



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

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## A Message from the Executive Director

This coming academic year will be the first full year for our Caucasus Program, and I'm pleased to report that we have some exciting plans. This spring we will welcome our first Visiting Scholar, Dr. Ghia Nodia to Berkeley, and we also expect to hold a conference either in Tbilisi or in Berkeley in the spring term on our research theme for the year, "Nationalism, Ethnopolitics, and Conflict in the Caucasus." In addition, we have begun distributing a new e-mail calendar of scholarly events for specialists on the Caucasus; we have created a Caucasus website with useful information about our Program and the region, as well as links to numerous other internet resources on the Caucasus for scholars; and we are continuing to support graduate student and faculty research in the region.

Dr. Nodia will join us this spring semester as our first Caucasus Visiting Scholar. Dr. Nodia is the Chairman of the Board of the Caucasian Institute for Peace, Democracy, and Development (CIPDD) in Tbilisi, and he is an editor of the monthly English language journal, *The Georgian Chronicle*. Dr. Nodia also serves part-time as Head of the Political Science Department at the Institute of Philosophy of the Georgian Academy of Sciences and as Professor in the Department of Sociology at the Tbilisi State University. While at Berkeley, Dr. Nodia will continue his research on national identities and ethnic conflict in the Caucasus and lead a series of graduate seminars on contemporary issues in the Caucasus. He

will also help design our spring conference, which we will advertise as soon as the particulars have been worked out.

This past September, we distributed our first "Caucasus E-Mail Calendar." The calendar provides news about upcoming events, announcements, and important publications dealing with the Caucasus, and it will be distributed once every month or two. Our hope is that the calendar will keep scholars in the Caucasus, the U.S., Western Europe, and Russia informed about developments in the field of Caucasus studies and enhance opportunities for cooperative research. I encourage our readers to send information about events, research projects, and important publications to Stella Paras at [bsp@garnet.berkeley.edu](mailto:bsp@garnet.berkeley.edu); include "Caucasus Email Calendar" in the subject line. Also, if you wish to subscribe, send a message to Stella at that same address. Include your e-mail address and a brief description of your current position and research interests.

An archived copy of the calendar can also be found at our website (<http://garnet.berkeley.edu/~bsp/caucasus/caucprog.html>). The site includes a program description, past issues of our Newsletter, the Caucasus E-mail Calendar, a list of key research institutions, a linked list of useful web sites dealing with the Caucasus, a short bibliography of works in English on the Caucasus, and a page on Chechnya with publications by our affiliated faculty and academic staff.

This past academic year has also been a busy one for the program. Catherine Dale, a UC Berkeley Ph.D. candidate in Political Science, traveled to Georgia in October 1995, where she made many contacts for the program and conducted research on the Abkhaz conflict. She then presented a paper on Abkhazia at a conference entitled "Conflicts in the Caucasus" held in Oslo on 24-26 November 1995. Catherine and fellow political science graduate student David Hoffman were both in Baku studying Azeri and conducting research over the summer. Catherine used the opportunity to travel to Tbilisi, Abkhazia, Yerevan, and Karabakh in pursuit of her research interests, while David spent a month in Kazakhstan continuing his research on the Caspian pipeline controversy. In November 1995, Professor Steve Fish (Political Science) took a research trip to Baku where

*In This Issue:*

David Hoffman: "Beyond the Bottleneck: Oil and Politics in the Near Abroad, an update" .....	3
Ghia Nodia: "The Origins of Georgia's 'Pro-Western Orientation'" .....	5
Michael Ochs: "Update on Azerbaijan" .....	7
Robert Bruce Ware and Enver Kisriev : "Daghestan after the Chechen Conflict" .....	10
Catherine Dale: "The Bridge Over the River Inguri and Beyond" .....	13
M. Steven Fish: "Impressions of Azerbaijan" .....	16

he conducted numerous interviews and gathered material for his research on parties and party formation in post-communist societies. Finally, I traveled to Yerevan and Tbilisi in June to interview leading scholars as potential best candidate for our Visiting Scholar position, as well as to pursue my own research interests on center-periphery relations, federalism, and ethnic conflicts in the former Soviet Union.

We benefited from the visits of many scholars of the Caucasus to campus last academic year. Speakers included Leila Aliyeva (Center for Strategic and International Studies, Baku), Sergei Arutiunov (Institute of Ethnology and Anthropology, Moscow), Thomas Goltz (independent journalist and filmmaker); Fiona Hill (Harvard's Kennedy School); Raffi Hovannisian (Armenian Center for National and International Studies, Yerevan); Richard Hovannisian (UCLA, history), Nikolai Hovhannisian (Institute of Oriental Studies, Yerevan); Katrina Menzigian (American University of Armenia, Yerevan), Michael Ochs (OSCE), Daniel Snyder (*Christian Science Monitor*), and Ronald G. Suny (Chicago, political science).

We also held our first Caucasus conference in May. Entitled "The Past as Prelude: The Cultural, Social, and Political Roots of Identity in the Caucasus," the conference took place at Berkeley and included presentations by Sergei Arutiunov (Institute of Ethnology and Anthropology, Moscow, Caucasian studies: "Representations of the 'Other' in Russia's North Caucasus"); Richard Hovannisian (UCLA, history: "Armenia: The Evolution of a Modern Identity"); Stephen F. Jones (Mount Holyoke College, Russian and Eurasian studies: "Georgians: Europeans and Asians, Christians and Muslims?"); Michael Khodarkovsky (Loyola University, history: "Of Enlightenment and Colonialism: Russia in the North Caucasus before the Nineteenth Century"); Johanna Nichols, (Berkeley, Slavic: "Languages and Ethnic Groups in the Caucasus: Overview and History"); Harsha Ram (Berkeley, Slavic: "The Caucasus: Literary Exile and Colonial Policy in the 19th Century"); Ronald Suny (Chicago, political science: "Nation-making, Nation-breaking: The Caucasus in the Soviet Empire"); and Tadeusz Swietochowski (Monmouth College, history: "Azerbaijan: The Legacy of History in a Borderland").

Finally, I'm pleased to welcome Ivan Ascher, a new graduate student in Political Science, to Berkeley. Ivan comes to us from the Strengthening Democratic Institutions Project at Harvard's Kennedy School, where he worked as a research assistant for Fiona Hill. Ivan is studying Turkish this semester and plans to study Azeri in Baku in the summer. He is particularly interested in Chechnya and Russia's role in the Caucasus.



*Ned Walker with Suzy Antounian of AUA at Lake Sevan, Armenia during the summer of 1996.*

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# Beyond the Bottleneck: Oil and Politics in the Near Abroad, an update

*David I. Hoffman*

David Hoffman is a second year Ph.D. candidate in political science at UC Berkeley. He spent the summer of 1996 in Baku and Almaty studying Azeri and consulting for Cambridge Energy Research Associates. David is also serving as Graduate Student Coordinator of BPS during the academic year 1996-97.

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Since the dissolution of the Soviet Union, hydrocarbon resources—specifically, oil and gas reserves—have been identified as perhaps the most important source of economic revival for the Soviet successor states. This has been especially true for two countries whose populations are dwarfed by their massive energy reserves: Kazakhstan and Azerbaijan. In the past six to eight months, a series of events on the energy front has contributed to a palpable shift in both countries' prospects for realizing substantial energy revenues in the near future, as well as in their respective strategic orientations.

In Azerbaijan, the Azerbaijan International Operating Company (AIOC), a consortium of several western and Russian energy companies and the State Oil Company of the Azerbaijan Republic (SOCAR), has moved forward with plans to export "early-oil" to the West using the existing infrastructure of the Russian Transneft pipeline system. Currently, no export route out of Azerbaijan actually exists; its only major pipeline was constructed in Soviet times to transport crude oil *from* Russia down to Azerbaijan's two refineries. The flagship project of the AIOC has been the development of the Azeri, Chirag, and Güneshli offshore oil fields in the Caspian Sea. Until this past year, however, a combination of political and technical roadblocks had stymied efforts to export the nearly seven billion barrels of recoverable, high-quality oil contained in these fields. Influential actors within the Russian government—especially the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and the Ministry of Environmental Protection and Natural Resources—applied intense diplomatic pressure in opposition to the project, arguing that mineral resources in the Caspian beyond a 10-mile coastal zone should belong in common to all the littoral powers, as stipulated by the 1940 Soviet-Iranian Treaty on Trade and Navigation and the Russo-Iranian Friendship Treaty of 1921. Accordingly, they argued that the AIOC's project was unlawful. At the same time, chronic political instability in Azerbaijan itself, stemming both from military reversals in Nagorno-Karabakh and from internal

power struggles, further delayed the signing and implementation of the AIOC agreement.

