



The Berkeley Program in Soviet and Post-Soviet Studies
 Graduate Training and Research Program on the Contemporary Caucasus
Newsletter

Volume 1 Issue 1

Winter, 1995

A Message from the Executive Director

This is the first newsletter of the Graduate Training and Research Program on the Contemporary Caucasus at UC Berkeley. The Program is being funded by a three year grant from the Ford Foundation and will be administered by the Berkeley Program in Soviet and Post-Soviet Studies (BPS). We are deeply grateful to the Ford Foundation for supporting a program devoted to scholarly research on this extraordinary part of the world. We believe that the Caucasus, which we define to include the three Transcaucasian republics of Armenia, Azerbaijan, and Georgia as well as the North Caucasus region of the Russian Federation, is a strategically vital, extremely volatile, and fascinating region.

The strategic importance of the region is tied to its very large fossil fuel reserves; the security concerns and interests of outside powers (particularly Russia, Turkey, Iran, and, to a lesser extent, the United States); and its location as a potential route for pipelines bringing oil and gas from Central Asia to the international marketplace. The extreme volatility of the region is evidenced by the difficult time the new states and administrative units of the Caucasus have had adjusting to the collapse of communism and to the still unresolved ethno-territorial conflicts in Nagorno-Karabakh, Abkhazia, Chechnya, and South Ossetia; the conflicts between groups of the "titular nationalities" in Azerbaijan and Georgia; and economic distress and disorder throughout the region. But even if energy and instability were not issues, the rich history and

extreme ethnic heterogeneity of the region would make it a fascinating object of study for social scientists. Nevertheless, the Caucasus remains the most understudied region of the former Soviet Union, with not a single center for Caucasus studies in this country.

The Ford grant to BPS is intended to help overcome this shortcoming. The three year project will bring visiting scholars from the region to teach and conduct research at UC Berkeley; fund graduate training, dissertation, and language training fellowships for UC Berkeley graduate students specializing on the Caucasus; provide travel and conference grants to faculty and graduate students conducting research on the Caucasus; bring speakers to campus for public presentations and seminars; and convene an annual conference. The project has three research themes, one for each year of the grant period: (1) "Nationalism, Ethnopolitics, and Conflict in the Caucasus;" (2) "The Geopolitics of Oil, Gas, and Ecology in the Caucasus and Caspian Sea;" and (3) "State Building and the Reconstruction of Shattered Societies." The visiting scholar brought to Berkeley each year will be an expert on that year's theme and will lead an informal graduate seminar, conduct research, and participate in the annual conference. The research topic of the year will be the organizing theme of the annual conference.

The program will get fully underway in academic year 1996-1997. Meanwhile, we have already started our speakers series (some of these talks are summarized in this newsletter), and we are planning a one-day conference for May 17, 1996. The conference will be entitled, "Past as Prelude: The Cultural, Social, and Political Roots of Identity in the Caucasus," and we are lining up an outstanding collection of scholars, mostly historians, anthropologists, and historians, to discuss the background of current identities in the region as an introduction to conferences on more contemporary themes in the following years. As soon as the conference speakers and their topics are finalized, we will send out announcements.

In implementing the program, we will continue to work closely with the Slavic Center and the already-existing Armenian Studies Program here at UC Berkeley. We have already cooperated closely with the Armenian Studies Program, the Association for the Study of Nationalities, and the Slavic Center to bring an excellent set of speakers on the Caucasus to campus over the fall term. Katrina Menzigian (Fletcher School of Law and Diplomacy, Tufts

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University) gave a talk on the geopolitics of the Azerbaijani oil industry; Raffi Hovannisian (former Foreign Minister of Armenia, Yerevan) gave a presentation on Armenian domestic politics and foreign policy; Fiona Hill (Strengthening Democratic Institutions Project of the Kennedy School of Government, Harvard University) presented a paper on Russian policy in the Caucasus; Nikolai Hovhannisian (Institute of Oriental Studies, Yerevan) spoke about Armenian politics and diplomacy; Sergei Arutiunov (Institute of Ethnology and Anthropology, Moscow) spoke about the cultural roots on ethnic conflict in the North Caucasus, including Chechnya; Richard Hovannisian (Professor of History at UCLA) gave a talk as Berkeley's William Saroyan Chair in Armenian Studies this term discussing his recently completed multi-volume history of the republic; Ronald Suny (Professor of Political Science at the University of Chicago) spoke about the Karabakh conflict; and Leila Aliyeva (Director of the Centre for Strategic and International Studies in Azerbaijan) analyzed current Azerbaijani politics and patterns of leadership in the Caucasus. We hope to arrange an equally interesting collection of visiting speakers for the spring term.

We have also been busy developing links with institutions in the region. We are cooperating with the American University of Armenia (AUA), a graduate university located in Yerevan, Armenia, that began operation in September 1991. Since its inception, AUA has had a formal affiliation with the University of California (UC), which provides AUA with technical support in administration, faculty training, and collaborative programs of scholarly exchange and research. This summer, I visited Vladikavkaz, North Ossetia, to explore cooperative ties with the North Ossetian State University (NOSU). NOSU is conveniently located for conducting research on the North Caucasus and is equipped with an excellent library, modern communications equipment, and other facilities for visiting researchers. More recently, Catherine Dale, a BPS graduate student in political science and a specialist on the Caucasus, made a two-week trip to Tbilisi, where she interviewed potential visiting scholars and identified key institutions while

conducting research for a paper on the Abkhaz crisis. We are grateful to Ghia Nodia and the Caucasian Institute for Peace, Democracy, and Development for arranging her trip. Shortly after returning, Catherine flew to Oslo, Norway, where she presented her paper on Abkhazia at an

international conference entitled, "Conflicts in the Caucasus," sponsored by the Peace Research Institute of Oslo and the Norwegian Helsinki Committee. Finally, Steve Fish, UC Berkeley's new Assistant Professor in Political Science and a specialist on political parties and social movements in post-communist societies, is in Baku as this newsletter goes to print to conduct research and develop scholarly contacts in Azerbaijan. Thanks to the Centre for Strategic and International Studies in Baku for arranging his visit.

One of the important goals of the program is to foster communication and interaction between scholars of the Caucasus both in this country and abroad. We hope to cooperate with the Association for the Study of Caucasia to this end, and at the same time we strongly encourage our readers to notify us of upcoming conferences, visits of scholars from the region, important publications, and other important events that we can advertise in future newsletters. We have already set up a homepage on the World Wide Web (<http://garnet.berkeley.edu/~bsp/caucprog.html>), which will include a description of the program, a calendar of events, a bibliography of publications in English on the contemporary Caucasus, and a database of non-governmental organizations and research institutions in the region. We hope that these databases will be used by faculty and graduate students traveling to the region to facilitate scholarly contacts. We will also sponsor panels at professional conventions, and we will bring both scholars from the region and from around the US to our annual conferences at UC Berkeley.

We encourage you to inform your colleagues about the existence of the program and ask them to contact us if they are interested in receiving future issues of our newsletter.

We believe that there is a real need to develop scholarly expertise in the study of the Caucasus in this country, and we hope to make an important contribution in the coming years to scholarship and informed policy making on this vital yet understudied part of the world.

Edward W. Walker
Executive Director
Berkeley Program in Soviet and Post-Soviet Studies

Newsletter of the Graduate Training and Research Program on the Contemporary Caucasus, Vol. 1, No. 1, Winter 1995. Published biannually by the Berkeley Program in Soviet and Post-Soviet Studies at UC Berkeley. Edited by Edward W. Walker and Stella Paras. Subscriptions are free. To request a subscription, send a request by e-mail to bps@garnet.berkeley.edu or contact us at UC Berkeley, 361 Stephens Hall #2304, Berkeley, CA, 94720-2304. Phone: (510) 643-6737. Fax: (510) 643-5045.

Russian Foreign Policy and Conflict in the Caucasus

Fiona Hill

Fiona Hill, Associate Director of the Strengthening Democratic Institutions Project at the John F. Kennedy School of Government, Harvard University, presented a talk on Russian foreign policy in the Caucasus on October 31, 1995. The talk was co-sponsored by BPS and the Association for the Study of Nationalities.

