



Contemporary Caucasus Newsletter

The Berkeley Program in Soviet and Post-Soviet Studies

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A Message from the Executive Director

We have come to the end of the third year of our Caucasus Program during which we focused on the Caspian oil boom and its ramifications for politics and society in the Caucasus and Caspian littoral states. As the academic year draws to a close, looming economic and political chaos in Russia reminds us that a shadow of uncertainty hangs over the “oil dreams” of the region. Will oil companies and local governments decide this fall on the route of the Main Export Pipeline which will bring Caspian oil to the world market, as long anticipated? Or will the economic meltdown in Russia throw a wrench into the works, further delaying this fateful decision? As many speakers at our annual Caucasus conference argued, the geopolitical and ecological stakes in the struggle for control of the Caspian pipeline routes are enormous, and the outcome of the decision on the route of the Main Export Pipeline will have inevitable consequences on long-term relations between the Russian Federation and the countries of the region.

Our annual Caucasus conference, “The Geopolitics of Oil, Gas, and Ecology in the Caucasus and Caspian Basin,” took place on May 16 in the Alumni House on the UC Berkeley campus. Nearly a hundred people turned out, indicating the high level of public interest in the Caspian oil strikes. Beyond the short summary of the conference proceedings presented below, BPS has published a conference report with a full summary of each presentation that is available through our office.

The conference capped a year of BPS-sponsored talks on the Caucasus. Our visiting speakers in 1997-98 included Vartan Oskanian (Armenia’s First Deputy Foreign Minister); Jayhun Mollazade (President of the US-Azerbaijan Council and editor-in-chief of *Caspian Crossroads* magazine); Levon Abrahamian (Professor of Anthropology at the Institute of Ethnography of Yerevan State University); Elizabeth Sherwood-Randall (former US Deputy Assistant Secretary of Defense for Russia, Ukraine and Eurasia); Armen Aivazian (Visiting Fulbright Scholar at the Center for Russian and East European Studies, Stanford University); Gerard Libaridian (former Senior Advisor to the former Armenian President, Levon Ter-Petrossian); Nasib Nasibzade (former Azerbaijani Ambassador to Iran); Rusudan Gorgiladze (former Chief Advisor to Georgian President Eduard Shevardnadze); and Oleg Grinevsky (a former Soviet diplomat and Ambassador, whose talk is summarized below).

Our annual visiting scholar for the current academic year is Dr. Leila Alieva, the former Director General of the Center for Strategic and International Studies in Baku. Dr. Alieva has served as the national coordinator of the United Nation’s National Human Development Report in Azerbaijan. She has broad expertise on Azeri society, having worked on a diverse range of issues, from economic reform in postcommunist Azerbaijan to the difficulties facing Azeri women in this turbulent time of transition.

Our latest working paper, “Mother Tongue: Linguistic Nationalism and the Cult of Translation in Postcommunist Armenia” by this past year’s visiting scholar, Dr. Levon Abrahamian of Yerevan State University, is also currently available from our program office, along with the working paper by the previous year’s visiting scholar,

Berkeley Program in Soviet and Post-Soviet Studies (BPS)
University of California, Berkeley
361 Stephens Hall #2304
Berkeley, CA 94720-2304
(510) 643-6737
<http://socrates.berkeley.edu/~bsp>

Editors: Edward W. Walker, Ania Wertz, Alexandra Wood, and Aleksandra (Sasha) Radovich
Please send suggestions, corrections or inquiries to Sasha Radovich at the above address or e-mail at bsp@socrates.berkeley.edu

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Dr. Ghia Nodia of Tbilisi State University, entitled “Causes and Visions of Conflict in Abkhazia.”

