was not justifiable by any means. It follows from this that insofar as such extended Russian military action reaching out into Georgia was conducted in violation of international law, Georgian military forces were acting in legitimate self-defence under Article 51 of the UN Charter. In a matter of a very few days, the pattern of legitimate and illegitimate military action had thus turned around between the two main actors Georgia and Russia."
5. Russia's claims of its action as a "humanitarian intervention" were not recognized and *Russia's actions outside of South Ossetia (including in Abkhazia) were found to be outside of the international law.*

Therefore, the report apportioned blame to both sides. Georgia violated international law in the August War's initial stages, while Russia violated it after pushing

back the Georgian military from South Ossetia. Politically, however, the report was more damaging to Georgia, personally to President Saakashvili, and to his most ardent Western backers. The narrative of brave Georgia falling victim to an aggression to its large neighbour was essentially dismissed and found to be a myth. In fact, the report's findings suggest that Russia missed an opportunity to fully comply with international law by simply stopping at the established boundaries of South Ossetia and not pushing its forces deep into Georgian territory, which would have placed Saakashvili in a difficult position, at least from the perspective of international law. The report also rejected the Russian narrative of its actions necessary for genocide prevention as a stretch. In the event, the Tagliavini Report added many colours into the black-and-white picture of aggressive Russia attacking plucky democratic Georgia, and the report's findings put Saakashvili's backers in the West and, in particular, in the US, on the defensive.

The Tagliavini Report made the greatest impact in Europe, which was eager to repair relations with Russia, mirroring Washington's "reset" of its relations with Moscow. The conclusions of the Tagliavini Report implied that Saakashvili was intentionally making false statements on CNN and other international media outlets during the hot days of August 2008, thus making it easier for the EU, which commissioned the report, to distance itself from the Georgian leader. But even in the US, despite the warm atmosphere of the Biden visit to Georgia, the underlying logic, or rather mythology, of US-Georgia relations of the Bush era was breaking down. The new US Administration clearly had little to gain from continuing to treat the flawed Georgian polity as a post-Soviet "beacon of democracy" *a la* Bush. While not formally siding with the findings of the Tagliavini Report, it could not but understand that the August War's origins had the marks of Georgia's culpability. It also saw the question of NATO enlargement in more realist terms, understanding that NATO could simply not commit to collective defence of Georgia. In addition, the perceived need to repair relations with Russia played its role. The US support to Georgia under Bush was a strong irritant to bilateral US-Russian relations, and the Obama administration was carefully working to diffuse this irritation, while not giving Russia signs that it was abandoning Georgia altogether. The relationship between the Washington and Tbilisi is still strong, and enshrined in the US-Georgian Strategic Partnership Charter. However, it is losing its ideological embellishments as well as the symbolism associated with a strong personal relationship between the presidents of the two countries.

Hence, the major change from 2008 to 2009 was the trend of convergence in US and EU policies towards Georgia. It is not that US policy necessarily became more

“European”; it simply became less “romantic,” and, thus, could not but move towards the EU’s views.¹⁰ The appointment of the new US ambassador to Tbilisi was symbolic of this new approach. Ambassador John Bass has a light record of the work in the region. He arrived in Tbilisi only some nine months after Obama’s inauguration, giving an impression that Washington felt that filling an ambassadorial post in Tbilisi was among its foreign policy priorities.

The EU and the US also had to work close together on other components of the fallout of the war. Both tried in vain to overcome the Russian veto and to keep open the OSCE Mission in Georgia and the United Nations Observer Mission to Georgia (UNOMIG). The Greek Chairmanship of the OSCE made a strong effort to find a formula that would accommodate both the Russian recognition of Abkhazia’s and South Ossetia’s independence and the West’s steadfast refusal to recognize the independence of these territories. In the end, the OSCE and the UN had to close their presences in Georgia, leaving on the ground only the EU observer mission which has a far more limited mandate with no access to Abkhazia or South Ossetia.