The Caucasus is one of the world's most ethnically complex regions. It is the faultline between the Caucasus mountains and the Asiatic steppes; the meeting point between Persian, Turkic, and Slavic civilizations; the frontier between Orthodox Christianity and Islam; and the barrier between Byzantine, Ottoman, Persian, and Russian empires. A long history of invasions, incursions, and waves of settlement, along with the isolation of mountain valleys, have produced an extraordinarily complex mosaic of peoples.

This helps explain why the overwhelming majority of violent conflicts in the former Soviet Union have occurred in the Caucasus. Indeed, two of these conflicts, between North Ossetia and Ingushetia, and between Moscow and Chechnya, have been fought on the territory of the Russian Federation itself. In each case, conflicts that began as disputes over the political status of administrative entities ended as interethnic conflicts between two national groups: Armenians against Azeris, Ossetians against Georgians, Georgians against Abkhazians, Ingush against Ossetians, and Chechens against Russians.

The region is riddled with overlapping conflicts. All of the larger states in the neighborhood, including Turkey and Iran, have large diasporas of Caucasian peoples. Ethnic conflicts in Georgia and Azerbaijan have sent waves of refugees into Russia's North Caucasus while drawing North Caucasian volunteers into the fighting. Likewise, Chechen fighters cut their teeth in the war between Georgia and Abkhazia; the Chechen and North Caucasian diasporas in Turkey have been raising funds and procuring weapons for their compatriots in the region; the Lezgin people straddling the border between Dagestan and northern Azerbaijan are pressing for unification; and the conflict in Nagorno-Karabakh has prompted responses from Turkey and Iran thanks in part to their own Azeri communities.

A number of objective factors help to explain why the Caucasus has been so unstable. The first of these is the region's extreme ethnic diversity. This diversity has been exploited by Russia, which has adopted a strategy of divide and rule just as it did in the 19th century when it divided potentially powerful groups like the Circassians into smaller, artificial ethnic groups and emphasized cul-

tural and linguistic differences between them. The Russians also elevated Christians such as Armenians, Georgians, and Ossetians above the Muslim peoples of the regions, and settled Cossacks on the traditional territory of all ethnic groups. Many of these same policies continued in the Soviet period.

Second is the cleavage between Orthodoxy and Islam in the region given the long history of clashes between Islam and Christendom in Asia Minor, the massacre of Armenians by Turks in 1915, and repeated pogroms throughout the region. However, these cleavages too have been effectively exploited and manipulated by the instigators of the conflicts and the Russian government.

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Third is a high rural birth rate and high population density throughout the region. The result has been chronic unemployment, especially in the countryside where ethnic groups are particularly intermingled. In the Soviet period, surplus labor in the region was exported, but this safety valve has been turned off. Large numbers of unemployed have led to growing pressures on scarce land and housing.

A fourth factor is the economic distress in the region. Economic problems have compounded the traditional weakness of the local economies which had been heavily dependent on Moscow for subsidies. Of course, economic problems have in turn been aggravated by ethnic tensions in the region.

Fifth, the administrative legacy of the USSR created the basic conditions for ethnopolitical conflicts in the region. Dividing the Caucasus into ethnically-defined administrative units served to politicize ethnicity, created the impression that territory that was settled by a number of groups actually belonged to only one group, and scattered individual groups across frequently changing administrative borders.

A sixth factor is the lack of experience of the new national and regional leaders of the Caucasus. Soviet nationality policy gave the administrative units of the region all the trappings of sovereignty and autonomy but none of the substance. It thus deprived the leaders of the region of experience in self-government, and it promoted a “brain drain” from the region. As a result, local elites lacked the skills needed to contain intensifying interethnic tensions when they arose.

A final objective factor has been the refugee crisis, which was initially an effect of conflict but is now helping to prevent stabilization. As many as 700,000 refugees have fled from Armenia and Azerbaijan since the conflict broke out over Nagorno-Karabakh in 1988. In 1991, 100,000 refugees fled the fighting in South Ossetia, while there are now some 250,000 refugees from the war in Abkhazia. Finally, the conflagration in Chechnya has displaced some 450,000 people, approximately one third of the republic’s pre-war population. The refugee problem has further strained local housing and infrastructure, and it has placed an additional burden on local governments and the welfare system. Recent sociological surveys reveal that residents of the Caucasus tend to associate the deteriorating economic situation and its attendant rise in crime with the influx of refugees.

Along with these objective factors were specific triggers for individual cases. In general, these consisted of an unwillingness of local political leaders to compromise and a failure to follow through on key political directives. For example, in the case of the conflict between North Ossetia and Ingushetia, two pieces of legislation contributed to the outbreak of hostilities. The first was the 1991 Soviet-era Law on the Rehabilitation of Repressed Peoples, which directed that those peoples who had been deported in the 1940s should have their former lands restored or should receive compensation. The law encouraged the Ingush to demand the return of the disputed district and legitimized their claim to it. The second was the June 1992 Law on the Creation of the Ingush Republic passed by the Russian Federation’s Supreme Soviet. Unfortunately, the law did not include provisions for its implementation, and no decision was made on the ultimate territorial, administrative, or governmental configuration of the new republic. When the Russians resisted the demarcation of Ingushetia’s borders, the Ingush took matters into their own hands, reaching a border agreement with Chechnya and attempting to establish one by force with North Ossetia. In contrast, those republics that managed to contain or avoid interethnic conflicts—for example, Dagestan and Karachevo-Cherkessia—did so because of the self-restraint of the parties involved and concessions on the part of local governments.

Finally, although the Russian government has not always been a primary instigator of the conflicts in the region, it has certainly played an important role, particularly after tensions emerged or erupted into violence. Although Russia is hardly a unitary actor, many in Moscow clearly believe that Russia’s national interest is served by conflict in the region. As a result, Russia has engaged in a limited covert operation in support of the Abkhaz secessionists; played a role in a coup in Azerbaijan that brought down President Abulfaz Elchibey; manipulated Armenia and Azerbaijan to keep them at loggerheads over Karabakh; assisted the North Ossetians in their conflict with the Ingush in order to ensure that North Ossetia would remain a key ally of Moscow in the region; and supported the Chechen opposition prior to the Russian invasion in an effort to bring down Chechen President Dzhokhar Dudaev by covert means.

At the same time, Russia has made some efforts to resolve some of the conflicts of the region. For example, Moscow brokered a peace agreement between Georgia and South Ossetia in 1992; it is sponsoring negotiations over Karabakh; and it has insisted that the international community grant it a special status as the principal guarantor of peace and stability in the Caucasus. However, it is doing so in order to increase its influence in the region, as suggested by the fact that it has on many occasions obstructed the peacemaking efforts of the Organization

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of Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE) and the UN. As a result, the involvement of international organizations has become little more than window dressing.

Russia has made clear that the Caucasus is one of its top strategic priorities. It has appealed to fellow signatories of the Treaty on Conventional Forces in Europe (CFE) to lift the treaty’s limitations on Russian tanks and heavy weapons in the region. It has already established military bases in Armenia and Georgia, and it is pressuring Azerbaijan for basing rights there as well. Clearly, Moscow intends to maintain a large military presence in the region.

The Caucasus has become the new “Black” Silk Road—the transportation route for oil from the Caspian Sea to the Black Sea and markets in Europe—and the perception in the region is that whoever controls the Caucasus will control the pipelines. Irrespective of the real rev-

enues likely to result from control of the pipelines, all contenders want a piece of the action. The possibility that other major powers will establish their own “sphere of influence” in the Caucasus is therefore of great concern to Moscow. In particular, Moscow is committed to resisting efforts of Turkey and Iran to increase their presence in the region. Moscow also wants to (1) prevent the unraveling of its own federation; (2) maintain the security of strategic international borders with Iran and Turkey; (3) ensure access to key former Soviet industrial and military facilities; and (4) develop a market for Russian products.

All this fits in with Moscow’s decision to make the reintegration of the Soviet successor states its top foreign policy priority. Integrationists in Moscow fall into two camps: those who want to see full political and military reintegration; and those who want to see economic integration only. There is, however, a consensus that some form of reintegration is necessary and inevitable.