Over the last year, the situation in Azerbaijan has changed dramatically. On the one hand, the Russian government has muted its opposition to the AIOC project, while on the other, Azerbaijan has enjoyed a period of relative peace and domestic stability. A cease-fire in Nagorno-Karabakh is now entering its second year, and parliamentary elections, whatever their validity, have provided nominal legitimacy to President Heydar Aliyev and his regime, helping to consolidate his political position. The AIOC has also solved its pipeline dilemma by obtaining Transneft's permission to reverse the flow of the existing pipeline from Baku. From a state of virtual paralysis, AIOC now plans on exporting "early oil" by the end of 1996.

Kazakhstan has also experienced a breakthrough in its efforts to boost its export capabilities. Bereft of sufficient oil transport infrastructure in its western regions—especially from the gigantic Tengiz field which alone contains an estimated 8-10 billion barrels of oil—the Kazakhstani government in 1992 formed the Caspian Pipeline Consortium (CPC) with Chevron and the Russian and Omani governments in order to develop an export route to the world (i.e., non-CIS) market. However, disputes over financing had frozen the project, and for five years Kazakhstan's export capacity languished at artificially depressed levels. In March of this year, however, the CPC was restructured, with Oman losing most of its stake while seven additional western and CIS companies were added. In April, President Yeltsin flew to Almaty to give his blessings to the new arrangement. Importantly, this new arrangement resolved the critical issue of financing and represents a huge step forward for the project.

Both Azerbaijan and Kazakhstan have thus cleared important bottlenecks in their search for increased oil

exports. But how does this affect the broader political and economic situations of these two nations? It is still too early to say whether Kazakhstan and Azerbaijan are headed towards a “happy hydrocarbon future,” especially because large-scale energy revenues are still a few years off. This, however, is not for lack of anticipation. In both cases, policy-makers are well aware of the implications such revenue would have for their countries. Access to world markets for Azerbaijani and Kazakhstani oil promises hard-currency revenues of a hitherto unheard of level for both governments, partly because in both cases the state oil company and the government itself control a portion of the project. Besides providing much-needed infusions of cash, oil revenue would likely strengthen the sovereignty of each state by bolstering its economic independence from Russia and by contributing to the end of governmental non-payments for basic services and utilities. These non-payments have hobbled economic recovery efforts thus far.

Azerbaijan’s AIOC “early oil” and Kazakhstan’s CPC agreements will also affect state-building efforts in both countries. Azerbaijan, for example, may use energy sector revenues to expedite the building of a genuine national army to replace the system of semi-independent, private

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militias that have so far proved extremely ineffective on the battlefield and politically volatile at home. Kazakhstan, on the other hand, faces the monumental task of converting the dilapidated city of Akmola into its new capital, a task that is estimated to cost between seven and ten billion dollars. The move is intended to pre-empt separatism in the predominately-Russian north and to help separate the state apparatus from powerful *zhus-* (clan-) based “national-mafioso” structures in and around the current capital, Almaty. Given the fact that the development of Akmola is an extra-budgetary item and that foreign investment for the move has not been forthcoming, it is reasonable to conclude that capital streams made possible by the CPC’s completion will be used to build the new capital.

It is impossible to analyze developments in Azerbaijan and Kazakhstan without discussing the role of Russia.

The Russian government and Russian energy companies—primarily Lukoil, Gazprom and Rosneft—were opposed to the emergence of AIOC and CPC. Until this past year, the Russian government had frequently been accused of obstructing the development of independent export capabilities by Azerbaijan or Kazakhstan, either directly (as in 1994, when voices in the Russian government advocated bombing Baku to forestall the AIOC agreement) or indirectly (by limiting the quantity of oil Kazakhstan could export through the Transneft system). Within the last year, however, there appears to have been a strategic shift in the Russian government’s stance towards oil exports from the near abroad. Azerbaijan’s brash decision to go ahead with the “early-oil” option in the absence of a Caspian demarcation—and the deafening absence of any punitive response from Moscow—may have opened the way for Kazakhstan. It is more likely, however, that Moscow’s willingness to allow and even expedite the AIOC and CPC agreements reflect commercial realities more than political pressures.

In 1991-92, leaders in both Kazakhstan and Azerbaijan dreamt of exporting their oil and gas completely independently, bypassing Russia entirely through pipelines into Turkey and perhaps Iran. It soon became clear, however, that regardless of their political preferences, Russia inevitably must play a major role in exporting oil to the world market because of its controls of centralized pipeline networks. Thus, despite local concerns that Russia would have direct control over what promises to be Kazakhstan’s and Azerbaijan’s primary hard-currency lifelines, Russian companies were invited to participate in both the AIOC and CPC projects. Lukoil now controls ten percent of AIOC’s Apsheron project, and Lukoil and Rosneft together command a 20 percent share of CPC, while the Russian government has an added 24 percent. The economic benefits of Russian participation have apparently outweighed the political risks of expediting projects that might lead to an unfavorable demarcation of the Caspian Sea; increase the economic viability of Azerbaijan and Kazakhstan and thus erode their incentives for reintegration with Russia; consolidate a Western foothold in the strategically critical Caspian region; and, in the case of CPC, establish 56-percent foreign ownership of one of the largest infrastructure projects taking place on Russian soil.

Whether the catalyst for the recent changes in Azerbaijan and Kazakhstan’s hydrocarbon prospects lies in Moscow or elsewhere, it is clear that a major change is underway in these two countries. As revenue-generating and state-building tools, the export of oil and gas will become increasingly important in years to come. The price these two states have had to pay for AIOC and CPC is high;

Russia's position on issues like taxation and the allocation of pipeline access can ultimately make or break both projects. But it remains to be seen whether oil and gas revenues help consolidate their sovereignty or serve to bind them closer to Russia.



*David Hoffman in Baku with fellow BPS graduate students (left to right) Marc Howard, Lise Morjé Svenson, and Catherine Dale in August, 1996.*

## The Origins of Georgia's "Pro-Western Orientation"

*Ghia Nodia*

Ghia Nodia is Chairman of the Board of the Caucasian Institute for Peace, Democracy, and Development (CIPDD) in Tbilisi. Dr. Nodia is editor of the monthly English language journal, *The Georgian Chronicle* and serves part time as Head of the Political Science Department at the Institute of Philosophy at the Academy of Sciences of Georgia and as Professor at the Department of Sociology at the Tbilisi State University. Dr. Nodia will join BPS for the spring 1997 semester as our Visiting Scholar for our Caucasus program.

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Georgian political developments during its fight for independence and its attempt to maintain its independence despite interference by Russia are not understandable without an appreciation of Georgian orientations to "the West." In recent centuries, Georgians have generally believed in the notion that "we do not belong here." In the medieval period, Georgia was politically tied to the Arab, Persian, and Turkic-speaking worlds. This, however, was considered an aberration by most Georgians, a counter to a cultural-geographical "center of goodness and hope" against which the "wrongness" of Georgia's neighbors could be contrasted. Georgia, it was assumed, "belonged" to this center of goodness, and only by establishing proper links with it would the country be able to find its true self. For the Georgian elite since the 19th century, this center of goodness and true self was the West, and the basic Georgian political project was understood to be the building of bridges to the West and to become westernized itself.

Georgia's identity has traditionally linked to another, more practical concern: the search for a suitable patron.