The US and the EU have to work closer together in the framework of the Geneva talks, the product of the Medvedev-Sarkozy peace agreements. In 2009, the Geneva format that brings together representative of Georgia, Russia, the breakaway entities of Abkhazia and South Ossetia, the EU, the US, along with the UN and the OSCE has been mostly successful so far as it fleshed out the differences between the sides. After the eighth round of the Geneva talks that took place in November 2009, some progress was reported as a result of regular meetings of so-called Incident Prevention and Response Mechanisms, especially in Abkhazia.¹¹ As the EU monitoring mission remains the only legitimate international mission in Georgia, and as the Geneva discussions are destined to continue for the foreseeable future, the EU and the US are destined to work together on Georgia. This represents a shift from the situation of some years ago when even senior EU diplomats in Tbilisi complained of the failure of the US to share information with its European colleagues.

The West also had to expend political and diplomatic capital on warning third countries to refrain from recognizing the independence of the breakaway territories. On this front, the US also found that it needed EU’s help. For example, in absence of any leverage on Belarus, which is under Washington’s sanctions, the US also had

10 The author would like to give credit for the introduction of the adjective “romantic” in analysis of the US policy towards Shevardnadze’s and then Saakashvili’s Georgia to the doyen of Georgian strategic analysts, Alexander Rondeli.

11 Press Statement, United States Delegation to the Geneva Discussions, November 11, 2009. <http://geneva.usmission.gov/2009/11/11/geneva-discussions/>

to count on the EU's combination of sticks and carrots to be applied on Belarus's charismatic strongman, Aleksandr Lukashenko, in order to thwart off recognition of Abkhazia's and South Ossetia's independence by Minsk.¹²

The changing character of US relations with Georgia was also underscored by the increasing number of visits to Washington by the Georgian opposition, which, under the Bush Administration, had no audience in the US even among the non-governmental actors. Ultimately, Georgia may benefit from closing the gap between the policies of Brussels and Washington. A more critical U.S. approach, along the lines of the EU, should, for example, push Tbilisi into the direction of making real rather declaratory democratic reforms and taking a more sober inward look as well as realistic assessment of its own strategic value. In the words of a U.S. expert who spent some time in Georgia,

[Georgia] would be better served ... by a strategy that recognizes the new currents in US policy and establishes a new narrative for why the United States should support Georgia. ... The new narrative needs to be more modest in its substance and goals. It is unlikely that the extraordinary level of political and financial support for Georgia from Washington will remain in place indefinitely, and therefore the new narrative should abandon the idea that Georgia will, or should, survive as a highly subsidized client of the United States. A more realistic Georgia narrative is certain to be less exciting than the old one, and is unlikely to engender the kind of close cooperation the country enjoyed during the Bush years. But it will have considerably more staying power and make it possible for Georgia to position itself in a way that is more rational and more in tune to the new realities, and realism, in Washington. The real risk for Georgia is that if it does not take action to change the narrative itself, US perceptions will evolve beyond Georgia's control and a less favorable view will triumph.¹³

In short, the West's policy in 2009 could be summarized in two simple statements. First, there is continuity in support for Georgia in terms of its security, territorial integrity and democratic aspirations. Second, this support is no longer necessarily synonymous, even in the United States, with the support of President Saakashvili personally and his extravagant claims about Georgia's progress since the

12 Castle, Steven. "EU warns Belarus not to recognize Georgian separatist regions." *The New York Times*, December 3, 2009.

13 Mitchell, Lincoln. "Georgia's Story: Competing Narratives since the War." *Survival*: vol. 51, no. 4, August–September 2009. – Pp. 98-99.

“Rose Revolution” and his self-serving presentation on the origins and causes of the 2008 August War. In this way, the more realistic and less personality-driven Western policy has some potential to encourage genuine political reform in Georgia.

ARMENIA’S RELATIONS WITH THE WEST: TOWARDS THE CENTER OF ATTENTION?