The Program is also continuing to support the efforts of our graduate students conducting research in the region. David Hoffman (Political Science) is currently completing his dissertation research comparing the impact of the Caspian oil strikes on politics in Azerbaijan and Kazakhstan. Catherine Dale (Political Science) is spending this academic year in Georgia, where she is conducting research for her dissertation and helping international humanitarian organizations in their efforts to relieve the suffering of internally displaced persons from the Abkhaz conflict. Serge Glushkoff (Geography) has returned from two months of field research on the zapovedniki (nature reserves) in the northwest Caucasus region of Russia. Jarrod Tanny (History) and Ivan Ascher (Political Science) are at Berkeley preparing for their qualifying exams. Finally, we are pleased to welcome two new graduate students into the Program. Ani Mukherji (history) will work on Soviet policy toward minorities in the Caucasus. Jennifer Utrata (Sociology) is a specialist on Uzbekistan and other countries of Central Asia.

I would like to close on a personal note. For the past year, I have had the privilege of serving as acting Executive Director of the Program while Dr. Edward W. Walker, the permanent Executive Director, was away on leave. It has been a great pleasure and an exciting learning experience to manage the Program this year, and I would like to thank Professor George Breslauer (Chair of BPS), Professor Victoria Bonnell (Chair of the Slavic Center), Dr. Barbara Voytek (Executive Director of the Slavic Center), Alexandra Wood and Sasha Radovich, our program assistants, the staff of the Slavic Center, and last but not least, Dr. Walker, for their support and help over the year. I will always fondly recall my tenure at BPS, and the Program and Centers' staff is a large part of the reason.

Marc Garcelon,
Acting Executive Director, 1997-98



Comparing Soviet and Russian Decision-Making in Afghanistan and Chechnya

Oleg Grinevsky

In a talk given at Berkeley on March 18, former Soviet diplomat and Ambassador Oleg Grinevsky provided an insider's perspective on the Politburo decisions that led to the Soviet invasion of Afghanistan in 1979. He then compared and contrasted the discussions leading up to Afghan invasion with the decision of the Russian government to seek a military solution in Chechnya at the end of 1994. The following is a summary of his talk.

The Decision to Invade Afghanistan

The fateful decision to invade Afghanistan was made on December 12, 1979. The Politburo had a very special, very secret meeting on that day. Only one sheet of paper left the meeting, signed by then Soviet leader Leonid Brezhnev and written by Konstantin Chernenko, Brezhnev's personal secretary. This paper contained only three or four handwritten sentences:

Resolution of the Central Committee of the Communist Party of the Soviet Union
#176125, Dec. 12th 1979.

On the situation in A:

First: to approve considerations and measures submitted by Y. Andropov, D. Ustinov and A. Gromyko. To authorize them to make adjustments not of a principal character while undertaking these measures.

Second: to entrust the three to report back to the Politburo about the ongoing progress of carrying out these measures.

(signed)

General Secretary of the Communist Party, Leonid Brezhnev

What did this piece of paper really mean? To this day, we don't really know. According to one participant, the meeting took place in the customary Politburo room on the third floor of the Kremlin, with eleven members of the Politburo attending—all except Kosygin, who was ill. Also in attendance were ten or eleven people drawn mainly from the Central Committee, the Ministry of Defense, and the KGB. Nobody other than the Foreign Minister Gromyko was present from the Foreign Ministry. The meeting was chaired by Gromyko, not Brezhnev, with KGB head Andropov on one side and Defense Minister Ustinov on the other side. Reports from the various agencies were being reviewed when the door suddenly opened and Brezhnev appeared. At that time his health was very poor, and he was assisted by Gromyko as he walked around the table trying to embrace everyone present, one by one. After Brezhnev was seated, Gromyko began to whisper into his ear—loudly enough for all to hear—that information had just been received about how bad and unreliable this Afghan leader Amin was. Brezhnev was silent for about two minutes, then he banged his fist on the table and said, "What an indecent man!" Then he stood up and left the room.

With these words the fateful decision on Af-

ghanistan was made. With the aid of minutes of the Politburo meetings that have been declassified since the fall of the Soviet Union, it is possible to reconstruct, to some degree, the considerations and measures that led to this final decision, particularly by the troika of Gromyko, Andropov, and Ustinov.