Given Russia’s economic decline and the dire state of its military, it would be surprising if Moscow were not using every means available to maintain its role as the major player in its traditional sphere of influence. However,

continuing conflict in the Caucasus may no longer be in Russia’s best interests. Major investors will not get involved in the development of the oil in the region if pipelines cross zones of chronic instability. Moreover, there is growing concern over terrorism in the region. To secure funding and to reduce the threat of terrorism, Russia may decide to encourage the resolution, or at least the management, of the Caucasus’s myriad disputes. But

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given their deep political and economic roots, and the fact that Russia has either ignored or deliberately exacerbated them, this will be no easy task. And after Chechnya, one has to ask if negotiation or force will be Russia’s preferred approach to the Caucasus.

The Republic of Armenia: Politics and Diplomacy

Nikolai Hovhannisian

On November 7, 1995, Nikolai Hovhannisian presented a talk on the main directions of Armenian foreign and domestic policy today. Dr. Hovhannisian is the Director of the Institute for Oriental Studies of the Armenian Academy of Sciences. The talk was co-sponsored by BPS, the William Saroyan Chair in Armenian Studies, and the UC Berkeley Department of Political Science.

On December 12, the Republic of Armenia will celebrate the fifth anniversary of its independence. To the relief of many Armenians, Armenia’s second Republic has already outlived the first, which lasted for only 2½ years (1918-20). Although five years is a rather brief period, the main trends in the foreign and domestic policy of the Second Republic are nevertheless clear.

In the period immediately after independence in 1991, a new generation of Armenian leaders came to power who lacked experience as statesmen. Facing many problems, the new president, Levon Ter-Petrosyan, concluded that his main task was to secure the safety of the Armenian people. This required determining the main foreign policy orientation of the new state. Initially, he decided to try to weaken dependency on Russia by turning to Turkey as a “third force,” the first being Russia, the second the Republic of Armenia, and the third Turkey. At the time, of course, many in Armenia felt this was a dangerous idea

which would put the country in a very complicated position. In fact, it soon became clear that the anti-Russian policy at the time was misguided, for four reasons: first, Russia is one of the world’s great powers; second, the Transcaucasus is still in Russia’s sphere of influence; third, a strategy of strengthening the political economy of Armenia was not in conflict with a policy of cooperation with Russia; and fourth, Turkey rejected Armenia’s overtures.

Thus Armenia’s new leadership ultimately proved to be practical and realistic. It understood the existing balance of forces and moved to reestablish close relations with Moscow on the basis of equality and non-interference in internal affairs. As a result, over 100 treaties have been signed between the two countries since the collapse of the Soviet Union, treaties that embrace all aspects of political, economic, and cultural life.

Most important, however, has been cooperation in the military field. The Armenian-Russian military agreement grants Russia two military bases in Armenian territory, one near the Armenian-Turkish border and the other near the Armenian-Iranian border. The treaty allows for military aid for defensive purposes only—Russian troops are on Armenian soil only to help protect the country from foreign attack. And naturally Armenia has its own military forces entirely under Armenian control.

Much has been written about attempts by forces in Moscow to restore the Russian Empire. It is of course true that some in Moscow dream of such an eventuality. But these people have no political future, and they are not determining the main directions of Russian foreign policy. And even if they somehow come to power in Moscow, they will quickly find that their dreams are impossible to realize—attempts to restore the empire are simply against the national interests of Russia. For Russia to become once again a superpower and to influence events beyond its borders, it does not need to eliminate the other Soviet successor states. Russia is much better served by pursuing a strategy of strengthening the CIS and turning into a second European Union.

As for relations with the West and the US, Armenia obviously wants close relations because of the need to counterbalance relations with Russia. Armenia wants to strengthen its independence, and thus it does not want to be dominated by Russia. It is therefore trying to improve its position by deepening economic, financial, and cultural ties with the rest of the world. It is also attempting to diversify international economic links and, as part of its commitment to a free market economy, hopes to develop trade relations with the West. Likewise, it is trying to become a member of key Western economic and political structures such as the OSCE and the Partnership for Peace Program. Nevertheless, relations with Europe are developing rather slowly—there have been many declarations but little progress.

Relations with the US are better. US humanitarian aid is much appreciated and continues to arrive despite the blockade by Azerbaijan and Turkey. The Senate has passed a bill that provides for an additional \$85 million for Armenia in the 1995-96 fiscal year. Still, there is a potential for misunderstanding here. Armenia needs to develop its economic links with the West more than it needs humanitarian aid. Indeed, many in Armenia feel that ongoing humanitarian aid is humiliating to Armenia's national dignity. Armenia wants to develop trade on the bases of equality, particularly given its high intellectual potential and strengths in particular industries, such as radioelectronics. Medicine and food are of course appreciated, but better yet would be greater economic coop-

eration.

Another factor complicating relations with the US is Turkey. Armenia understands that Turkey is an important military ally of the US. But we cannot help but note that, despite many US declarations about democracy and human rights, Turkey continues to impose a blockade that is strangling the Armenian economy. Why is the US, which is such a powerful ally of Turkey, not applying greater pressure on Ankara to lift its blockade?

At the same time that Armenia is trying to reach out to the West, it is also attempting to improve relations with yet another powerful neighbor, Iran. However, the US is making this difficult. Iran is critical to Armenia in its efforts to circumvent the Azerbaijani-Turkish blockage because Georgia, the only other country with which Armenia shares a border, is in a state of chaos and because the current blockade of Abkhazia has made overland links to Russia very difficult. Today Armenia is importing a great deal of food and raw materials from or through Iran, in exchange for various industrial products, and it is quite dependent on Iran for electricity.

In the long run, however, most important to Armenia is an improvement in relations with Turkey. As noted earlier, Armenia's new post-Soviet leaders were initially quite optimistic about the possibility of a rapprochement with Turkey, but reality can be merciless. Turkey recognized the independence of Armenia, Azerbaijan, and Georgia simultaneously, but it refused to establish diplomatic relations with Yerevan unless Armenia met three conditions. The first of these was that Armenia must announce that it

Armenia needs to develop its economic links with the West more than it needs humanitarian aid.

will not accuse Turkey of responsibility for the Armenian genocide. But while Armenia does not hold the current generation of Turks responsible, it does have a right to insist on an apology like those offered by the Germans for World War II and the Jewish holocaust, and recently by the Japanese. Second, Ankara insists that Armenia renounce any territorial claims on Turkey and accept the terms of the 1921 Treaty that ceded some 30,000 square kilometers of western Armenia to the Turks. Finally, Ankara demands that Armenia stop the fighting in Nagorno-Karabakh and end its "aggression" against Azerbaijan.

Armenia's position is that it is ready to establish diplomatic relations with Azerbaijan without conditions, in accordance with international law. Yerevan is also concerned about the desire of some in Ankara to impose a

Turkish model on the Soviet successor states, as well as Turkey's claim that it is a champion of democracy and human rights in the region. Indeed, President Demirel recently wrote a letter to the Washington Post describing Turkey as a "bastion of stability" with strong democratic traditions and a free market economy. It goes without saying that Armenia does not agree.

Between 1991 and 1994, the war in Nagorno-Karabakh made it very difficult to improve relations with Turkey. As Azerbaijan began to suffer reversals at the front, Turkey moved three divisions close to its border with Armenia. This caused panic among the Armenian people. Only in the face of US pressure did Turkey withdraw those forces and give up the idea of military intervention. Now both sides say they want to improve relations, but Turkey continues to insist on its three conditions.

As for the actual conflict in Karabakh, many specialists have concluded that the Karabakh army is now the strongest in the Transcaucasus. The Armenian army is itself very strong, while the Azerbaijani army has been defeated. Nevertheless, Baku continues to insist that the Karabakh forces withdraw from all Azerbaijani territory and that Karabakh remain a part of Azerbaijan, although the Azerbaijanis also say that they are ready to negotiate. The

Armenia is the only CIS member-state that has recorded positive growth this year.

Karabakh government in turn is insisting on a security zone. Yerevan wants guaranteed security for Armenians and thus would like to see peace-keepers sent to its border zone with Azerbaijan.