If Georgia lost some of its luster in Washington, issues connected with Armenia have gained a slightly higher role in the Obama administration’s foreign policy than that in that of his predecessor. As a presidential candidate, Barack Obama promised to work towards recognition of the tragic events of 1915 as Armenian genocide. As an elected president, however, he fell short on this promise. However, his administration intensified the support for the process of Armenian-Turkish rapprochement as well as continuing to fulfill its role as a co-chair of the OSCE Minsk Group, trying to keep the momentum engendered by the more frequent meetings between the presidents of Armenia and Azerbaijan. On the other hand, Armenia lost a portion of the US assistance when in June 2009, in an unusual and principled move, the board of the Millennium Challenge Corporation (MCC) decided not to resume funding for any further road construction and rehabilitation under the \$236 million Millennium Challenge Account (MCA) compact, due to concerns about the status of democratic governance in Armenia.

Armenia and the Armenian-American community had high hopes that President Obama would do what presidential candidate Obama promised and recognize the 1915 slaughter of thousands of Armenians by Ottoman Turks as genocide.¹⁴ However, similar to Presidents Clinton and George W. Bush who reneged on similar campaign promises once they assumed the Oval Office, he found that the strategic relationship with Turkey would be seriously damaged if he were to pursue this course. Instead he (or his speechwriters) turned to the use of an Armenian expression *Meds Yeghem* (“Great Calamity”) in his statement on the occasion of Armenian Remembrance Day.¹⁵

Obama paid an official visit to Turkey early in his presidency, in April 2009, some

14 Watanabe, Teresa and Christi Parsons. “Marking Armenian genocide, many feel snubbed by Obama.” *The Los Angeles Times*, April 25, 2009.

15 *Statement of President Barack Obama on Armenian Remembrance Day*. The White House, Office of the Press Secretary, April 24, 2009.

http://www.whitehouse.gov/the_press_office/Statement-of-President-Barack-Obama-on-Armenian-Remembrance-Day.

two weeks before Armenian Remembrance Day. The visit was primarily aimed at mending the US's damaged relationship with the Muslim world, and during his stay in Turkey, the American president was extremely careful in his language, even though he claimed his views on the events of 1915 "did not change." Instead, Obama stressed his wish for the restoration of normal diplomatic relations and the opening of borders between Turkey and Armenia. Speaking at the Turkish Parliament, the US president stated,

An open border would return the Turkish and Armenian people to a peaceful and prosperous coexistence that would serve both of your nations. So I want you to know that the United States strongly supports the full normalization of relations between Turkey and Armenia. It is a cause worth working towards.¹⁶

The message of support for the normalization of Turkish-Armenian relations was also given to Armenian President Sargsian by Vice President Biden in an April telephone call. The EU was also supportive of the process of normalization of relations between Armenia and Turkey.

The EU and the US also worked closely within the framework of the OSCE Minsk Group, co-chaired by the US, France, and Russia, which saw a high level of activity in terms of meetings between the presidents of Armenia and Azerbaijan, Serzh Sargsian and Ilham Aliev, and the adoption of high-level statements, including a statement by Presidents Obama, Medvedev, and Sarkozy issued in June 2009 at the G-8 summit.¹⁷ The presidents of Azerbaijan and Armenia held six meetings in the course of the year, discussing a possible settlement based on the so-called Madrid Principles, agreed upon at the Madrid OSCE Ministerial meeting in 2007 which many commentators see as more favorable for Armenia and Nagorno-Karabakh than the principles that were articulated in the OSCE Chairman's statement at the 1996 OSCE Lisbon Summit. The Madrid principles envisage an interim status for Nagorno-Karabakh providing guarantees for security and self-governance, a corridor linking Armenia to Nagorno-Karabakh, as well as the future determination of

16 *Remarks by President Obama to the Turkish Parliament.* The White House, Office of the Press Secretary, April 6, 2009.

<http://www.whitehouse.gov/the-press-office/remarks-president-obama-turkish-parliament>

17 *Joint Statement on the Nagorno-Karabakh Conflict by U.S. President Obama, Russian President Medvedev, and French President Sarkozy at the L'Aquila Summit of the Eight.* The White House, Office of the Press Secretary, July 10, 2009.