Georgia's neighbors were usually aggressive and far more powerful, which meant that Georgia has been engaged in a centuries-long struggle for survival. Prior to Russia's involvement in the Caucasus in the late 18th century, Georgia was the victim of Turkish and Iranian imperial ambitions. As a result, there was constant warfare on Georgian territory, and Georgia suffered from periodic invasions and chronic backwardness. In order to survive, it was clear that Georgia needed a patron.

The choice of patron, however, had to be legitimized by Georgia's definition of its own identity. Central to this self-identity was Christianity. The country saw itself as an "outpost of Christianity" in a sea of hostile Islamic states. It was therefore natural that in the late medieval period, Georgians considered Russia to be the most natural candidate for the role of patron: it was nearby, and not only was it Christian, but it was Orthodox as well. Accordingly, a treaty was signed between Russia and Georgia in 1788 whereby Georgia conceded its sovereignty in international relations to Russia in exchange for protection from Iran. Unfortunately for

Georgia, however, the Russian vision of its role as patron differed dramatically from Georgia's. In 1795, Russia failed to protect the country from a devastating invasion by Iran that had been provoked by the treaty of 1788. Ever since, the Georgians have nurtured a memory of Russia's failure to come to its aid and believe that it did so in a deliberate effort to weaken Georgia and pave the way for its annexation by the Tsar, which took place in 1801.

Thus Georgia finally had a patron but not the kind of patron envisioned by the Georgians. Russia brought peace and guaranteed the preservation of Georgia's Christian identity. But it also eroded Georgia's political identity

***The notion that Georgia belonged in "the West" provides a certain foundation for Georgia's "pro-western orientation."***

and ultimately threatened its cultural identity through deliberate Russification. As a result, Georgian elites today are deeply ambivalent about Russia. On the one hand, they appreciate Russia's role in ensuring the physical survival of the nation, but on the other they see Russia as a threat to their freedom and identity.

Until the nineteenth century, the idea of the West did not play an important role in Georgian political discourse. Strategic thinking was linked to the triangle of Russia, Iran, and the Ottoman Empire. However, as Georgian intellectuals became exposed to modern Western political thought through their studies at Russian universities, they came to share the Russian intelligentsia's penchant for liberal ideas. But pro-western Georgians were divided into two camps: those favoring some form of socialism and those adhering to Western liberal nationalism. Nevertheless, by the second half of the nineteenth century, the Georgian elite, both nationalist and socialist branches alike, had become dominated by Western ideas and embraced Western role-models. Indeed, there was no nativist anti-Western backlash in Georgia like the "Slavophile" movement in Russia. But being pro-Western did not imply moving away from Russia because socialism was the more dominant trend among Georgian Westernizers.

The Bolshevik revolution changed this. By refusing to accept the Bolshevik coup and choosing loyalty to the classic western version of social democracy, Georgian Social Democrats opted for the West and rejected Russia. Declaring its independence in May 1918, Georgia looked for guarantors of this independence in the West, and in

particular to Germany and Great Britain, although in the end, Georgia reached out to Germany rather than Britain. While this proved to be a miscalculation, a new paradigm was born. By the logic of its internal development, Georgia was rejecting totalitarian Russia and striving to become part of the democratic West, which, it was hoped, would in turn provide security guarantees for its independence and support for democracy against the imperial cravings of Russia. However, when in 1921 the Red Army took Georgia by military force, the West did nothing. Still, by then the West was expected to support Georgia, and this expectation became a constant element of Georgian political thinking.

It was during this period that the ideology of Georgian cultural-psychological "westernness," which was contrasted with the "Asiatic-despotism" of Russia, began to take root. According to this view, the Georgian sense of individualism and love of freedom contrasted sharply with Russian collectivism, egalitarianism, and traditions of slavery. Georgia's political subordination to Russia was thus contrary to Georgia's national personality. Naturally, these traits induced Georgians to seek closer contacts with the West.

These beliefs may be based on historical realities or they may simply represent Georgian wishful thinking guided by ideological dogmas. But in either case, the notion that Georgia belonged in the West provides a foundation for Georgia's "pro-western orientation" today. However accurate its assumptions, the notion contributes to the propensity of Georgians to represent their country as intrinsically western.



*Ned Walker with Manana Gholidze outside Tbilisi, summer, 1996.*

# Update on Azerbaijan

*Michael Ochs*

Following is a report on a trip to Baku taken on April 26-29, 1996 by Michael Ochs, Professional Staff Advisor, US Commission on Security and Cooperation (CSCE) in Europe. Dr. Ochs gave a presentation at UC Berkeley on March 19 on his trip to Baku taken during September through December 1995 when he served as Co-Coordinator of the CSCE/UN Joint Electoral Observation Mission in Azerbaijan. We are grateful to Dr. Ochs for forwarding us this report on a more recent monitoring trip.

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The backdrop to the trip was the upcoming June 16 presidential election in Russia. Throughout Transcaucasia, Russia's presidential election has left both governments and opposition movements in a waiting mode. Most interlocutors believed Boris Yeltsin would win but often expressed concern about a possible communist victory, about the implications for stability in Russia if Yeltsin won by questionable means, and about how any future occupant of the Kremlin would treat the countries of Transcaucasia, as Russian-inspired pressures for "integration" among the CIS states intensified.

***Nagorno-Karabakh:*** The cease-fire of May 1994 continues to hold, with occasional, small-scale lapses, but little real progress has taken place in the OSCE negotiations. Among the major sticking points are security arrangements for Nagorno-Karabakh, control of the Lachin corridor (which links Nagorno-Karabakh to Armenia), and most problematic, the ultimate status of Nagorno-Karabakh. Baku has offered Nagorno-Karabakh a status like Tatarstan's within the Russian Federation, which Azerbaijani officials characterize as the highest possible form of autonomy. Nagorno-Karabakh representatives, however, continue to insist on full independence.

On April 21, Azerbaijani President Heydar Aliiev and Armenian President Ter-Petrosyan issued a joint communiqué in Luxembourg that reconfirmed their commitment to a peaceful resolution of the conflict and to the Minsk Group talks. In general, though, the mood in Baku was gloomy about prospects for a negotiated settlement in the near future.

An important consideration in evaluating prospects for a resolution of the Nagorno-Karabakh conflict are three key presidential elections in 1996—in Russia (June-July), Armenia (September), and the US (November). From the perspective of Baku (and Tbilisi), the most meaningful election is Russia's: a victory by Communist Party leader Gennadii Zyuganov in Russia, they believed, would likely

continue or intensify Russian support for Nagorno-Karabakh (and Abkhazia). In any case, the political sensitivities involved in these elections have dampened hopes for any major movement on Nagorno-Karabakh this year. In 1998, however, Heydar Aliiev will be running for reelection as President, and he will presumably be under greater pressure before then to show some progress on the return of occupied territory. Addressing villagers and refugees outside Baku on April 28, President Aliiev acknowledged that his efforts to achieve Azerbaijan's goals through negotiations had not yet been successful, but he pledged to continue trying and promised that the territories would be regained and that refugees would be able to return to their homes.

***Elections:*** In February 1996, repeat parliamentary elections took place in 15 of Azerbaijan's 125 electoral

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districts. Opposition sources reported that they were able to field candidates, but the voting and vote count featured the same sort of violations that had marred the first round and runoff elections in November 1995. For example, the Chairman of Musavat—which had been barred, on questionable grounds, from fielding a party list in November—ran in Sumgait, but he said there was widespread ballot stuffing and opposition observers were ejected from polling stations. Ultimately, of the 15 opposition candidates who entered the lists, two won seats, one from the Azerbaijani Popular Front (APF) and one from Musavat.

Local elections are anticipated in the near future, though the law on local elections has not yet been passed, and no date has been set. Opposition sources said they would participate, even though they harbor no great hopes for

fair elections, nor do they see local councils as bodies with any real power.