The first time the possibility of an invasion of Afghanistan was raised was on March 17, 1979. On the previous day, a Friday evening, some of us from the Foreign Ministry were summoned to Gromyko's office, where the First Deputy of the Foreign Minister said that something was wrong in Afghanistan. We were advised that a mutiny had occurred in a small town in the north of the country, and that very unclear information was coming in from Kabul. We were told to be prepared to work over the weekend.

The next morning Gromyko spoke from his office with Andropov and Ustinov, but not to our staff. Andropov arrived at Gromyko's office before lunch, where the two remained together until three in the afternoon. They subsequently went to the Politburo meeting together. When Gromyko returned late in the evening, he summoned us and told us to write different papers about the situation in Afghanistan. One of these was to be an argument against a Soviet invasion of Afghanistan. Before we went in we were warned by his chief aide that Gromyko was in a very bad mood. That meant that no questions were to be asked. Nevertheless, First Deputy Kornienko asked him if the Politburo had made a decision on Soviet involvement. He said that there was no decision, but that "in no case [could] we lose Afghanistan, in no case." Well, as we later found out, this was the key phrase from the Politburo meeting of that day. Practically everybody, including Kosygin, used this phrase.

On the next day, a Sunday, Andropov, Ustinov, and Gromyko met at Gromyko's country house in Zarechye. Again, we don't know what this troika discussed. They went directly from the dacha to the Politburo meeting. Weekend Politburo meetings were quite unusual. The mood at this meeting was quite different than that of the Politburo meeting of March 17. Two people stated that invasion was impossible, that Afghanistan was not prepared for the socialist way of life, and that a new regime would be entirely dependent on Soviet bayonets. Both Gromyko and Andropov supported this line, and Ustinov agreed that this was not the time for invasion.

There was a sigh of relief from those of us opposed to an invasion. But in October the situation

began to change again. Gromyko stopped in to discuss the situation in Afghanistan with the staff, signaling that things were going badly there. We soon had proof of this. For instance, from day-to-day information the ministry received from Afghanistan, we learned on one occasion that two Soviet battalions were headed for Kabul to defend the Soviet Embassy, and on another occasion that Soviet troops were being sent to defend Kabul's airport, and so on. A crucial indication that a change in policy was taking shape came on the first of December. At that time, the chief KGB resident in Kabul, Boris Ivanov, sent a cable in which he wrote that Amin was in effect a CIA agent who was trying to reorient the whole country from the Soviet sphere of influence to that of the United States. Ivanov also indicated that the problem was not confined to Amin, as U.S. Marines were now approaching Pakistan, where they would land and then proceed to Afghanistan. According to Ivanov, an advance group of these Marines were already in Afghanistan disguised as irrigation workers. In constructing this scenario, Ivanov already relied on information concerning American military activities in the Indian Ocean. Indeed, the Americans were very active in the Indian Ocean at the time, in connection with the Iranian hostage crisis.

On the basis of this information, Andropov wrote a special memorandum to Brezhnev in which he claimed that Amin was an American spy who was trying, just as Sadat had done previously with Egypt, to reorient the whole country towards the West. And he indicated that the consequences of this would be terrible, as it would allow the deployment of Pershing missiles in Afghanistan. This would mean that the Asian part of the USSR would now be within range of these missiles, complementing those deployed in Europe. The second consequence would be that the uranium supply in Afghanistan could be used by countries like Iran, Afghanistan, and Pakistan against the Soviet Union. This memorandum was written by hand, so that nobody knew of it, not even Andropov's secretary.

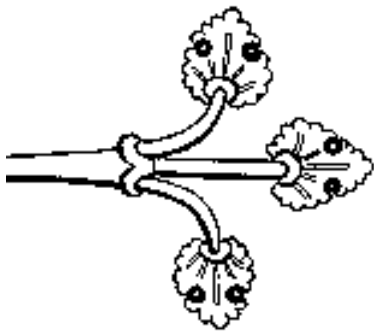
Andropov's memorandum contained no direct mention of Soviet involvement, or of an invasion, but it definitely conveyed the necessity of taking measures to remove Amin. And it mentioned that, fortuitously, there were some Afghans, Babrak Karmal and other members of the Communist Party, who were planning a mutiny against Amin. All we had to do was support these people, nothing more! It would only be neces-

Campus Visitors relating to the Caucasus

Leila Alieva, national coordinator for the U.N. National Human Development Report in Baku, Azerbaijan, will be the Visiting Caucasus Scholar at BPS, funded by the Ford Foundation. She is a prominent specialist in Azeri foreign policy.