<http://www.whitehouse.gov/the-press-office/joint-statement-nagorno-karabakh-conflict>

the final legal status of Nagorno-Karabakh through a legally binding expression of will of the people of Nagorno-Karabakh, which would surely mean independence of Nagorno-Karabakh from Azerbaijan. This moves a long way from the principle that all OSCE states except for Armenia agreed to in 1996 at the OSCE Summit in Lisbon which afforded to Nagorno-Karabakh “the highest degree of self-rule within Azerbaijan.” The endorsement of the Madrid principles by the presidents of the US, Russia and France in 2009 can not be viewed as anything but a success of the Armenian diplomacy.

It should also be noted that the new US administration has not followed the model of the Bush Administration, where one official, Matthew Bryza, was responsible for relations with the states of the Caucasus as well as for the Nagorno-Karabakh negotiations. Some observers, especially in the Armenian community in the US, believed that due to the US interest in Azerbaijan’s energy resources, the congruence of Bryza’s responsibilities led to the Bush administration’s bias against Armenia in conflict negotiations. The Obama administration appointed Ambassador Robert Bradtke, a seasoned specialist on European security, as its co-chair of the OSCE Minsk Group while an expert on the Balkans, Tina Kaidanow, was appointed Deputy Assistant Secretary of State with responsibility for the Caucasus, Turkey, Greece and Cyprus. This configuration, which “unbundles” the Nagorno-Karabakh conflict from issues of political and economic development of the region, may ultimately be to Armenia’s benefit.

In short, 2009 could have been judged as a reasonably good year for Armenia’s relations with the West if it were not for the West’s reminders about Armenia’s democratic deficit. The most costly of these was the suspension of the road construction and rehabilitation program of the US Millennium Challenge Account (MCA) due to concerns over the country’s democratic deficit. The EU also occasionally reminded Armenia about its lack of progress in democratization. In particular, the West continued to be concerned about the perceived failure of the authorities to adequately investigate the causes of March 1, 2008 lethal violence after the troubled Armenian presidential elections.¹⁸ It remains to be seen whether the Armenian authorities receive this message and speed up domestic reforms or will take a calculated gamble that the desire of the West in Armenian-Turkish *rapprochement* and in the resolution of the Armenian-Azerbaijani conflict will be sufficient to keep the West’s

18 See, for example, the *EU Statement on 1 March commemoration in Armenia in the OSCE Permanent Council*. Vienna, 12 March 2009.

http://www.delvie.ec.europa.eu/en/eu_osce/eu_statements/2009/March/PC%20no.754%20-%20EU%20on%20commemoration%20ARM.pdf

interest in the country on a sufficiently high level despite the democratic deficit. In 2009, Armenia managed to attract greater attention by the West than in previous years, but this attention may wane should the process of normalization of relations with Turkey hit a roadblock and should the development of Armenia's democratic institutions continue to be arrested.

AZERBAIJAN MARGINALIZED?

The evolution of Azerbaijan could serve as an example of how a small, but energy-rich country could squander the goodwill of the West. Azerbaijan's importance as an energy source is becoming overshadowed by: 1) its unconstructive role in opposing the normalization of Turkish-Armenian relations, making it the only external player holding such a negative position; 2) its dramatic decline in democratic performance, best exemplified by the March 18 constitutional referendum that removed limits on presidential terms, opening a door to Ilham Aliev's life presidency and especially the sentencing on trumped-up charges of young bloggers who posted a satirical video on the youtube.com internet website after what all the impartial observers judged to be an unfair trial.¹⁹ The Azerbaijan elite's narrative of justifying its democratic retrenchment on the damage and displacement the country sustained during the conflict over Nagorno-Karabakh has been wearing thin on the Western audiences. On the energy side, Azerbaijan's already declining relations with the West have not been helped by the deal signed in June 2009 in Baku by Russian President Dmitry Medvedev and his Azerbaijani Counterpart Ilham Aliev, which envisages, as of January 2010, the delivery of Azerbaijani gas to Europe via Russian pipelines, thus making the construction of the *Nabucco* pipeline, long advocated by the US State Department, highly problematic.²⁰