Some people in the US, such as Paul Goble, have suggested an exchange of territory as a solution, in particular the exchange of a corridor linking Karabakh with Armenia for a corridor linking Nakhichevan with Azerbaijan. This, however, is not acceptable to the Armenians, for it would cut Armenia off from its important trade partner, Iran. Another suggestion has been that Karabakh be given some sort of "associated" status with Azerbaijan, which would grant Karabakh many of the rights of an independent state, including establishing diplomatic relations with other states. Finally, another option is what might be called the Cyprus model—essentially a freezing of the status quo with no agreement on a permanent solution. This appears to be the most likely outcome.

What, then, of the internal situation in Armenia? Today, the Armenian pan-national movement remains in power, and it continues to pursue democratization and marketization. There is now no chance of a return to the

rigid totalitarianism of the Soviet period or to communism. On July 7, 1995, a new constitution was approved in a referendum that guaranteed the preservation of democracy. The most controversial part of the new constitution, however, are those provisions that deal with executive-legislative relations. Many specialists felt the country would be better off with a parliamentary system, but President Ter-Petrosyan disagreed. As a result, the new regime has a weak parliament and a strong president who can dissolve parliament under certain conditions, appoints the prime minister, has the right to declare martial law, and is the commander-in-chief of the armed forces.

In accordance with the new constitution, a new parliament came to power recently in elections that OSCE observers called "free but not fair." Several important opposition parties, including Dashnak, were not allowed to participate in the elections, and some opposition newspapers were closed. However, the media in Armenia still remains for the most part free to criticize the government and even the president.

The economy of Armenia continues to experience grave difficulties. Initially, the government made some rash and rather naive decisions, particularly the decision to close Armenia's only nuclear power station which provided some 25 percent of the country's electricity. The result was a severe electricity and energy crisis. Aggravating the situation further was the commitment to a form of economic "shock therapy." Armenia is now the only Soviet successor state that continues to pursue such a reform program. The result, unfortunately, has been great hardship for the Armenian people and an extremely low standard of living. Pensioners in particular have been hard hit. There has also been an unfortunate differentiation in the material well-being of the people—few are becoming rich while most are impoverished. Also, Armenia is the only Soviet successor state that has proceeded with a radical program of land reform. There are no longer any collective farms, and land is being privatized. Privatization is also now under way in industry.

Today the government is trying to reverse some of its previous decisions. The nuclear power station is being reopened, with Russia's help. This will be the first time in history that a closed nuclear power plant will be reopened.

Fortunately, there are signs that the economy is beginning to grow again. Armenia is in fact the only CIS member-state that has recorded positive growth this year. In part this is due to the stable political situation in the republic—Armenia, unlike Georgia and Azerbaijan, has managed to avoid civil war and political upheavals since independence, thanks to the wisdom of its people, its political culture, and the generally constructive position

taken by the opposition. And Armenia continues to have a very low rate of crime.

All-in-all, then, there is reason to believe that Armenia will overcome its difficulties and that life for the Armenian people will continue to improve in the coming years.

The Cultural Roots of Ethnic Radicalization in the North Caucasus

Sergei Arutiunov

Sergei Arutiunov, Chairman of the Department of Caucasian Studies at the Institute of Ethnography and Anthropology of the Russian Academy of Sciences, presented a talk entitled “The Cultural Roots of Ethnic Radicalization in the North Caucasus” on November 14, 1995. The talk was co-sponsored by BPS, the Center for Slavic and East European Studies, and the UC Berkeley Department of Anthropology.

Ethnic radicalization in the North Caucasus began immediately after Stalin’s death. Now forty years old, the process will likely continue, at least in the mentality and psychology of the peoples of the region, even if on the surface there are signs of normalization. The peoples of the Caucasian highlands will continue to strive for greater autonomy until some sort of *modus vivendi* is reached with the lowland nations surrounding them—Russia, Georgia, and Azerbaijan.

For the three millennia of the region’s written history, the Caucasus has witnessed incessant conflicts between warring clans, religious confessions, states, and empires. Russia’s entry into the region began with the establishment of a military outpost at Mozdok (now in North Ossetia) in 1763, and was followed by a hundred-year war between the Caucasian highlanders and Russia. The second half of the 19th century, however, was relatively peaceful, but widespread violence broke out in the region once again during the Civil War.

Today the North Caucasus is again in turmoil. The “cease-fire” in Chechnya is being violated every day, and peace talks seem to be going nowhere. So too is the cease-fire in Abkhazia highly precarious—the region is being blockaded now by both Georgia and Russia, and some 200,000 Georgian refugees are waiting to be repatriated. Neither does it appear that the Ingush-Ossetian conflict over Prigorodnii *raion* is close to resolution, with 60,000 Ingush refugees still in temporary housing in Ingushetia. Dagestan, which is extremely heterogeneous ethnically, is a powderkeg. There are some 30 recognized nationalities in the republic, ranging in population from 1000 to 700,000. All are engaged in a struggle over schools, subsidies for newspapers and other cultural institutions, and access to public office (particularly police chiefs, procurators, judges, and mayors). The cities in the republic are

multiethnic, while the countryside is increasingly so, creating an extremely complex and volatile ethnic mosaic.

Thus 1992-1995 has been a period of intense conflict in the region, conflict fought under the banners and slogans of extreme nationalism. But while these slogans often include noble words about the need to defend culture, religion, and the nation, they are in fact mostly about property, and in particular, about land.

Some of the many disputes over land in the region are rooted in the deportations of the Stalin era. Contrary to conventional wisdom, the 1944 deportations of the Chechens, Ingush, Karachai, Balkars, and others were not punishments for collaboration with the Nazis—rather they were retribution for the resistance of the highland peoples of the region to collectivization and Soviet power before and during the war. Nevertheless, for a period after 1945, a spirit of genuine proletarian internationalism characterized the area—there was no hope under socialism for property and land, so there was nothing to quarrel about. It was when private ownership of various assets, particularly land, became conceivable in the Gorbachev era that intense ethnic conflict broke out. In the absence of a clear understanding of who owned what and well-defined laws about private property, land redistribution and the privatization of resorts, restaurants, hotels, enterprises—indeed, virtually all the valuable assets of the region—created new causes for conflict between the peoples of the region. Fortunately, the situation is beginning to stabilize somewhat because ownership has been more or less settled—now, little is left to redistribute.

When he spoke at Berkeley in 1992, Professor Arutiunov had argued that the introduction of Russian troops into the region would likely lead to a general uprising in the North Caucasus. However, such an uprising did not take

place after Moscow's invasion of Chechnya two years later. The Chechens did receive some support from their close ethnic cousins, the Ingush and the Akkins, and to a lesser extent from the Avars (Shamil, the great leader of the highlanders in the North Caucasus War of the 19th Century, was an Avar, and the Avars had been close allies of the Chechens at the time). Also, small numbers of Abkhaz, Adygei, Cherkess, and Kabardin volunteers helped the Chechen resistance, as did some Tatars, Estonians, Ukrainians, and mujaheddin from Iran and Afghanistan. But the role of volunteers from outside the conflict zone was much more limited than had been the case in Abkhazia. Moreover, the governments of Chechnya's North Caucasian neighbors did nothing except call for a cessation of hostilities.

There were several reasons for this. First, Dudaev's regime had discredited itself in the eyes of the highlanders in the three years between the end of 1991 and the end of 1994. Second, extreme nationalists elsewhere in the region had likewise lost much popular support because of their manifest inefficiency and even dishonesty and graft. Third, the presidents of the republics of the region, almost all of whom are former Communist Party officials, had managed to acquire much of the popular support lost by the nationalists—this despite the fact that in 1991-1992 there had been widespread demonstrations calling for their removal. Each of these presidents now has relatively good relations with Moscow, and each has managed to present himself as a pragmatic politician interested in stability and opposed to the romantic, disruptive policies of the nationalists. Finally, each has managed to wrest considerable privileges from Moscow by pointing to the threat of popular unrest and potential support for the Chechens if Moscow is stingy. And Moscow itself is now very aware that the carrot is much more effective than the stick, having learned its lesson in Chechnya.