Sergei Arutiunov, chairman of the department of Caucasian studies at the Institute of Ethnology and Anthropology, Russian Academy of Sciences, Moscow, will visit Berkeley during the spring semester. He will be teaching two courses with the anthropology department, "Peoples and Cultures of the Caucasus" and "Archaeology of Northeast Siberia."

Vladimir Degoev, professor and chair of the Department of Russian History and Caucasian Studies at North Ossetian State University in Vladikavkaz, Russia, will be at the history department for the fall semester as a visiting Fulbright scholar. His research project is entitled "The Caucasus in the International and Geopolitical System of the Sixteenth through Twentieth Centuries: The Origins of the Regional Threats to Global Security."



Issa Guliev of the Ingush National Theater in Nazran, Russia will spend the fall semester as an exchange visitor at the departments of Slavic languages and literatures and linguistics. He is working with Johanna Nichols, professor of Slavic languages and literatures, on an Ingush-English dictionary project, funded by the National Science Foundation.

Gayane Hagopian is teaching an Armenian language and culture course both semesters as a visiting professor in the department of Near Eastern Studies. She is a former Fulbright scholar in the department of linguistics.

Alma Kunanbaeva, former head of the department of ethnography of Central Asian Peoples of the Museum of Ethnography in St. Petersburg, is teaching a Kazakh language course both semesters as a visiting professor in the department of Near Eastern studies. In the spring, she will team-teach, with Harsha Ram, an assistant professor in the Slavic department, a second course on Central Asia through IAS teaching programs.

Firuza Ozdoeva, head of the department of Ingush philology at Ingush State University in Nazran, Russia, is visiting campus during the year to work with Professor Johanna Nichols on an Ingush-English dictionary project, funded by the National Science Foundation.

sary to deploy Soviet troops around the Afghani border, just in case, in order to help the good Communists who were organizing this mutiny.

I know of no Brezhnev resolutions regarding this memo, but on December 8 the Andropov-Gromyko-Ustinov troika met with Mikhail Suslov, the long-time Ideology Secretary and Politburo member. Prior to this meeting, a so-called Small Commission on Afghanistan had been formed, in which KGB and military personnel explored various plans for eliminating Amin. Of course, this was not described in direct terms. Rather, discussions were couched in terms of maintaining the excellent connection between the Soviet and Afghan leadership. The deployment of Soviet troops around the border—which, if necessary, might have to enter Afghanistan—was simply intended to assist with the mutiny in the event some kind of counter-revolt of internal troops who supported Amin broke out. All in all, this would be a very simple operation.

But Ustinov's Chief of Staff, Marshal Ogarkov, was completely opposed to these plans. Against Ustinov and Andropov's contention that the Soviets had to preempt the Americans who were supposedly landing in Pakistan, Ogarkov argued that nothing should be done to stop them. If the Americans really wanted to do this, then they should be allowed to do so, because it would be a disaster much worse than Vietnam! But the leadership did not agree with this logic. On December 10, the troika met again in Brezhnev's presence, and Ogarkov was invited to the meeting in order to demonstrate that the whole Soviet leadership was ready to send Soviet troops to eliminate Amin.

This is the prehistory to one of the most mysterious and unusual decisions in modern times. Two days later, Brezhnev would sign the cryptic memo authorizing the "considerations and measures" of the troika. But what were these considerations and measures? In order to discover this, in 1992 and 1993, I asked Alexander Vagintsev about the Politburo meetings before the invasion. Vagintsev was a personal aide to Brezhnev for thirty years, and subsequently to Chernenko and Andropov. He also worked for Gorbachev. (As a young man, I was trained by Vagintsev to be a speechwriter for Brezhnev and other Soviet leaders.) According to Vagintsev, the first "measure" was the elimination of Amin. The details were not discussed--Andropov simply assured everybody that it was a KGB matter and that the comrades

shouldn't worry, everything was going to be fine. The second "measure" was the possibility of a small Soviet incursion into Afghanistan to support this action, and the third dealt with the propaganda that would be necessary to explain these actions to the Soviet and Western public. My own research into the events that led to the end of Amin near Kabul on December 27, 1979 support Vagintsev's statements.