Notwithstanding the intensive personal diplomacy of President Ilham Aliyev with regard to negotiations with his Armenian counterpart on the Nagorno-Kara-

19 EU Statement on the Conviction of two Azerbaijani Youth Organization Members in the OSCE Permanent Council. Vienna, 19 November 2009.

http://www.delvie.ec.europa.eu/en/eu_osce/eu_statements/2009/November/PC%20no.782%20-%20EU%20on%20youth%20activists%20in%20AZE.pdf

United States Mission to the OSCE Statement on Verdict in the Court Case of Imprisoned Youth Activists in Azerbaijan. http://osce.usmission.gov/media/pdfs/2009-statements/st_111909_azerbaijan.pdf. More on the human right situation in Azerbaijan see: Frichova Grono, Magdalena. "Azerbaijan." *Nations in Transit 2010*. Freedom House, 2010.

20 Pannier, Bruce. "Russia, Azerbaijan Achieve Gas Breakthrough," *Radio Free Europe/Radio Liberty*, June 30, 2009.

bakh issue and his visits to major European countries, including the UK, France, and Germany, one gets an impression of the waning importance of Azerbaijan to the West. Foreign visitors to Baku were mostly energy emissaries, special representatives, and deputy ministers. There is a sense of Azerbaijan losing momentum as a partner for the West. The delay in appointing the new US Ambassador to Baku to succeed Anne Derse who completed her mission in 2009 reinforces this impression. The possible nomination of Matthew Bryza, who held the post of Deputy Assistant Secretary of State for European and Eurasian affairs in the George W. Bush administration, was opposed by Armenian-American groups for his alleged pro-Azerbaijani bias, and for the second half for the year, the US had no ambassador in the Azeri capital.

The democratic backsliding has led to fairly sharp statements from both the US and the European Union. There are signs that international organizations mandated to monitor the implementation of Azerbaijan's international commitments are becoming more vociferous. For example, after the March Constitutional referendum, the acting president of the Council of Europe's Congress of Local and Regional Authorities Ian Micallef went as far as outlining a possible sequence of procedures that could lead to the suspension of Azerbaijan to the Council of Europe.²¹ And while this sequence has not been triggered, Micallef's musings are symptomatic of strong frustration with Azerbaijan's record within the bureaucracies of European organizations.

In general, it is the geographic situation of Azerbaijan as a transit country for NATO's military operations that is currently of the most serious value to West. In absence of other common interests or values, a temporary military importance is a tenuous basis for building relations, since wars eventually come to an end. If the trend of a stagnating relationship with the West continues, Azerbaijan may find itself in a difficult situation should Turkey and Armenia move towards the normalization of their bilateral relations with the support and encouragement from the US and the EU. The position of Azerbaijan as an obstacle to that process will not be appreciated or rewarded. Whereas Armenia is trying to diversify its foreign policy, Azerbaijan's foreign policy traditionally has been based on its energy wealth. Having signed a massive gas deal with Russia, Azerbaijan may have also reduced its room for maneuver on this dimension as well. In a dangerous neighborhood such as the South Caucasus, the reduction in the margin of error is not a good policy. And ab-

21 "Council of Europe Official Says Azerbaijan Could Be Suspended over Amendments." *RFE/RL*, March 19, 2009.

sent any progress on democracy, human rights and rule of law, as common values with the West, Azerbaijan risks further losing the West's interest.