The only real anomaly is President Aushev of Ingushetia. Aushev has a professional military background, never having been a Party official. Despite his inexperience, he has proven to be an honest and consistent politician who objected strongly to the invasion of Chechnya but managed to keep his people out of the conflict. There is still a risk, however, that the conflict will spread to Ingushetia, as suggested by a number of recent incidents, including the bombing of Ingush settlements along the border with Chechnya by the Russians. And the Ingush remain extremely hostile to the Russian troops.

The enormous destruction of life and property in the region—houses demolished, cattle destroyed, fields burned—and the huge numbers of refugees, homeless, and unemployed resulting from the violence in South Ossetia, Abkhazia, North Ossetia, and Chechnya have

demonstrated to the peoples of the North Caucasus that there are no winners from ethnic conflict. Even when land is seized, it is no longer valuable, assuming one can keep it. As a result, there has been a profound change in mentality over the last two or three years. They are not afraid of violence—they do not scare easily—but the peoples of the region are indeed afraid of the destruction of their way of life and their relations with their neighbors. An indicator of this new, more mature mood was a 1994 referendum in Balkaria, in which 94 percent of those voting rejected the bifurcation of the Karbardin-Balkar Republic.

The Chechens, however, are a special case. All the peoples of the North Caucasus are proud, freedom loving, and independence minded, but all except the Chechens experienced feudalism. The others had their kings, khans, emirs, barons, nobles, gentry, serfs, yeomen, and slaves—

It was when private ownership of various assets, particularly land, became conceivable in the Gorbachev era that intense ethnic conflict broke out in the North Caucasus.

only the Chechens had none of this. Theirs was a patriarchal, militarized, democratic society where social ties were horizontal, not vertical. Even Shamil was seen only as a charismatic military leader, not as ruler of the Chechens.

This is true of Dudaev today as well. Dudaev's popularity had been waning before the Russian invasion due to pervasive crime and corruption in his republic and deplorable social conditions. But with the invasion, the Chechens forgot their differences and rallied around Dudaev. Dudaev is obeyed not as a president but as a military leader. Even those who had a vendetta against him have put their desire for revenge aside. A former air force general, Dudaev managed to earn the respect of his fighters as a genuinely talented war commander.

Nevertheless, Dudaev today is weak, even in the highland areas of Chechnya. Most of Chechnya is now occupied by Russian forces. There is no real front—there are only small groups of Chechen fighters concentrated in the mountains. It is therefore possible that these guerrillas could be suppressed. However, this would require more inhuman bombing of civilians or even the use of chemical weapons. But the war has already caused so many losses for the Russians. Reliable sources indicate that, official figures notwithstanding, Russian military casualties number some 6,000 dead and many more wounded. The Chechen fighters, in contrast, have probably lost only some 2,000—they were better trained and

had numerous military advantages. But at least 30,000 civilians have been killed in the conflagration, some 50 percent of whom were ethnic Russians. And most were women, children, and the elderly. Prolonging the war will only add to this total.

Still, it is possible that the level of fighting will abate. In two days, Shamil Basayev achieved what Russian democrats had been unable to accomplish in six months. Basayev, who led the Chechen raid on Budyonovsk, forced Moscow to the negotiating table. Basayev had himself lost eleven members of his family. It is this loss of family and friends that will make the Chechens fight on, regardless of whether the other highland peoples are tired of war. Today, although Russian commanders are sometimes able to arrange cease-fires with their Chechen counterparts, there are always Chechen fighters in the group who have lost family and friends and who will say, "You have no right to negotiate in my name. I will find another commander and go on fighting."

Even if the remaining resistance groups in the mountains are dispersed, then, the effects of the war in Chechnya will be felt for years to come. Chechen resistance fighters have identified individual commanders, officers, pi-

The enormous destruction of life and property in the region and the huge numbers of refugees, homeless, and unemployed have demonstrated to the peoples of the North Caucasus that there are no winners from ethnic conflict.

lots, and Chechen collaborators against whom they have sworn revenge. Chechen terrorism in the coming years will therefore not be random—for the most part, it will be directed at specific targets, as in the case of the car bombing of the then commander of the Russian forces in the republic, General Romanov.

The war has meant that many Chechen refugees have fled to cities and towns throughout Russia. Even if these refugees want to see an end to the violence, traditions of inter-Chechen and clan loyalty will induce them to harbor those Chechens seeking to carry the war to Russia. Neither is there a shortage of weapons or money for the Chechen resistance.

In the North Caucasus, few of the ethnic Russians who have fled the region will return while many of those remaining will leave. Most are still there today because they have nowhere to go, but as soon as there is a reasonable opportunity to move, they will do so. Most of the

other non-indigenous minorities in the region will do the same. Stavropol and Krasnodar *krais* will attract many of those who leave the republics of the North Caucasus, and they will accordingly become more ethnically heterogeneous. This will create further tensions in the region, in particular within the Cossack communities—already Cossacks in the region have engaged in pogroms against immigrants.

Thus the North Caucasus will remain extremely unstable for years to come. As a result, conditions will be very unfavorable for the development of a rule of law, the creation of a middle class, economic recovery, and democracy. Former communists will continue to draw the most popular support, because they will be viewed as the least likely to destabilize the region even more. Nevertheless, it appears unlikely that there will be secessionist attempts by the other North Caucasus highlanders in the foreseeable future.

Karabakh: A Soluble Problem

Ronald Grigor Suny

Ronald Suny, Professor of Political Science at the University of Chicago and currently Visiting Professor of Political Science at Stanford University, spoke on November 21, 1995, about the prospects for peace in Nagorno-Karabakh. The event was co-sponsored by BPS, the William Saroyan Chair in Armenian Studies, and the Center for Slavic and East European Studies.

While the violence in Nagorno-Karabakh has been raging for some six years now, the roots of the conflict go back at least to a number of political decisions made in the Stalin era. Some analysts, however, argue that the conflict is somehow ancient, tribal, even primordial, and they conclude from this that the conflict defies solution. In fact, the causes of the conflict are not so much primeval as obscure, and they are rooted in relatively modern, specific, and contingent events of our own century—particularly, the 70 years of Soviet rule, 20th century nationalism, and the discourse of the modern territorial state. As a result, the conflict is considerably more susceptible to political solution than is frequently assumed. To appreciate this, however, one must understand the character of ethnic identity, the way nations are constituted, and the relationship between state collapse and nation building

As many students of the subject have shown, the territorial state system, and nationalism as a political ideology, are essentially modern phenomena, having emerged within the last 200 years. Previously, other types of organization dominated the political landscape—dynasties, religious orders, city states, and so on, which meant that territorial borders were quite permeable. In the last 200 years, borders have hardened and have thus become much less transversable.

Ethnicity is an individual's most basic unit of identity that defines the way in which social difference is constructed. It is not, therefore, an objective cultural attribute—rather it is a means for differentiating oneself and one's community from "the other." The boundaries of ethnicity are accordingly far more blurry than is often assumed. Objectively, for example, Armenians and Azeris may be far more similar than they are different, and there may thus be far less cultural distance between Armenians and Azeris in the Caucasus than there is between various groups within the ethnos—e.g., between Armenians in Armenia and diaspora Armenians. For an ethnic identity to survive, then, its boundaries must be maintained and policed—Armenians are always worried that if they fail to police their own ethnic boundaries, their identity will disappear. Thus difference determines the content of ethnicity rather than the reverse.

In fact, what an ethnic group is not is often much clearer than what it is, especially to those in the group. Many Armenians, then, are very proud of their culture even though they know very little about it. What they do know is that they are neither Turks nor Azeris, and as a result, they often treat intermarriage between, say, Armenians and Turks as cultural betrayal. Boundary maintenance in this case, then, has nothing to do with religion.

The key to boundary maintenance is determining what behavior is acceptable and what is unacceptable, and then policing that boundary. People of Armenian heritage in this country, for example, are told to be wary of the temptations of American life, and they are told that particular kinds of "American" behavior are unacceptable. If the rules of behavior are violated, the violator is seen as having rejected his or her Armenian heritage and has instead become an American.