**Parliament:** In Parliament, Speaker Rasul Guliev, who was reelected without opposition in November 1995, has criticized both his parliamentary colleagues (for their lack of professionalism and work habits) and the government (for its proposed budget). He laid out to Commission staff his legislative reform agenda, which includes: judicial

**Government officials and opposition discuss domestic Azerbaijani politics with an eye on Russia.**

reform, laws liberalizing the economy, and education (in which one important issue is whether university deans will be elected or appointed). Discussing the upcoming local elections, Guliev stressed the importance of creating elected bodies to counter the local executive authorities which “do whatever they want.” [Editor’s note: In mid-September, Guliev resigned as parliamentary speaker. He had lost the support of his party, Musavat, apparently because he had fallen out of favor with President Aliiev.]

**Government-Opposition Relations:** After the final round of voting in February 1996, the parliamentary representation of the opposition is APF (4), Party of National Independence (4), and Musavat (1), for a total of nine out of 125 seats. With limited opportunities to influence legislation, the opposition has nevertheless managed to present its views on important issues, including the budget and an amnesty bill, and occasionally gets issues onto the parliamentary agenda. APF deputies have prepared a bill, for example, on local elections.

Opposition spokesmen reported that government pressure, after an election-related lull, had intensified in February, with the sentencing of a leading Popular Front activist and the seizure of APF headquarters in Nakhichevan. Even more ominously, in early April 1996, the authorities organized a People’s Convention, at which government officials, including President Aliiev, blasted the opposition as enemies of Azerbaijan’s sovereignty and independence. Some of Aliiev’s aides specifically linked members of the Popular Front and the Social Democrats, among other opposition parties, with the March 1995 coup attempt.

In the wake of the People’s Convention, although tensions have risen, no mass repression has taken place, no parties have been banned, and opposition political parties still publish their newspapers. The opposition remains, however, under pressure; its possibilities for action and

political organization—especially outside Baku—remain limited, and its newspapers are subject to censorship. Moreover, after the People’s Convention, an atmosphere has been created that could facilitate a larger-scale crackdown.

**Azerbaijani-Russian Relations:** Government officials and opposition spokesmen discuss domestic Azerbaijani politics with one eye on Russia. Moscow’s pressure on Baku for strategic concessions has not abated: indeed, everyone expects it to intensify. Some Azerbaijani officials point to the unhappy experience of Georgia as an argument against any concessions to Russia. Tbilisi has yielded to Moscow’s pressure for military bases, yet Moscow has done nothing to help Georgia regain even nominal control of Abkhazia, though Moscow professes to recognize Georgia’s territorial integrity. In fact, Moscow has failed to carry out all the sanctions imposed on Abkhazia at the CIS Summit in Moscow in January 1996. At the People’s Convention in April, government ministers openly called former warlord Surat Husseinov (who led the uprising that toppled Popular Front President Abulfaz Elchibey in June 1993 and who subsequently, as Prime Minister, plotted against Aliiev) an agent of the Russian Ministry of Defense. Various speakers pointed to Moscow’s harboring of other coup plotters who had fled Azerbaijan, and they clearly implied that Moscow was deeply involved in attempts at subversion.

Nevertheless, President Aliiev has strongly backed President Boris Yeltsin in his reelection bid (as have all the leaders of the CIS states). Along with Armenian President Ter-Petrossyan, Georgian President Shevardnadze, and heads of Russia’s southern republics, Aliiev met with Yeltsin in Kislovodsk in early June to sign a Declaration on Inter-Ethnic Accord, Peace, and Economic and Cultural Cooperation in the Caucasus. Although Azerbaijan has no reason to expect Russian pressure to ease under Boris Yeltsin, Baku evidently prefers him to Gennadii Zyuganov, who openly calls for the “voluntary restoration of the USSR.” Baku also hopes that a reelected Yeltsin will carry out the idea behind his statement at the January 1996 CIS Summit that the status of autonomous republic would be the most Nagorno-Karabakh could hope for.

One issue that has not aggravated Russia’s relations with Azerbaijan, unlike some other former Soviet republics, is the status of Russians. In mid-June, a delegation from the Russian Duma, led by Speaker Gennadii Seleznev, visited Baku in hopes of improving bilateral ties and reportedly pronounced itself satisfied with the conditions of the “Russian-speaking population.”



**Media:** The media have been under government pressure since the fall of the Popular Front government in summer 1993. For example, though opposition parties function in Azerbaijan and can publish newspapers, they have been subject to censorship, which intensified after an October 1994 coup attempt. Opposition newspapers were not closed down, but they often appeared with “blank spots,” indicating where the censor had cut material deemed objectionable or sensitive. Officially, the authorities only acknowledged military censorship, pointing to the ongoing Nagorno-Karabakh conflict. However, newspapers of all political parties, the independent press and other media have, in fact, been subject to political censorship, as well. According to opposition sources, no newspapers were able to print the Popular Front’s response to attacks on the opposition during the People’s Convention of April 5-6. Opposition political parties reported that their newspapers must be delivered to the censor by 9 p.m. the evening before the next day’s scheduled publication and that the only available typograph—which is state-controlled—will not publish

On the other hand, there are certainly strong pressures on the opposition that are not likely to disappear as long as Aliev is in power. After the People’s Convention, there may be more broad-based repression, especially if the economic situation deteriorates further—or, less likely, if Aliev decides to make an accommodation with Moscow that the opposition, which strongly backs his rejection of Russian demands, cannot accept. Given the turbulent political history of Azerbaijan since the late 1980s, normalization of government-opposition relations will be a long-term process and will require the best possible will from all sides, as well as careful monitoring and encouragement by Western governments.

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the paper without a seal of approval from the censor. The Ministry of Defense handles military censorship, while the President’s staff directs political censorship.

**Outlook:** Perspectives for developing freedom of the press depend on the course of political reform in Azerbaijan and the general state of government-opposition relations. Musavat Chairman Isa Gambar speculated that Azerbaijan would have to decide in the next few years whether to take the “Central Asian route” and ban the opposition altogether, or to liberalize, which, he felt, would necessitate pre-term parliamentary elections. But these alternatives seem too stark for Azerbaijan, where—unlike Central Asian countries—the opposition was in power for a year under a Popular Front government. Simply banning opposition parties, especially under the close watch of Western governments, would entail serious political consequences. Along with staking a great deal on developing good relations with the West and the United States in particular, President Aliev has pledged to observe and promote democratic reforms. The constitution he shepherded to adoption last November enshrines the right of association, and it is undoubtedly a source of pride for him that Azerbaijan does not have the reputation of Central Asian states which permit no opposition.

# Daghestan after the Chechen Conflict

*Robert Bruce Ware and Enver Kisriev*

This essay summarizes a presentation on 18 September 1996 at BPS by Robert Bruce Ware, who serves as College Lecturer in Politics at Oxford University. Enver Kisriev is Head of the Sociology Department at the Dagestan Research Center of the Russian Academy of Science and advisor to the Chairman of the Daghestan Parliament. He participated as a negotiator in the hostage crisis in Kisliar and Pervomayskoye. The authors are grateful for the assistance of Tatiana Chubrikova, Head of the English Philology Department at the Daghestan Pedagogical University and Senior Translator for the UN High Commissioner on Refugees.

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Recent events in Chechnya threaten to destabilize the political situation in neighboring Daghestan, which has traditionally managed to preserve a delicate balance among its numerous ethnic groups. This is of special concern given Daghestan's rapidly expanding regional and international significance.

Ethnic relations in Dagestan are extraordinary not only for their rich diversity but also for their relative tranquility. Dagestan is home to more than 30 national groups. Largest among these are Avars, Dargins, Kumyks, Lezgins, Russians, Laks, Nogais, and Chechens, the last of which accounts for approximately eight percent of Daghestan's two million people. Despite this extreme heterogeneity, Daghestan is virtually the only administrative unit in the Caucasus that has not experienced significant ethnic conflict in recent years. This is surprising not only in view of Dagestan's ethnic diversity, but also in view of its economic deprivation. Despite subsidies from Moscow, Dagestan is one of

***Ethnic relations in Dagestan are extraordinary not only for their rich diversity but also for their relative tranquility.***

Russia's poorest regions. Dagestan's political stability is also remarkable in view of displacements inevitable in its rapid transition to democratic institutions in the absence of a mature democratic political culture.