That December, the building of Amin's new palace on a hill outside of the city was completed. He hosted a reception to celebrate its completion and to display it to the country's leaders. When asked if he was not afraid to live alone on that hill, surrounded only by mountains, he proudly replied that he was not alone, as his Soviet friends had made all the necessary security arrangements, even providing him with two special battalions. But his Soviet friends didn't tell him that Babrak Karmal and other people from Moscow had also arrived and had arranged a mutiny against him. Witnesses at the reception have helped me to reconstruct the events of that night.

The party was going well. One of the members of the Afghan leadership had just returned from Moscow and explained how strongly the Soviet Union supported Amin. Amin himself remarked that Soviet troops were coming to the Kabul airport. But after the first course, the guests and the host began to feel ill, succumbing to nausea and weakness, and turning very pale. One of Amin's ministers said that this looked like poisoning and inquired after the cook. Amin replied that there was nothing to worry about, that it was a Soviet cook. Within one hour, all the guests and the host were lying on the floor, very sick, except for one person who didn't eat anything. They called the Soviet embassy to ask the Soviet doctors for help. These doctors did not know about the plans to eliminate Amin, so they pumped his stomach and provided intravenous medication until he appeared to revive. But then the situation changed--the information that Amin had been revived reached the embassy, which meant the beginning of the second stage of the operation. A rocket lit up the sky, signaling the attack. Two Soviet battalions started their attack, entering the palace without hindrance. Amin heard the sound of firing around the palace. He stood up and asked what was going on. He was told by his people that they were being attacked.

One of the doctors described the scene that followed to me. Amin appeared in the hall in his white

underwear and with IV tubes in both his arms. Amin wanted to call the Soviet embassy to ask for help. When his bodyguard told him that it was in fact the Soviets who were attacking, he wanted to punish him, but at that moment he heard someone cursing in Russian. Only then did he grasp what was happening and sat down on the floor. The Soviet soldiers appeared, machine guns firing. Amin's body was wrapped in a blanket and disappeared forever. His son was also killed, as were some of the guests. That same night Soviet forces blocked the troops loyal to Amin.

The Decision to Invade Chechnya


Comparisons between the processes that led to Russian actions in Afghanistan and Chechnya are difficult, but not impossible, to develop. By now, we know practically all of the details about Afghanistan, but very little about Chechnya.

Despite the relative lack of information, we can discern some similarities. First of all, there were the clear-cut attempts to eliminate Chechen President Dudaev (there were also attempts against Amin, but it

less clear who was behind them). The first attempt was made on September 27, 1994, using tank and aviation "volunteers" to try and take Grozny, the capital of Chechnya. After entering the city with no resistance, the Russian contingent was ambushed and nearly destroyed, and the attempt was quickly aborted. On October 15, there was another attempt. The "volunteers" managed to enter the city without anyone trying to stop them; however, this made them suspicious and they left the following morning. The third attempt was made on November 26, unfolding in practically the same way as the first--after entering the city with no resistance, the Russian military contingent was attacked and almost completely destroyed. On November 29, the Russian Security Council met and made a decision to shift to overt operations. If previously the intent had been to eliminate Dudaev covertly, it was now decided to send troops to do the job officially and openly. The Minister of Justice, Yurii Kalmykov, stated publicly in *Komsomol'skaia Pravda* that at the meeting Yeltsin told the members to "just vote on the issue, and I don't want to hear you." Several people--whose

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Calendar of Events



Friday, October 9. Brown Bag Talk. Elkhan Nuriyev, Director, Center for International Studies, Baku and Associate Professor of Political Science, Caucasus University, Azerbaijan: The Azerbaijan Presidential Election and Azeri Foreign Policy.