The tendency in the late twentieth century has been to forgo broader, civic understandings of identity in favor of narrower, ethnic understandings—from civic nationalism to ethnic nationalism, with imagined borders consequently proliferating even as they grow harder. Today, the nation-state is the only game in town, the only way to participate in international politics, and it is perceived as the only way to reap the benefits and privileges afforded by international lending agencies. The new formula for obtaining international attention and benefices are nation, democracy, and markets.

As a result, the fifteen Soviet successor states have been working hard to constitute themselves as nations. This, however, has proved very difficult, thanks to 70 years of Soviet internationalism and participation in a transnational space. Indeed, many are now nostalgic for the ethnic peace, transnationalism, and sense of belonging they felt as part of the former Soviet "homeland."

A second important issue is how nations are constituted. In addition to celebrating internationalism, the Soviet state paradoxically also reinforced the perception of differences between the peoples of the USSR. Individuals were required to identify their "nationality" in their internal passports. Union republics and other ethnically-defined administrative units of the Soviet federation were estab-

lished, thereby territorializing ethnicity, with titular nationalities afforded particular material privileges and cultural rights. The history of Azerbaijan, for example, was therefore written and taught as the history of the Azeri people, not the history of all the peoples of Azerbaijan, including its many minorities. This only reinforced the belief that the territory of Azerbaijan belonged to the Azeris.

Territorial homelands, however, are constructed, imagined concepts. The territory of what is now Armenia had, in the mid-19th century, a majority Muslim population. Even Yerevan's population was majority Muslim at the turn of this century. The reality of the Caucasus is that it is extremely heterogeneous ethnically, and while in the Soviet era it was becoming more self-consciously ethnic and more homogeneous, this was only a very marginal trend until 1989. And the urban intelligentsia, which always played a key role in promoting these processes, and which grew inordinately in the Soviet period thanks to massive subsidies by the state, continues to promote them today as the intelligentsia has come to play a larger role in politics.

A third issue is the relationship between state collapse and nation making. The notion of "transitions to democracy" is in fact a very misleading euphemism for what is going on today in the Soviet successor states. What has been happening for the most part has been deconstruction, institutional breakdown, and coups without states, not the creation of new democratic states. And in fact, many of the successor states have recently become less democratic. Above all, throughout the region there has been a radical decline of state authority. And the state comes first—without the state, there can be no markets, no rule of law, no democracy, and no social order.

What is the relevance of all this for Nagorno-Karabakh? Over the past year, there has been a gradual stabilization of state authority in the Caucasus. Aliev in Azerbaijan has survived a coup attempt and has consolidated his political position in the recent, highly managed parliamentary elections. He has also begun to demonstrate a genuine interest in a solution to the Karabakh conflict. Georgia too is in much better shape than a year ago. Shevardnadze also has survived a coup attempt, and he has reigned in the paramilitary Mkhedrioni and consolidated power through an relatively free and fair parliamentary election. As for Armenia, it appears relatively stable, and Ter-Petrosyan faces a compliant parliament after a dubious election. All this makes some kind of negotiated solution at least possible.

There are, however, a number of factors which must be accounted for in assessing the prospects for peace in Karabakh. First, it is essential to appreciate the influence

of Russia in the region. Russia is the colossus of the Soviet successor states—even with its current weakness, it is more powerful than any of its neighbors. Russia has thus claimed a special role in the Near Abroad, arguing that no other power is able or willing to challenge its po-

The tendency in the late twentieth century has been to forgo broader, civic understandings of identity in favor of narrower, ethnic understandings.

sition. Russia's southern border with the Caucasus is, however, its most vulnerable, as the war in Chechnya has demonstrated. And Russia does indeed have a vital interest in preserving its territorial integrity as well as in bringing order to the Transcaucasus. And it has convinced itself that it confronts a Muslim threat from the south, with some pointing to a perceived threat from a "Muslim Crescent" running from Adzharia in Georgia to Tatarstan in central Russia. As a result, Russia is determined to ensure that other powers, notably Turkey and Iran, do not replace it as the dominant power in the region, which means in turn that any solution to Karabakh must involve Russia.

Second, the West has a role in contributing to a resolution of the conflict, although it has a much weaker hand than Russia. There is now, in fact, a window of opportunity for the West. Indeed a high level team has formed in the State Department, and even the White House has shown some interest. Thus the US appears to be serious about contributing to some sort of agreement. But the West must recognize Russia's paramount influence, which means that Washington faces a dilemma. It wants at the same time to encourage Russia to play a constructive role in the Near Abroad while preventing Russia from bullying its neighbors and deterring Moscow's increasingly imperialistic tendencies.

Third, the fact is that Armenians have won the war. The victory, which surprised Suny as much as others, is explained in part by Russia's role in the conflict. But much more important was the internal unity of Armenia since the Soviet collapse. Armenia has a strong, deeply-rooted sense of nationhood, which enabled it to mobilize its population much more easily than Azerbaijan. Indeed, Azerbaijani national identity is much more recent and weaker. The Armenians are the Israelis of the Caucasus, and they openly see themselves that way.

Fourth, Azerbaijan has two advantages—its close ties to Turkey and its massive oil reserves. It is the latter which accounts for the dramatic increase in US interest in the

region. State Department officials argue that the US government has tied the hands of American oil men in Iraq and Iran, and the government cannot afford to do so again in Azerbaijan.

Finally, Armenian-Azeri enmity now runs very deep. Both sees themselves as victims at the hands of the other. The Azeris in particular feel their losses in the war over

Finally, enforcing such an agreement will require an international peacekeeping force with a large Russian contingent—at least 30 to 35 percent Russian. It will be critical to include the Russians in the peace process, thereby accomodating Russia's self-image as a great power in its own neighborhood.

The notion of “transitions to democracy” is in fact a very misleading euphemism for what is going on today in the Soviet successor states.

Karabakh, and they also see themselves as victims of the 1990 crackdown by the Soviet military in Baku. The dominant discourse in Armenia today, in contrast, is triumphalist but with a notable tinge of anxiety. Karabakh is seen as the last line of defense—Armenians have been pushed back everywhere, and if Karabakh is lost, the Armenian nation itself may be lost. Still, in both countries there is also a profound war weariness. And both sides are increasingly aware that a purely military solution to the conflict is impossible.

Thus there is now a moment of opportunity. Both Armenians and Azeris can imagine a brighter, peaceful future, characterized by greater stability and prosperity based on oil and the possibility of “peace pipelines” that would give both sides even greater incentives to cooperate.

What might a possible solution look like? First, it must be non-revolutionary—both sides must lose something and both must gain something. Both principles of international law—territorial integrity and self-determination—must be accomodated. This requires that Nagorno-Karabakh remain *de jure* a part of Azerbaijan, but it must be afforded the maximum amount of autonomy possible short of full independence. It must, in short, be a fully self-governing republic within Azerbaijan, with full control over its own politics, economy, tax system, and cultural institutions. Karabakh must also have some degree of guaranteed representation in the Azerbaijani parliament. There must be also unfettered passage between Karabakh and Armenia, while those who have lost their homes and property will have to be compensated. The Lachin corridor should be demilitarized and should be recognized as a transit zone between Karabkah and Armenia (as proposed by the Russians but to date rejected by the Armenians). There should be no Armenian enclaves within Azerbaijan other than Karabakh, while Shusha should be a multinational city within Karabkah that is populated by both Armenians and Azeris, with guarantees of protection for the latter by both Karabakh and Armenian authorities.

Political Leadership Strategies in Azerbaijan

Leila Aliyeva

On Tuesday, November 28, 1995, Leila Aliyeva presented a talk entitled "Political Leadership Strategies in Azerbaijan." Dr. Aliyeva is Director General of the Center for Strategic and International Studies in Baku, and is currently a Research Fellow at the Kennan Institute in Washington, DC. The talk was co-sponsored by BPS and the Association for the Study of Nationalities.