THE EASTERN PARTNERSHIP

The survey of the West's policies towards the Caucasus in 2009 would not be complete without a brief discussion of the European Union's Eastern Partnership program. The rationale for the program was to distinguish six former Soviet states – Armenia, Azerbaijan, Georgia, Belarus, Ukraine, and Moldova – that are situated in Europe proper from the European “neighbors,” countries included in the European Neighborhood Program (ENP). There was also a political imperative to find a way to include the previously isolated Belarus into some format of cooperation with the EU, while sending a strong signal to Georgia and Ukraine that their pro-Western rhetoric in absence of real reforms has not impressed Europe sufficiently to offer these two countries closer relations with the EU. This was also a “poke in the eye” to the outgoing Bush administration that was pressing for Georgia's and Ukraine's accession to NATO over some Western objections. However, the optics of the Eastern Partnership at this stage suggests a simple repackaging of already existing programs. The Eastern Partnership's main document is a rather unexciting hodge-podge of possible activities where the potential beneficiaries have to work through the usual red tape associated with obtaining funds from the European Commission.²² The first Civic Forum of non-governmental organizations, held at the end 2009 in Brussels, was a disappointment, according to many participants, and working out further progress may be a challenge, given that the European Union does not have significant experience in working with civil society, especially when the bilateral inter-governmental programs do not appear to be effective. In any event, the Eastern Partnership may simply become a vehicle for bilateral programs in different sectors going at different speeds, reflecting that the ambivalence that the European Union and the “European neighbors,” including the three states of the South Caucasus, feel towards each other.

CONCLUSIONS

In the three years that this author has been covering the subject of relations between the West and the countries of the region for this publication, the position

22 *Vademecum on Financing in the Frame of the Eastern Partnership*. Last update 16 December 2009. http://ec.europa.eu/external_relations/eastern/docs/eap_vademecum_14122009_en.pdf

of the three countries of the South Caucasus vis-à-vis the West has not improved. George W. Bush's administration made the South Caucasus an area of competition with Russia, especially in the sphere of energy. In addition, the US's unconditional embrace of Georgia's "Rose Revolution," which fit the Bush Administration's simplistic ideas of spreading democracy, further irritated Russia (and also had a flaw of ignoring institutional development as a process while playing up revolutions as a transformational moment). However, as the Baku-Tbilisi-Ceyhan pipeline has already been built, and the prospects for the *Nabucco* pipeline appear distant at best, the energy interests of the West in the region are likely to wane, meaning the likely decrease in the West interest in Azerbaijan. As the Obama administration appears to move the US position towards the region – by accident or by design -- closer to that of the EU, skepticism in Washington about the quality of Georgia democracy is likely to grow and awareness that Georgia was not blameless in the run-up to the 2008 August War is likely to increase. This may mean that the West's interest in Georgia could continue to decrease.

The prospects for an Armenian-Turkish opening, which could redefine the political equation in the region, were of most interest to the West in 2009. However, if the process of Armenian-Turkish rapprochement were to yield no results in the short run, the region could easily find itself reduced to the margins of foreign policy in the West. As the US and the EU are facing a multitude of challenges and are frustrated with the slow pace of reforms in the countries of the Caucasus, the major regional actors – Turkey, Russia, Iran – could take up the political space which the West may vacate. Such a development may not necessarily result in greater stability or security of the region. For the West, the challenge is to keep sufficient focus on the region so that the conflicts do not flare up again and to ensure that the above-mentioned regional powers do not – intentionally or unintentionally – compound the already difficult regional security problems. The last three years should serve as a serious warning to optimists, for in the last three years the region witnessed a war, undemocratic elections and post-election violence. The Russian recognition of Abkhazia's and South Ossetia's independence meant the complete erosion of the principle of territorial integrity in the regional context. In short, the region is less secure and stable than it has been for some time. And, if the leaders of the countries of the South Caucasus believe that the West's engagement in the region is critical to its security, they would be well-advised to take stock of their policies and find ways to keep the West's interest in the troubled region.

ABOUT THE CAUCASUS INSTITUTE

The Caucasus Institute (CI) is one of the leading think-tanks and educational centers in Armenia and the entire region. It implements research in the areas of political science, social sciences and media studies with regard to the Southern and Northern Caucasus. The CI also engages in regional studies on a wider scope.