Tuesday, October 13. Brown Bag Talk. Stephan Astourian, the William Saroyan Visiting Professor of Armenian Studies, UC Berkeley: "From Ter Petrossian to Kocharian: Causes and Prospects of the Transition in Armenia."

Tuesday, November 10. Brown Bag Talk. John Dunlop, Senior Researcher, Hoover Institution, Stanford University: "Witnessing History: Monitoring Azerbaijan's Presidential Elections."

Wednesday, November 18. Public Lecture. Richard G. Hovannisian, the Armenian Educational Foundation Professor in Modern Armenian History, University of California, Los Angeles: "Unresolved Issues in the Twentieth Century Armenian History." 150 Kroeber hall, 4:00 pm.

Monday, November 30. Brown Bag Talk. Thomas Goltz, journalist and independent film maker will speak about Chechnya and ethnic conflict in the Caucasus and show his film "A View From The Front: Media Coverage of Post-Soviet Caucasus." 442 Stephens Hall, 12:00 noon.

April 30, 1999. Conference. Speakers TBA: "State Building and the Reconstruction of Shattered Societies." Lipman Room, Barrows Hall, 9am-5pm.

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names I don't want to mention because they still hold their posts--gave me practically the same rendition of that meeting. Yeltsin indicated he was well aware of all of the dangers of invasion but wanted the council members first to vote in favor of it and then to voice their concerns.

Today, of course, many officials then in the government claim that they opposed this action all along. It is difficult to evaluate such claims. What is clear is that some officials favored an open invasion of Grozny, such as the Chairman of the Security Council, then Minister for Nationalities Yegorov, then Minister of Defense Grachev, and then Minister of Federal Security Stepashin. It is possible to speak about a troika here also: Yegorov, Grachev and Stepashin. These three people were mostly responsible for the decision to invade.

I cannot prove empirically how this troika managed to persuade Yeltsin, but my sources indicate that "information" similar to that cabled by Boris Ivanov from Kabul fifteen years earlier played a role in swaying the President. Recall that Ivanov's cable warned of the danger that Afghanistan was about to tilt toward the West. Very similar type of "information" was now cited in regard to Chechnya, namely that Dudaev was trying to reorient the whole republic away from Russia, that Chechnya intended to seize the entire North Caucasus, expel Russia and close her access to the Caspian Sea, and so forth. Furthermore, this "information" claimed that the Chechen capacity to resist was weak, and that two days and two regiments were all that the Minister of Defense needed to resolve the situation.

The meeting of the Security Council on November 29 also resulted in an unpublished decree to which I do not have access, but we do have access to a decree published on November 13 (#2137) entitled "On Measures for the Restoration of Constitutional Law and Order," which created a pretext for the invasion.

Comparing the Decisions to Invade

In both cases, we see quite clearly a desire to avoid looking squarely and analytically at the problems which existed, and instead a tendency to seek simplistic solutions through the assassination of leaders. Second, bad information was used to justify assassination and military actions. Third, in both cases the capacity of the armed forces to carry out

"surgical" operations was highly exaggerated.

Finally, both the Soviet and Russian leaderships were unable to make coherent strategic decisions. Why? In answering this question, we should first note that the decision-makers were all prisoners of false information in their own ways. But this was not unrelated to their personal characters.

Ustinov was a very arrogant man by nature, and he seized on the Ivanov cable as justifying his position to enter Afghanistan as a way of countering the Americans. Andropov probably did not believe this rumor, but knew that the Soviet Union was losing Afghanistan, and for him this was unacceptable. As for Gromyko, he did not want to go against Andropov and Ustinov. Even though he may well have been against the invasion, he never argued openly with Andropov or Ustinov. Aside from this troika, Brezhnev's thinking cannot be considered influential, as his health had reduced him to essentially the state of a child by late 1979. And of course people in the International Department, like Suslov and Ponomarev, were in favor of the invasion because they considered Amin a "bad person" and believed that the Soviet Union needed a "good Communist" like Babrak Karmal as an ally. Though much of the leadership must have shared the views of Ogarkov that it would be better to let the Americans blunder into Afghanistan, this view did not prevail.