Aliyeva began by reviewing the background of Abulfaz Elchibey's election as president of Azerbaijan in June 1992 after the former Communist Party first secretary, Ayaz Mutalibov, was forced to resign as Chairman of the republic's Supreme Soviet earlier in the year. Elchibey, who was at the time of his election the leader of the Azerbaijani Popular Front, was typical of the first generation of post-communist leaders in the former Soviet Union, many of whom were idealistic former dissidents who ultimately proved to be unskilled and naive as politicians. Tolerant, flexible, and a champion of peace, Elchibey wanted a maximum amount of freedom for Azerbaijan. His pro-Turkish foreign policy at the time was widely misunderstood. What he wanted was not some sort of union or confederation with Turkey. Rather, he wanted Azerbaijan to follow Turkey in establishing a secular, pro-Western democracy in a predominately Islamic society. Neither did Elchibey wish to suggest that Turkey should replace Russia as "the elder brother" of the Caucasus. He was, perhaps naively, committed to liberalism and democracy, despite inhospitable conditions, and he backed these principles up in practice, for example, by offering sanctuary to important Uzbek opposition leaders, even though by doing so, he jeopardized Baku's relations with the authoritarian government of Tashkent.

Elchibey was particularly committed to a policy of tolerance towards Azerbaijan's ethnic minorities. The fact that he called the Azeri language "Turkic" caused considerable concern among non-Azeris in the country, but it too was an aberration, a misstep in an otherwise mature and tolerant policy. Earlier, the Steering Committee of his Popular Front had attempted to protect Armenians during the anti-Armenian pogroms in 1988 and 1990, setting up a hotline to deter violence when possible and to warn Armenians to take precautions when needed, policies Elchibey continued after he came to power.

Politically, Elchibey was committed to full pluralism and the protection of civil liberties, particularly freedom of association and freedom of the press. Again, well-known incidents in which journalists were beaten up at the order of the notorious Interior Minister at the time, were aberrations. Satirical newspapers and journals continued to publish during his tenure, ridiculing both the president

and the leadership generally without fear of official re-buke. In contrast, political satire in the media since Elchibey's removal first became more vulgar and then halted in the face of government repression, including the arrest of a number of journalists for insulting the pride and honor of President Aliyev.

On the economic front, however, Elchibey accomplished very little. The country was involved in a devastating war that created a huge refugee problem and greatly strained Azerbaijan's already depressed economy. The government was therefore very reluctant to launch a reform program that might bring long-term benefits at the expense of short-term costs. Nevertheless, numerous laws were adopted under Elchibey that might have served as the basis for marketization and the creation of a market-friendly legal infrastructure, but these laws have unfortunately never been enforced.

Elchibey's greatest error, however, was his decision to delay parliamentary elections, which in the final analysis never took place. Again, his decision was made in the face of serious reversals at the front, which made Elchibey reluctant to risk political instability in Baku. Political uncertainty, he feared, might affect the Azeri's ability to fight effectively. But by not holding elections, he was deprived of the political legitimacy needed to fight off the Moscow-backed coup that forced him out of office only one year after being elected president.

A second costly mistake was his delay in negotiating an agreement to develop the massive oil fields off the coast of Baku. One factor here was the February 1993 decision of the US Congress to impose a ban on all US government aid to Azerbaijan. A second factor was that again he was under massive pressure from Russia on the question, and making a deal that served Azerbaijan's interests and not Moscow's would have been very risky. Indeed, Russia was openly blackmailing Baku, saying that if it did not agree to an arrangement favorable to Russia, Moscow would allow the Armenians to take this or that city in Azerbaijan. This explains in part why Elchibey was so anxious to keep expelled all Russian troops on his territory. Had they remained, they would have been used by Moscow to support one side and then the other, depending on Moscow's interest at the moment. Elchibey felt that the

sooner Russian troops were out of the country, the sooner the conflict would be resolved. The Armenians, in contrast, came to the opposite conclusion, and events proved them right.

Ultimately, however, it was the setbacks at the front that undid Elchibey, particularly the loss of the province of Kelbajar the spring of 1993. Gussienov, the coup leader, had extensive ties with the Russian military, and Elchibey feared that resisting him would lead to the kind of bloody civil war that had brought Georgia to near anarchy after fall of Gamsarkhurdia. So rather than resisting, he simply left office returning to his home in Nakhichevan. By not resisting and defending his legitimate place, however,

The big difference between Presidents Aliev and Elchibey has been the former's recognition that the West does not really care about Azerbaijan's commitment to democracy and liberalism.

he lost not only personal authority but also helped discredit his liberal-democratic program. As a result, Giadar Aliev, another former CPSU first secretary in Baku and a one-time member of the CPSU Politburo, was able to take power and garner support for his more authoritarian, conservative approach.

Interestingly, however, Aliev did not fulfill Moscow's hopes that he would prove considerably more pro-Russian and pro-CIS than his predecessor. Instead, although Aliev has been more circumspect in his approach to Russia (for example, the word "Russia" is virtually banned in parliament in favor of euphemisms like "our external enemies" when criticizing Moscow), and despite his repeated assertion that Russia is not to blame for all of Azerbaijan's problems, he too has refused to allow Russian military bases in the country. Initially, he tried to oppose Russia by joining the CIS soon after he came to power. But having discovered that a more friendly approach to Russia brought no benefits in the way of support in Azerbaijan's war effort, Aliev returned to more or less the same policy towards Russia as Elchibey. Unlike Elchibey, however, he has moved to resolve the oil question, signing the "contract of the century" with eight western oil companies after giving Russia's Lukoil only a ten percent interest in the consortium.

The big difference between Aliev and Elchibey, then, has been the former's recognition that the West does not really care about Azerbaijan's commitment to democracy and liberalism. Nor does the West really care that Azerbaijan's territorial integrity has been threatened by the secessionists in Nagorno-Karabakh and the occupa-

tion of almost 25 percent of Azerbaijan's legally recognized territory by Armenians. Much more important is oil. As an astute and experienced politician familiar with the principles of *real politik*, he has played the oil card and played it well. As a result, despite his authoritarian tendencies, he has won the support of the West, as evidenced by the decisive show of support for him by Western representatives in Baku during the last coup attempt.

A compliant parliament and Aliev's skillful use of patronage and the administrative levers of the former Communist Party have enabled him to consolidate power and concentrate more and more authority in his own hands. He is a master of intrigue, and many in Baku suspect that he engineered one or both of the

two recent coup attempts to help him weed out his enemies. Aliyeva, however, was convinced this was not the case, based on her observation of Aliev's television appearances at the time.

Aliyeva concluded by noting that, despite considerable differences in style, the current leaders of the Caucasus have much in common. All have close ties to the militaries in their country; all have moved to consolidate power and eliminate the political opposition (although Shevardnadze has done so in perhaps a more democratic fashion); all face weak, compliant parliaments; and all have, to one degree or another, taken steps to accommodate Russia.

Please visit our website at <http://garnet.berkeley.edu/~bsp/caucprog.html>. The site is still under construction, but by the end of January we hope to have made available a calendar of upcoming events; a bibliography of publications on the contemporary Caucasus; a list of key institutions in the region and their addresses; and a list of language training opportunities in this country and in the region for those interested in studying the languages of the Caucasus.

UNRESOLVED TENSION IN ABKHAZIA

Catherine Dale

The author is a graduate student in Political Science at Berkeley. This short piece is taken from research findings presented at a conference entitled "Conflicts in the Caucasus" co-sponsored by the Peace Research Institute of Oslo and the Norwegian Helsinki Committee, held in Oslo 24-26 November 1995. Ms. Dale recently returned from a two week trip to Tbilisi, Georgia.

Over two years ago, the Abkhaz capital Sukhumi was captured by ethnic Abkhaz, members of the Confederation of Peoples of the Caucasus, some Russian Federation troops, and other Russian citizens. Since then, Russian and international mediation efforts have produced a stable cease-fire. Currently, thirty-six military observers from the United Nations Observer Mission in Georgia (UNOMIG), under the leadership of Major General Per K@llstr'm, oversee the peacemaking efforts of approximately 3,000 CIS troops, primarily ethnic Russians. The troops are deployed along both sides of the Inguri River which separates Abkhazia and Georgia proper. But the parties have yet to find a political resolution, and the situation on the ground remains tense and volatile. Why is this conflict still simmering?