Founded in Yerevan in 2002, the CI offers a neutral platform for non-politicized debate on acute issues of the region's political and social development. Based on research, the CI conducts expert consultations, roundtable discussions and conferences. CI produces publications in various formats, including Caucasus Yearbooks which sum up various aspects of politics, social life and economics in the Southern and Northern Caucasus every year.

The CI is special in that it combines research and debates with close ties to the news media, actively engaging the media in order to inform the region's societies and political elites of the results of policy research. Its wide public outreach enables CI to influence the public opinion as well as professional discourses, and to propose recommendations to political decision-makers.

After its founding in 2002 and until mid-2008, the institute was called the CMI, or Caucasus Media Institute, stressing its media ties. The changeover to just "Caucasus Institute" reflects the broadening scope of CI activities and its focus on politics, economics and society in the wider Caucasus region.

OTHER CI PUBLICATIONS IN ENGLISH

Assessment of Research Capacities in Social Sciences and Humanities in Armenia. CI Research Paper #4.

Yerevan: CI, February 2011. – 48 p. ISBN 978-99941-2-511-1

This research paper assesses research capacities in the field of social sciences and humanities in Armenia. It reviews the overall scope of research being carried out in Armenia, available human resources and existing funding priorities. It aims to identify the strengths and weaknesses of the research environment in Armenia in the field of social sciences and humanities. It also aims to identify existing gaps in research and the prevalence or scarcity of particular topics and dimensions. For each issue, the study identifies its underlying causes and proposes remedies.

Deriglazova, Larisa and Sergey Minasyan. *Nagorno-Karabakh: Paradoxes of Strength and Weakness in an Asymmetric Conflict.*

CI Research Paper #3.

Yerevan: CI, June 2011. – 104 p. ISBN 978-99941-2-536-4

This Research Paper analyzes the conflict over Nagorno-Karabakh from the standpoint of the *concept and phenomenon of asymmetric conflict*; this enables the authors to take a fresh look at the situation in Nagorno-Karabakh and propose possible symmetric and asymmetric scenarios for its development. The asymmetry of the conflict is rooted in the non-identical statuses of the principal parties to the conflict, and in the military and security aspects of the confrontation in the Azerbaijan-Nagorno-Karabakh-Armenia triangle. The asymmetry of the players' potential figured importantly during the military phase of the conflict in the first half of the 1990s and continues to be obvious in the current stage.

Minasyan, Sergey. *The Conflict over Nagorno-Karabakh after Two Decades: an Inevitable Prolongation of the Status Quo.* CI Research Paper #2.

Yerevan: CI, August 2010. – 67 p. ISBN 978-99941-2-512-8

This research paper looks at the various aspects of the conflict over Nagorno-Karabakh and its evolution over the past two decades. The main objective of the paper to analyze the conflict in its entirety and identify factors and trends affecting the approaches of the parties in conflict and the involved regional and global actors. Special attention is paid to the political, military and military-technical components of

the conflict. The paper looks at the impact of the conflict on the regional policies and political discourses, the role of the time factor, and the relations between external actors and conflict parties. It is targeted at both political scientists and a general audience.

Iskandaryan, Alexander and Sergey Minasyan. *Pragmatic Policies vs. Historical Constraints: Analyzing Armenia-Turkey Relations*.

CI Research Paper, # 1.

Yerevan: CI, February 2010. – 48 p. ISBN 978-99941-2-340-7

The first CI Research Paper aims to identify the main parameters and trends of Armenia-Turkey relations. Rather than focus on recent years' developments, which have been frequently discussed elsewhere, the paper concentrates on the political, social, psychological and historical factors that impact the entire process, and reveals the logic of bilateral relations as they develop over time.

Mikaelyan, Hrant et al. *Armenia and the Armenians, Turkey and the Turks in Armenian Media Coverage*. CI Policy Brief #2.

Yerevan: CI, April 2010 (online only).