There are at least three reasons for Dagestan's ethnic harmony. First, there is a rough parity among Daghestan's largest ethnic groups. Since no single group is sufficiently powerful to govern on its own, cooperation has long been a necessity. This has contributed, secondly, to a tradition of pragmatic accommodation among ethnic groups. Thirdly, this spirit of pragmatism is particularly prevalent among those political and entrepreneurial elites who play

influential roles within most national groups, and who generally have been loyal to Moscow.

Although flexibility is an important feature of Dagestan's ethnic relations, parity sometimes requires a prudent rigidity. In some areas, for example, local administrative posts are traditionally allocated to members of different groups. Alternatively, some important positions rotate among representatives of different groups. As a result, patterns of power within, and among, Daghestan's ethnic groups have contributed to a fragile political stability.

What are the prospects for the preservation of this stability? In the past, stability has been threatened by migrations of one group into the traditional territories of other groups. Recent displacements have occurred as a consequence of conflicts in neighboring Azerbaijan and Georgia. Yet the greatest dislocations, and the greatest threat to Daghestan's political stability, are the result of the war in Chechnya. Far from being concluded, it is possible that these risks may increase as a result of ambiguities in the recent settlement. These difficulties, in turn, may be traced to migrations enforced by central authorities.

In 1944, Moscow resolved to transport certain Caucasian nationalities across the Urals. The Chechen-Ingush Republic was liquidated and replaced by the newly formed Groznensky region. Some territory was taken from Dagestan to form the new region, while territories of the Vedensk district, including the Khasavyurt region, of the former Chechen-Ingush Republic were annexed to Dagestan. In the difficult winter of 1944, thousands of people from the Dagestani highlands were forcibly resettled into these territories.

The Chechen-Ingush Republic was restored in 1957 by a decree from Moscow. Chechen and Ingush peoples were

permitted to return to their native lands. The Groznensky region was abolished, and territories were restored to Daghestan.

With the decline of the Soviet system, among the first organized anti-establishment movements was that of the Chechen-Akkins, who sought the return of lands occupied by Laks in the Khasavyurt district after 1944. Actions by this group were well-organized and threatened bloodshed until the Third Council of the People adopted a resolution returning the district to the Chechens and providing for the resettlement of the Laks on land to the north of Dagestan's capital, Makhachkala. While this resolution eased tensions, funds for resettlement were not forthcoming, and the dispute remains unresolved and dangerous.

In at least one respect, the Chechen conflict simplified the political situation in Chechnya. Whereas Dudaev and his supporters may have been viewed as self-interested usurpers before the war, they are now considered national heroes and legitimate authorities. However, the Chechen war has tremendously complicated the political situation in Dagestan.

For their part, many Chechens hoped that Caucasian solidarity would ensure the support of their neighbors and were disappointed when Dagestan remained loyal to Moscow. They seem to have ignored traditional Daghestani resentments stemming from livestock rustling by Chechens across the Daghestan-Chechen border. Daghestanis also were disturbed when trains passing through Chechnya were robbed, and when passenger trains were reportedly shelled by Chechen separatists during the war. Yet despite these frustrations, the Kremlin's conduct during the war galvanized opposition to Moscow among the Daghestani people. Travel to and from Dagestan by rail, sea, and air (except to Moscow) was interrupted, and telephone communication was cut. The resultant interruption of trade led to 40-50% increase in the cost of basic foods. At the same time, Russian investment in Daghestan shrank dramatically. Moreover, although local authorities remained loyal, Moscow was viewed as highhanded in its dealing with them. Emblematic of these complexities was the popular response of Daghestanis to the hostage crisis in Kizlyar and Pervomaiskoe. Initial calls for revenge against the Chechens were replaced by dismay when Russian artillery shelled buildings occupied by Dagestani hostages.

On the other hand, Chechen resistance leaders have not always been sensitive to Dagestani sensibilities either. For example, when General Lebed signed his recent agreement with the Chechen opposition in the Dagestani town of

Khasavyurt, Aslan Maskhadov, the Chechen separatists' Chief of Staff, remarked that he was especially satisfied that the agreement was being signed on "sacred Vainakh land," apparently signifying that Khasavyurt and its region belonged to Chechnya. Dagestani newspapers responded angrily. Dagestani officials deferred from official protest, but when Dagestan's Secretary of the Security Council, Magomed Tolboev, and its Minister of Nationalities, Magomedsalikh Gusaev, were interviewed recently in the Daghestani state newspaper, they both declared that "Daghestan has never claimed a centimeter of anybody's territory and will never give up a centimeter of its land" (*Dagestanskaia Pravda*, 6 September 1996).

***The Chechen conflict has raised serious challenges to Dagestan's fragile political stability, and the war's displacement of populations threatens to undermine Dagestan's delicate ethnic balance.***

A politically independent Chechnya would probably raise the issue of the Khasavyurt and Novolakskiy regions, which were occupied by ethnic Chechens prior to 1944. At present these areas (together with the Kazbekovskiy region) contain approximately 100,000 Chechen ethnics and 30,000 Chechen refugees. Any effort on the part of an independent Chechnya to interfere with relations between Dagestan's Chechen-Akkins and other Dagestani ethnic groups would likely result in increased tensions in these regions and perhaps elsewhere in Dagestan.

In December 1994, immediately after the beginning of the Chechen war, approximately 150,000 "Internally Displaced Persons" (IDPs) crossed the Chechen border into Daghestan. The official identification of these refugees as "IDPs" is Moscow's way of emphasizing that the conflict is not international. Although about 30% of the Chechen IDPs found refuge in collective centers (including former schools, hostels, and factories), most were hosted by Dagestani families of Chechen origin in the border regions of Khasavyurt, Novolak, Babayurt, Kizlyar, and Botlikh. The majority of Chechen IDPs fled to the Khasavyurt district where over 70,000 sought refuge. This ethnic influx inevitably amplified tensions in what were already disputed territories.

IDPs received assistance from a number of different sources, including a one-time grant from the Russian government. Within a few days of the start of the crisis, the International Committee of the Red Cross established an office in Khasavyurt near the Chechen border and began supplying food and medicine on both sides of the border. In mid-January 1995, the UN High Commissioner

on Refugees (UNHCR) and UNICEF officers opened offices in Makhachkala where they were soon joined by the World Food Project (WFP). Weekly coordinating meetings were held in the Dagestan Ministry of Emergency Situations.

In April of 1995, the intensity of the fighting in Chechnya diminished. As a result, the Russian government stopped providing financial support for IDPs and began encouraging them to return to Chechnya. The number of IDPs in Dagestan decreased to around 30,000, where it remained through August 1996. Of course, the porous Daghestan-Chechnya border makes it difficult to determine the precise number of IDPs, and there has been a constant discrepancy between figures provided by the Russian Migration Service and the UN.

The UN was invited into the region by Moscow but was not allowed to operate inside Chechnya. It therefore organized much of its operation in Dagestan. Relations between the UN and the government of Dagestan have been good, though the latter sometimes found itself unable to assist the former. For example, the Dagestan Central Customs House remained under Moscow's control. When the last food lift arrived in July, customs officials would not permit WFP personnel to transfer cargo directly to UN warehouses despite pleas from Daghestan's Minister of Nationalities and the presence of the Daghestan Minister of Emergency Situations at the airport.

Despite the cooperation between the UN and the Dagestan government, the latter has concluded that the provision of humanitarian aid encourages IDPs to remain on Dagestan territory. This has created problems for local authorities and upset the delicate balance of nationalities. Many in Dagestan believe that the continued presence of IDPs is likely either to drag Dagestan into the Chechen conflict or to create conflicts within Dagestan. The hostage situation in Kislyar and Pervomaiskoe did much to increase these fears, as have reported Russian military incursions across the border. As the war moved into the mountains of Chechnya, IDPs already sheltering there sought refuge in the nearby Daghestan villages of Andi and Gagatli in Botlikh region. In the beginning of August, Russian planes reportedly bombed the Daghestan countryside in the vicinity of these villages, and federal artillery shelled the same region. As a result, the Dagestan government has repeatedly asked the UN to deliver its humanitarian aid inside Chechnya.