Part of the explanation rests in the destabilizing effects of Russian military officers, soldiers, and other citizens in the conflict. This involvement, which began almost with the inception of the conflict, was demonstrated most dramatically by the downing of a Russian SU-27 flown by Russian Major Shipko in March 1993 and corroborated by the testimony of many witnesses. Russian help was critical to the victory of the far outnumbered Abkhaz. Most Georgians, when asked against whom they are fighting in Abkhazia, answer "the Russians." Regardless of the degree to which Russia's involvement is officially sanctioned, this widespread perception challenges the legitimacy of the Russian troops currently "making peace" in the region.

Another part of the explanation is that the magnitude and quality of violence during combat seems to have mobilized powerful and persistent hatreds. This hatred is by no means "primordial," however: deep-seated passions can emerge very quickly if the imagery, rhetoric, and associations with war are compelling enough. Both Georgians and Abkhaz have submitted horrific, highly detailed accusations of genocide against each other. Moreover, there are continuing incidents of violence on the ground. For example, in March and April 1995 in the Gali district of Abkhazia, where many Georgians live, Abkhaz troops carried out two brutal "searches" that led to a number of Georgian casualties. At the same time, both sides have attempted to reintroduce heavy weaponry into the conflict zone, according to UN reports. By October 1995, then, many Georgians were convinced that if they set foot

in Abkhazia they would be killed. Thus a solid basis for even minimal trust does not yet exist.

Another major issue is the refugee crisis. The Abkhaz, who comprised only 17.8% of the population of Abkhazia before the war, fear that the return of their displaced Georgian neighbors might threaten their physical safety as well as their current monopoly of political power. In turn, Georgian refugees are concerned for their own safety should they return in small numbers. For the Georgian government, under pressure from well-organized refugee groups to take action to secure their return, the stakes are high. The presence of refugees living in every available inch of hotel space in the country and barely making ends meet is a constant reminder to the political opposition and the population as a whole that Shevardnadze "lost" Abkhazia. But the pace of resettlement has been agonizingly slow. Only 311 of over 200,000 refugees have been allowed to return legally, and the Abkhaz proposal to admit up to 200 per week has been rejected by the UNHCR as wholly inadequate.

Tension surrounding the refugee issue has been heightened by provocative rhetoric. A year ago, on 13 September 1994, Russian Deputy Defense Minister Kondratyev tossed a match into an explosive situation by announcing to a large gathering of Georgian refugees that mass repatriation into Gali would begin the next day and would be supported by Russian peacemakers. After a flurry of high-level meetings, Yeltsin announced on 19 September that all parties had agreed to delay this repatriation. In October 1994, Major General Vasilii Iakushev, the Commander of CIS peacemaking troops on the ground in Abkhazia, called the mediators' objectivity further into question by stating that the international community should let the Abkhaz choose their own fate, and he added that their choice would be to join Russia.

One year later, however, the picture had changed dramatically. On 17 July 1995, Georgian Deputy Prime Minister Tamaz Nadareishvili stated that Georgia did not need input from the UN, the OSCE, or Russia regarding repatriation. If no agreement were reached by the end of July, the refugees would return spontaneously. General Iakushev responded that if a mass, spontaneous return began, the refugees would be protected by his forces. Shevardnadze has repeatedly focused attention on this

issue by asserting that the refugees would return home very soon.

An even more basic issue is that there appears to be no viable political solution to the conflict. Georgia has offered the Abkhaz autonomy within a federal structure, but the Abkhaz insist on a “confederal” arrangement with only very limited powers for the central government. Russian officials are clearly losing patience with the

A resolution to the Abkhaz conflict is tied closely to domestic politics in both Georgia and Russia.

Abkhaz: a Russian Foreign Ministry statement in August 1995 stated that the Abkhaz stance was counterproductive and that Russia was prepared to respond “in the harshest way possible.”

A critical result of the lingering deadlock is that both sides are losing faith in the mediators. Last spring, following the brutality in Gali, Georgia criticized the UN and CIS forces for failing to protect returning Georgian refugees. The Abkhaz, in turn, criticized the peacemakers for failing to keep infiltrators from crossing the Inguri into Abkhazia. In September 1995, Georgian Prime Minister Otar Patsatsia stated that Georgia would insist that both CIS and UN peacemakers withdraw when their current mandates expire since Georgia could no longer trust their intentions. And at the beginning of November, Shevardnadze stated that if the refugees were not allowed

to return soon, Georgia would reexamine the role of the mediators since they had achieved nothing and had become an obstacle to the return of the Georgian refugees.

A resolution to the Abkhaz conflict is tied closely to domestic politics in both Georgia and Russia. The Abkhaz are clearly unwilling to sign any major agreements until election results in Russia make clear how much support they might expect from their large neighbor to the north. The results of the presidential elections next June may bring about a change in Russia’s policies toward the other successor states. Meanwhile, Shevardnadze’s success in sidelining the opposition in Tbilisi and in consolidating his power through victory in what are widely perceived to have been unfair elections in November, may multiply his real or perceived options.

Russia’s role will clearly be critical to efforts to find a political settlement for the Abkhaz conflict, but it is not yet clear what role for Russia would be most propitious. Neither is it clear how the international community can be most effective in working with Russia to bring about a resolution of the conflict.

Upcoming Events

April 26-28, 1996. The Association for the Study of Nationalities (ASN) and the Harriman Institute are co-sponsoring the annual ASN convention at the Harriman Institute, 420 West 118th Street., International Affairs Building, 15th Floor, Columbia University. Panels focusing on the Caucasus are: "Turmoil in the Caucasus," chaired by Edward Walker (Berkeley), with paper presentations by John Colarusso (McMaster), Catherine Dale (Berkeley), Arthur Khachikian (Stanford), and Irakli Tsereteli (CEU); "Islam and Identity Politics in the Caucasus," chaired by Tadeusz Swietochowski (Monmouth), with presentations by Mahir Ibrahimov (Azerbaijani Embassy), Daniel Sneider (Christian Science Monitor), and Nayereh Tohidi (UCLA); "Security in the Caucasus," with paper presentations by Anders Troedsson (Embassy of Sweden) and Stephen Blank (US Army War College); "Azerbaijan: Past and Present Dilemmas," chaired by Reuel Hanks (Kennesaw), with papers presentations by Firouzeh Mostahari (Penn), Renee Pruneau (US Government), Tadeusz Swietochowski (Monmouth), and Gyane Hagopian (Berkeley). Individual papers include "Electoral Behavior in Armenia" by Arthur Matirosyan (Harvard); and "Russia and Azerbaijan" by Nayereh Tohidi (UCLA).

May 17, 1996. The Berkeley Program in Soviet and Post-Soviet Studies will be hosting a conference entitled, "Past as Prelude: The Cultural, Social, and Political Roots of Identity in the Caucasus." Details of the conference will be made available by the end of January—for details, check our website at that time.

June 6-8, 1996. The University of Leiden will be hosting the eighth Colloquium of the Societas Caucasologica Europaea. The first two days of the conference will be devoted to Caucasian linguistics and closely related matters. The final day will be devoted to the culture, history, and conflict in the North Caucasus. Those interested should contact Riëks Smeets, Department of Comparative Linguistics, Leiden University, P.O. Box 9515, NL-2300 RA, Leiden, The Netherlands (tel. 31-71-272509).

Other News

New Journal entitled *Caucasian Regional Studies*. The newly established International Association for Caucasian Regional Studies (IACRS) is planning on publishing a new international journal to cover contemporary issues of the Caucasus. The journal will be titled *Caucasian Regional Studies*. The idea of the journal came out of a conference held in Tbilisi on September 16-20, 1995, which also led to the founding of IACRS. Member of the editorial board of the new journal are Alexander Kukhianidze (Tbilisi State University); Stephen Jones (Mt. Holyoak College); Jean Radvanyi (INALCO, France); Dmitri Furman (Institute of Europe, Moscow); Leila Aliyeva (Centre for Strategic and International Studies, Baku); Grachia Galstian (Centre for the Studies of the Humanities, Yerevan), and Malkhaz Matsaberidze (Tbilisi State University).

Upcoming article in the National Geographic on the Caucasus. National Geographic's February issue will have a large article on the Caucasus. The article reportedly will include a detailed map showing the location of ethnic groups.

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