This Policy Brief is the result of a study conducted by a team of young researchers from January until March 2010. The main methodology of the study was content-analysis. The aim of the project was to see how Armenia and Armenians, on one hand, and Turkey and Turks, on the other, were presented in the media coverage of the ongoing Armenia-Turkey rapprochement. The resulting policy brief presents the stereotypes about Armenia, Turkey and Armenia-Turkey relations manifest in Armenian media, and recommendations to Armenian media concerning the coverage of these subject matters.

Gyulkhandanyan, Evelina and Nina Iskandaryan. *Media Environment and Attitudes to Media in Armenia*. CI Policy Brief #1.

Yerevan: CI, February 2010. (online only)

This study of the media environment and attitudes to media in Armenia was implemented by CI with the aim of identifying the factors that impact the functioning of Armenian media industry and the perceptions of the audience. Implemented by a team of young researchers lead by a sociologist, the study highlights issues preventing the development and sustainability of Armenian media, and proposes recommendations on making the Armenian media work for society.

Turkey-Armenia Dialogue Series: Assessing the Rapprochement Process.

TESEV-Caucasus Institute Joint Report.

Istanbul: 2010 – 28p. ISBN 978-605-5832-38-4

This second CI-TESEV report assesses the rapprochement and normalization process on both sides of the border, articulating how each side views recent developments and highlighting where progress can be made. Likewise, the report offers a set of joint recommendations that can help Turkey and Armenia not only normalize relations but also contribute to societal reconciliation.

Turkey-Armenia Dialogue Series: Breaking the Vicious Circle.

TESEV-Caucasus Institute Joint Report.

Istanbul: 2009. – 20 p. ISBN 978-605-5832-08-7

The first CI-TESEV report is a breakthrough joint Armenian-Turkish report on the Armenia-Turkey relations and prospects for rapprochement. It was written by Aybars Gorgulu and Sabiha Gundogar from TESEV and by Alexander Iskandaryan and Sergey Minasyan from the Caucasus Institute.

Caucasus Neighborhood: Turkey and the South Caucasus.

Ed. Alexander Iskandaryan.

Yerevan: CI, 2008. – 146 p. ISBN 978-99941-2-220-2

The volume focuses on the roles played by Turkey and the countries and unrecognized entities of the South Caucasus in regional integration and the management of the region's ethno-political conflicts. The analytical papers are based on presentations made at a CI-organized conference in Istanbul on August 1-4, 2008 by independent experts from Turkey, Armenia, Azerbaijan, Georgia, Abkhazia, Nagorno-Karabakh and South Ossetia.

Minasyan, Sergey. From Political Rallies to Conventions. Political and Legal Aspects of Protecting the Rights of the Armenian Ethnic Minority in Georgia as Exemplified by the Samtskhe-Javakheti Region.

Yerevan: CI and Yerkir NGO Union, 2007. – 92 p.

ISBN 99941-2-058-1

The volume analyses the situation with human and minority rights in Georgia and suggests ways of integrating minorities in the social, political and cultural life of the country. The author looks at the legal

framework for minority issues, focusing on Georgia's international legal obligations and their political implementation practices. In a case study of the Armenian-populated region of Samtskhe-Javakheti, the author proposes mechanisms and recommendations for achieving a compromise between minorities' needs to preserve their identity, language and culture, and to achieve factual political rights, on one hand, and their in-depth civic integration, on the other.

Election Guide. Parliamentary Election in Armenia 2003.

Eds. Nina Iskandaryan and Ruben Meloyan.

CI, Yerevan, April 2003. – 122 p. ISBN 99930-890-2-8

Election Guide. Presidential Election in Armenia 2003.

Ed. Mark Grigorian.

CI, Yerevan, January 2003. – 88 p.

The Election Guides are addressed to journalists, observers, NGOs, public activists, both local and foreign. They contain general data about Armenia, a brief survey of the post-Soviet period, excerpts from election laws and other legislation that applies to parliamentary elections, the biographies and electoral programs of the candidates and parties standing in the elections.

IDENTITIES,
IDEOLOGIES
AND
INSTITUTIONS

A DECADE OF INSIGHT
INTO THE CAUCASUS
2001-2011