The Chechen conflict has precipitated other forms of displacement as well. During the war, anti-Caucasian sentiments caused many Daghestanis to return home from other parts of Russia. Moreover, the federal troops

withdrawing from Chechnya as part of the recent peace agreement are likely to be deployed in Dagestan. Already there have been conflicts between federal troops and local populations on the Dagestan side of the Chechen border. The Dagestan government has persistently requested that federal troops should not be deployed near villages as conflict is nearly inevitable between local populations and Russia's corrupt, demoralized troops, many of whom combine an ignorance of local ethnic traditions with anti-Caucasian prejudices. There have even been cases where troop deployments within Dagestan have led to the spread of weapons among peaceful populations. Occasional clashes between civilians and military personnel have resulted in fatalities and increased tensions. Daghestan's leaders have consequently sought to raise a local militia,

***The Dagestani government has persistently requested that federal troops should not be deployed near villages as conflict is nearly inevitable between local populations and Russia's troops, many of whom combine an ignorance of local ethnic traditions with anti-Caucasian prejudices.***

but they have encountered resistance from an anxious Kremlin. The Russian army seem to be more effective in *creating* enemies for Moscow than in fighting them.

Since the beginning of September, the situation in Dagestan has been a focus of Kremlin concern. Dagestan has been visited by a number of official delegations concerned about the local situation following the Chechen accord. On September 3, for example, there was a special flight to Makhachkala carrying a delegation headed by the Russian Transport Minister, A. Zaitsev. His goal was the rapid construction (commencing October 1) of a rail line from Karlanyurt to Kizlyar that will bypass Chechnya in order to provide rail communication between Moscow, Makhachkala, and destinations in Georgia and Azerbaijan. The link is to run 78 km at an estimated cost of \$80 million. It is significant that the construction of this line could signal either Chechen independence or a Russian blockade of Chechnya. Daghestan was also visited by a group of specialists from 14 central ministries headed by the Deputy Minister of Nationalities of the Russian Federation, K. Tsagolov. The stated goal of their mission was to investigate the situation in Daghestan "in all spheres."

This sort of attention from central government, though belated, would seem to be wise. The Chechen conflict has raised serious challenges to Dagestan's fragile political stability, and the war's displacement of local populations threatens to undermine Dagestan's delicate ethnic balance.

Far from being resolved by the recent settlement, these risks appear to have increased in proportion to the ambiguity of the present situation. If Dagestan is to remain the exception to ethnic conflict in the region, then it may require heightened sensitivity as well as tangible support from Moscow and international relief agencies. This is crucial in view of Dagestan's increasing geopolitical significance. Not only is Dagestan vital to Russian strategy in the Caucasus, but it also provides an important link in the pipeline that will bring Caspian oil to the West through Russia. Thus Dagestan may prove to be the linchpin in the security of two strategically important regions.

## The Bridge Over the River Inguri and Beyond

*Catherine Dale*

Catherine Dale is a second year Ph.D. candidate in Political Science at UC Berkeley. She spent two months in Azerbaijan this summer studying Azeri and conducting research on refugees and IDPs in Azerbaijan. She also spent one month based in Tbilisi continuing her research on the Abkhaz conflict, and she took one week researching Armenia and Karabakh as well.

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The square blue sign across the road and behind the guard station declared "Republic of Abkhazia," but my escorts from the United Nations Observer Mission in Georgia (UNOMIG) and I, who had been camped in our Land Cruiser in the hot sun for over three hours, were denied entrance. We had come from the UNOMIG office in Zugdidi, Georgia, fifteen minutes away, and we had just crossed the bridge over the Inguri River, which separates the former Abkhaz Autonomous Republic from the rest of Georgia. I was there at the personal invitation of the Commander of the UNOMIG forces, General Per Kallstrom, whom I had met at a conference in Oslo, to update my research on the situation on the ground in Abkhazia and the work of the UN. I had just spent a scintillating two months in Azerbaijan, exploring the political and economic implications of the presence of nearly 800,000 refugees and internally displaced persons (IDPs), but the crowning moment of my summer was to be this trip to Sukhumi. Not only is Abkhazia one of the most beautiful spots on earth, with its Black Sea coastline, lush vegetation, and snow-capped mountains to the east (as any of the myriad Soviet apparatchiki and army officers who used to vacation there will tell you), it also had been

the focal point of my research for almost four years. But I had become a pawn in a battle for jurisdiction between the UN and the Abkhaz, and so the stand-off continued.

The UN had been involved as observers in Abkhazia since August 1993. One month later, Abkhaz forces, augmented by assistance from the Russian military and volunteers from the North Caucasus, had captured Sukhumi from the Georgian troops and then pushed the front line south to the Inguri River, where we now stood. A series of UN-sponsored talks through the winter of 1993-94 produced agreement from both sides to work toward a lasting cease-fire and a political settlement. Subsequently, UN Secretary General Boutros-Ghali rejected the use of exclusively UN peacekeepers because insufficient progress had been made toward a political settlement. But an agreement signed by both sides in Moscow on 14 May 1994 set out the innovative substitute peacekeeping arrangement whereby a limited number of unarmed UN military officers would observe and closely coordinate with several thousand technically independent armed CIS peacekeeping forces (PKF).

The Moscow Agreement established a “Security Zone” extending 12 km on each side of the Inguri River, where both the weapons and the members of the armed forces of each former combatant are forbidden, and a “Restricted Weapons Zone” for approximately 12 additional km on each side. Our detainees at the border, these 18-year-old camouflaged Security Service officers lazily swinging their AK-47s through the air and taking pot shots at the hill behind their duty station, were technically independent of the Defense Ministry and thus not subject to this restriction.

The Georgians had argued against this pattern of deployment because it effectively marked off the territory the Abkhaz forces had taken in battle. They wanted the peacekeepers to deploy throughout Abkhazia to guarantee the safe return to the region of those who had fled across the Inguri during the fighting. In practice, despite the more limited deployment, and despite Abkhaz caution and

***The UN supports Georgian territorial integrity, and therefore does not and cannot recognize the Inguri River as a border. The Abkhaz, however, insist that anyone crossing into Abkhazia must apply for and receive an Abkhaz visa.***

sluggishness in registering returnees, many former residents have returned spontaneously. Toward the end of our three-hour waiting and negotiation period, when it became clear that the verdict for the day was a resounding “No,” we crossed back over the Inguri and spent several hours talking with Georgians from Abkhazia in and around Zugdidi. Many reported that they regularly but illegally criss-cross the river into Gali to check on their property; many have left one or two family members in permanent residence in their homes there while other family members live, study, and sometimes collect government or humanitarian aid in Zugdidi.

In practice, General Kallstrom reports that UNOMIG and CIS PKF cooperation is running smoothly. The approximately 1500-2000 armed CIS PKF troops maintain a series of stationary check-points throughout the Zones. The positions they keep are predictable, but there are no other routes for moving heavy weaponry through the area, and the frequency of their posts makes one very aware of their presence. They have been engaging in some demining activity, but their 25 personnel and limited equipment are pathetically insufficient for the magnitude of the task at hand. On days when the “UNMOs,” middle- to high-ranking military officers from several dozen different countries, are not tasked with escorting wayward

political scientists, they patrol in vehicles throughout the Zones, talking with local officials and looking for potential violations of the Moscow Agreement. Representatives of both organizations, and of the Abkhaz and the Georgians, meet regularly in the small, square one-story structure leaning out over the water from the Abkhaz side of the Inguri, just across the road from where we waited.

But as our idyll demonstrated, one problem with the arrangement was the nature of the relationship between the peacekeepers and the Abkhaz authorities. The UN supports Georgian territorial integrity, and therefore does not and cannot recognize the Inguri River as a border. Furthermore, the UN insists on freedom of movement throughout the Zones, in accordance with the Moscow Agreement. The Abkhaz, however, insist that anyone crossing into Abkhazia must apply for and receive an Abkhaz visa. They have issued UNOMIG “diplomatic passes,” which they consider another form of visa, but when UNMOs show these, which they do rarely, they tend to treat them as decoration. UNOMIG planned to bring me in as a “guest of the UN,” a visitor to the UN and its operations. Does such a status exist? In such a peacekeeping operation, does the UN get a measure of “sovereignty” of its own to distribute? The Abkhaz clearly thought not. A further element of the problem is that the Abkhaz authorities are not well coordinated. Calls from the General’s office in Sukhumi to the Abkhaz Foreign Ministry that day, a Saturday, at last produced a faxed message that I might enter. But the following day, the border guards once again insisted that they belonged to the Security Services, not the Foreign Ministry, and furthermore that they had heard nothing from their immediate headquarters in Gali, let alone from farther away in Sukhumi. Through a series of diplomatic concessions, I was at last awarded a shiny bright green and yellow sticker in my passport and permission to continue through Abkhazia with the UN.

A second and far more serious problem with the whole operation is its potential vulnerability to attempts by partisan actors to push the international community to act. Since March 1996, a mining campaign has been carried out primarily in the Gali and Ochamchira Districts. These newly laid mines have taken the lives of one UNMO officer and one CIS PKF soldier, as well as several civilians. A number of other mines newly laid along the road have been “discovered” as hapless large animals wandered onto them. The mine-laying takes place as discussions continue concerning whether to expand the CIS mandate in Abkhazia to include policing functions, and someone may well be trying to force the issue. If the CIS is given new functions, the UN mandate would also, necessarily, change.

At the same time, the mine that killed the CIS soldier had been laid earlier that day in a spot passed twice that day by the head of the Gali militia. Perhaps the attack was an assassination attempt against an Abkhaz authority figure who was making it inconvenient for some Georgian party. Or if one is inclined to conspiracy theories, perhaps the attack was a provocation by some Abkhaz seeking to demonstrate that the Abkhaz are persecuted and that reuniting with Georgia would surely mean death for the Abkhaz people.

One practical consequence of the mining is that the UN has temporarily canceled patrolling of Gali District outside the M-27, the main road from Zugdidi north to Sukhumi. The result is that an uncontrolled and lawless buffer zone has been effectively established between the former combatants.

The concerted mining campaign takes place against a backdrop of stalled talks on a political settlement. The Georgians have offered “the fullest autonomy,” and the Abkhaz have dropped their insistence on a confederal arrangement in favor of a “federative union,” but still there is no common language. The federative union means one state with territorial integrity and one voice at the UN, but composed of two equal centers of power in Tbilisi and Sukhumi, where questions are decided by consensus; the arrangement is strictly horizontal. Perhaps the key problem is the continuing focus by both sides on status rather than specific issues. It is possible that the de facto isolation of Abkhazia limits the opportunities for discussion by both official and non-official parties in a variety of venues and contributes to the stalemate. It is not hard to see why many actors are frustrated with the deadlock three years after the armed conflict ended, and why some might decide to take matters into their own hands.

Our own, far less turbulent stand-off at the Inguri River was at last resolved, and I entered Abkhazia the next day and began a productive visit. The battle has left no lasting scars but instead offered a clear view of the practical but potentially explosive issues the basic Agreement left unresolved. As tensions mounted, one UNMO said to me that he thought the most senior UNMO present would interpret the order to enter Abkhazia without showing documents as requiring us to get in the vehicle and keep driving north across the check-point, at which point, he added, the Abkhaz might well open fire.

This alarmist prediction was not realized, and the only casualty of the day may prove to be my passport. One week later at the airport in Tbilisi on my way home, the Georgian passport control officer, after discovering the



*Catherine Dale and a representative from the International Federation of the Red Cross with IDPs at a camp run by IFRC in Sabirabad, Azerbaijan during July, 1996.*

Abkhaz visa, snarled at me and hurled my passport back under the window. My passport may need to be conveniently lost before next summer and my next attempt to cross the Inguri.

# Impressions of Azerbaijan

*M. Steven Fish*

Steven Fish is an Assistant Professor of Political Science at UC Berkeley who visited Baku in December 1995 as part of his research on parties and party development in post-communist states. Following is a summary of a talk he gave at Berkeley on February 5 describing his impressions of Azerbaijan.

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My trip to Baku proved to be one of the most interesting research experiences that I have had in years. I am not a specialist in the politics of Azerbaijan, though I now plan to add studying the country to my research agenda. The impressions I share are therefore those of an interested non-specialist.

One of the most salient aspects of Azeri politics is the closure of the political system and the building of a cult of personality around the country's president, Haidar Aliev. Aliev clearly does not intend to follow the example of his counterpart in Turkmenistan, Saparmurat Niiazov, who is building a Kim II-Sung style cult of personality. Aliev's cult is softer and, to a Westerner, less bizarre. But there seems to be little doubt that he has managed, using the formidable political skills and knowledge of the country he acquired during his long years as the Brezhnev-era communist party first secretary in Azerbaijan, to concentrate as much power as possible in his own hands. Nightly news programs feature lengthy coverage of his personal daily schedule and interviews with admiring citizens. Still, since most televisions in Azerbaijan also pick up a Russian and a Turkish station as well as the (state-controlled) Azeri national channel, there is some doubt as to how effective the Azeri government's efforts to control information can really be.

The opposition to Aliev's government is spearheaded by a number of groups that grew out of the country's National Front organization, which was the focus of resistance to Soviet rule during the Gorbachev period and which held power under the government of Abulfaz Elchibay for a little more than a year (1992-93). Oppositionists, having had a taste of power and having built reasonably coherent organizations, struck me as remarkably upbeat about their own futures and about the long-run prospects for pluralism and political change in Azerbaijan. Although some have experienced harassment and even imprisonment, none of the opposition leaders with whom I spoke engaged in the gloomy, whining fatalism and complaining so commonly encountered among Russia's liberal oppositionists, both during the Gorbachev period and today.

As in many other former Soviet republics, nostalgia is palpable in Azerbaijan. Many residents of Baku speak wistfully of the days when their city was one of the most cosmopolitan in the Soviet Union, encompassing large communities of Armenians, Russians, Greeks, Jews, and people of many other nationalities. In the wake of the rise of Azeri nationalism and the anti-Armenian pogroms of the late 1980s and the early 1990s, the entire Armenian community, as well as much of the Russian community, moved from Baku, leaving the city far more culturally homogeneous—and to many Azeris, far less interesting and vital—than it was up through the late 1980s.

The desertion of the country by entire communities, combined with the government's policy of non-reform and the burdens imposed by refugees from areas occupied by Armenia (one-fifth of Azerbaijan's territory, including the disputed Nagorno-Karabakh region, is controlled by Armenia) has left Azerbaijan's economy in dire condition. Much of Baku is reminiscent of Moscow in 1990-91—visibly in decline and disrepair, starved for investment, and economically listless. Some new private cafés, kiosks,

***Many residents of Baku speak wistfully of the days when their city was one of the most cosmopolitan in the Soviet Union.***

and supermarkets have opened, and shortages of basic consumer items are not as acute as during the Gorbachev period. Still, little of the explosive new commercial life visible in Moscow and some other Russian cities, as well as in the capitals of the Baltic states and in many places in East Europe, is to be found in Baku. There is little evidence that the country's vast oil wealth has filtered down to any but the most highly circumscribed groups; and there is little chance that it ever will under the current regime.





*BPS Graduate students Catherine Dale and David Hoffman showing Professor Stephen F. Jones and Professor Tadeusz Swietochowski around Napa Valley after our May 1996 Caucasus conference.*

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## Notices

**UC Berkeley, William Saroyan Visiting Professorship in Armenian Studies.** Applications are now being considered for a Visiting Professor at UC Berkeley in Armenian Studies for the Fall 1997 Semester (August 19 to December 18, 1997). Field open and salary negotiable. The applicant is expected to teach one or two undergraduate courses on approved topics of Armenian Studies, supervise and assist student research, interact with faculty and students in related fields, present public lectures, and lead the development of an active program. The objective of the UC Berkeley Armenian Studies Program is to support an integrated program for students, faculty, scholars, and members of the general public on Armenian studies, including the Armenian language and literature, art and archeology, culture, history, politics, economics, and sociology. While the emphasis is on contemporary issues, the program is flexible and may encompass any of the study areas mentioned above. Candidates must have a Ph.D. or equivalent, teaching experience, and a high level of proficiency in the English language. To apply, please send a curriculum vitae, a

syllabus and description of proposed course(s), and at least two references to Dr. Barbara Voytek, Executive Director, Center for Slavic and East European Studies, University of California at Berkeley, 361 Stephens Hall #2304, Berkeley, CA 94720-2304 (e-mail [csees@uclink.berkeley.edu](mailto:csees@uclink.berkeley.edu)). The deadline for applications is November 1, 1996.

**Viktor Kamkin's Bookstore** has an extensive collection of books and periodicals on the Caucasus, many of which have long been out of print. The new Director of Periodicals Division, James Beale, is currently cataloguing the collection. For inquiries, e-mail him at [kamkin@igc.apc.org](mailto:kamkin@igc.apc.org). Some items may be limited to two or three copies.

## Caucasus-Related Research Projects in the US

**Brown University.** Stephen Shenfield, Terry Hopman, and Dominique Arel of the Watson Institute for International Studies at Brown University are undertaking a research project entitled, “**Reintegration and Disintegration in the Former Soviet Union: Implications for Regional Global Security.**” The Soviet successor states included in the study are Russia, Ukraine, Belarus, Georgia, and Kazakhstan.

**Brown University.** The Humanitarianism and War Project of the Watson Institute has published the following reports: (1) *Armed Conflict in Georgia: A Case Study in Humanities Action and Peacekeeping*, Occasional Paper #1, by Neil MacFarlane (team leader), Larry Minear, and Stephen Shenfield, 1996, 126 pp.; (2) “*Humanitarian Action and Politics: The Conflict over Nagorno-Karabakh*,” Occasional Paper #25, by Neil MacFarlane and Larry Minear, 1996. In addition, an Occasional Paper by Robert Seely and Greg Hanson is being finalized, the working title of which is “*War and Humanitarian Action in Chechnya*.” The papers are available on the World Wide Web at [http://www.brown.edu/Departments/Watson\\_Institute/H\\_W/H\\_W\\_ms.html](http://www.brown.edu/Departments/Watson_Institute/H_W/H_W_ms.html).

**Friends of the Georgian National Archives (FGNA)** has been formed to assist the Georgian archives in a time of economic and political upheaval. FGNA has been formed by an international group of scholars and activists. Their aim is to secure funding for the archives and to collaborate with archival authorities in Georgia to assist in preserving and making accessible the information stored in Georgian archives. Their goals include creating a multi-lingual database to enhance access to the collections and to facilitate repair of the archive’s buildings. FGNA welcomes your support. For more information, please contact: Professor Anthony Rhinelander, Department of History, St. Thomas University, Fredericton, NB, CANADA, E3B 5G3; tel: (506) 452-0614; fax (506) 450-9615; e-mail: [rhine@stthomasu.ca](mailto:rhine@stthomasu.ca).

**Harvard University, John F. Kennedy School of Government, Strengthening Democratic Institutions Project (SDI) —Initiative on the Caucasus.** In July 1993, SDI produced a background report on Ethnic Conflict in the Russian Federation and Transcaucasia, and in 1994-1995, with the assistance of Dr. Magomedkhan Magomedkhanov of the Institute of History, Archaeology and Ethnography in Makhachkala, Dagestan, SDI conducted an in-depth study of conflict in the North Caucasus region. A final report from this study, authored by Associate Director, Fiona Hill, *Russia’s Tinderbox:*

*Conflict in the North Caucasus and its Implications for the Future of the Russian Federation*, was published in August 1995. SDI is cooperating with the Conflict Management Group (CMG), headquartered in Cambridge, MA, in framing a session on Chechnya at the meeting of the Hague Initiative in the Netherlands in March 1996. The session was chaired by Director, Graham Allison, and President Mintimer Shaimiev of Tatarstan, and brought together Russian government and Chechen representatives, including Russian Nationalities Minister Vyacheslav Mikhailov, to discuss a negotiated solution to the war. SDI’s briefing materials on Chechnya for the Hague meeting set the agenda for the session, highlighted the futility of a military solution, and provided some suggestions of alternative steps for intervention. The conclusions and recommendations SDI laid out were reflected in the final declaration from the meeting and were subsequently echoed in the Moscow-Chechen peace initiatives signed by Minister Mikhailov in May and June 1996. In 1996, as a follow-up to the *Russia’s Tinderbox* report, the SDI Project also convened a seminar series on the “Caucasus and the Caspian” at the Kennedy School of Government’s Center for Science and International Affairs. This series will continue in 1996-1997. SDI expects to focus this year on broader strategic issues in the Caucasus and Caspian region, including the war in Chechnya; the ongoing conflicts in Georgia, Nagorno-Karabakh and North Ossetia-Ingushetia; the role of the Russian military in the region (covering issues such as the status of the North Caucasus Military District and Russian military basing agreements in Georgia and Armenia); oil and pipeline politics in the Caspian; and Russia’s relations with Turkey, Iran and other regional powers. SDI may be contacted on the web at <http://ksgweb.harvard.edu/csia/sdi/index.html>.

**The International Association for Caucasian Regional Studies (IACRS)**, formed in November 1995, plans to put out a journal entitled, “*Caucasian Regional Studies*.” For inquiries, send e-mail to [IACRS@IACRS.org.ge](mailto:IACRS@IACRS.org.ge), or write IACRS, Floor 5, D. Agmashenebeli Ave., 89/24, Tbilisi, 380008, Republic of Georgia.

**The Institute for War and Peace Reporting (IWPR)**, a UK-based charity, in collaboration with the Verification and Technology Centre (VERTIC) in London, and the Caucasian Institute for Peace, Democracy, and Development, have launched an expansion of the coverage of the journal, *War Report*, to the Caucasus. To subscribe, e-mail inquiries to [warreport@gn.apc.org](mailto:warreport@gn.apc.org). The June 1996 issue (No. 42)

of **WarReport**, the Bulletin of the Institute for War and Peace Reporting, is dedicated to the Caucasus.

**University of California, Davis.** Paula Garb, Joseph DiMento, and John Whiteley of the School Social Ecology and Global Peace and Conflict Studies at the University of California, Irvine, have received funding for a project entitled, “**Practical Peacemaking in the Caucasus: the Link between Regional Environmental Cooperation and Security.**” The project focuses on second track activities to promote environmental cooperation and security in the Black Sea Region, with special attention to the coastal areas of Russia, Abkhazia, and Georgia. Investigators have visited Sukhumi (June 1995), Tbilisi (January 1996), and Sochi, Sukhumi, Tbilisi, and Istanbul (August-September 1996) meeting with governmental officials, academics, and other environmental experts and representatives of NGOs. Plans are underway to organize two major meetings by representatives of the parties and experts from outside the region.

**University of California, Los Angeles.** Nayereh Tohidi of the Center for Near Eastern Studies of the University of California, Los Angeles, has been awarded a research grants for 1996-1997 to study **national identity and Islam in post-Soviet Azerbaijan.** Dr. Tohidi spent a month in Azerbaijan this past summer conducting field research. The project is a follow-up to Dr. Tohidi’s book on “Gender, Islam, and Nationalism in the Muslim Republics of the Former Soviet Union: The Case of Azerbaijan. She may be reached by e-mail at [ntohidi@humnet.ucla.edu](mailto:ntohidi@humnet.ucla.edu), or by phone at 310-337-1165.

<http://garnet.berkeley.edu/~bsp/caucasus/caucprog.html>

Our Caucasus Program web site includes a program description, past issues of our Newsletter and the Caucasus E-mail Calendar, a list of key research institutions, a linked list of useful web sites dealing with the Caucasus, a short bibliography of works in English on the Caucasus, and a page on Chechnya with publications by our affiliated faculty and academic staff.

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