In Chechnya, the issue of the unity of the Russian state was a distinct factor in the decision, and Grachev emphasized this theme in persuading Yeltsin to authorize overt military action. This was at a time when Yeltsin was seeking ways to demonstrate his leadership abilities to the Russian people: losing Chechnya became unacceptable in this context.

What were the principal differences between the two situations? Although both Ogarkov and Grachev were operating on the basis of the same types of false information, the former advocated a more prudent course. There was a greater professionalism in the Soviet Army than in the post-Soviet Russian Army, and its officers had a pride about the military similar to that of the White Army officers of the Civil War period. Moreover, Soviet officers had a better grasp of purely military matters than the post-Soviet Russian military leadership. Although Grachev may have been a competent Soviet regiment commander during the Afghanistan conflict, he proved inadequate as a leader of the armed forces as a whole.

In Afghanistan, the KGB and the Soviet mili-

tary took a number of small-scale actions without first obtaining a Politburo decision. For example, we have some hints that the KGB made several attempts to assassinate Amin. And no Politburo decision had been taken about sending the earlier battalions to Afghanistan. Of course, these measures were probably not taken without permission or consultation with the inner circle, and in any case they were small steps. But in Chechnya, tanks, aviation, and helicopters were used in the attempts to invade Grozny in September, October and November without Security Council authorization. The Russian authorities have refused to admit anything of this kind. This indicates

that the Special Services had considerably more freedom of action under Yeltsin than under their Soviet predecessors.

Furthermore, today's Security Council cannot be compared to the Politburo in terms of the actual power it wields. According to the Russian Constitution, the former acts only in a consultative capacity. Yeltsin has used the council to his advantage in spreading accountability for his and Grachev's actions in Chechnya. By contrast, the Politburo made real decisions, with power divided among the members in a predictable way, so that responsibility for the Afghan invasion rests with it.



BPS Working Paper Series

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By Ghia Nodia, Chairman of the Board, Caucasian Institute for Peace, Democracy and Development (CIPDD)

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Islam in Chechnya



Edward W. Walker

Following is a summary of a talk given on March 13, 1998 by BPS's Executive Director (on leave 1997-98) at the Berkeley-Stanford Conference, "Religion and Spirituality in Eastern Europe and the Former Soviet Union."

There is a long-standing debate in the literature on ethno-nationalism about whether the nation creates the state or the state creates the nation. On one side are scholars who argue that common ethnicity (usually defined as some combination of common language and shared culture) leads, in the modern era at least, to a sense of political community, which leads in turn to political aspirations for statehood and then, in many cases, to statehood itself. The alternative view is that more often the state *precedes* the nation and a shared perception of belonging to a common political community. Rather than the nation creating the state, it is the modern state that makes the nation—in Eugene Weber's famous formulation about France, the state makes "peasants into Frenchmen" as it expands territorially, assimilates minority cultures, and embraces nationalism as a mobilizing ideology.

A similar debate is possible about the relationship between religion and the state in the former Soviet Union generally, and in particular about the relationship between the state and politicized Islam. Are previously existing and deeply-rooted religious beliefs responsible in part for the emergence of national identities, or are new states and political circumstances responsible for the emergence of new commitments to religion, commitments that were in fact weak or even nonexistent in the Soviet period?

Given the growing concern in Moscow and other capitals of the successor states about religious revival and politicized Islam in the Caucasus, Central Asia, and even Tatarstan and Bashkortostan, this question may have important political implications. On the one hand, if the Islamic revival is truly a revival—an awakening of traditional beliefs, practices, and institutions that were repressed in the Soviet period—then one might expect that the traditional conservatism and political moderation of the Islam practiced in most of these regions will prevail in the successor states. If, on the other hand, the turn to Islam is essentially a political phenomenon rooted not so much in the past

but in the insecurities and traumas of today, then it is more likely that the Islamic revival will itself be politicized, fundamentalist, anti-Russian, and probably anti-Western in orientation.

While the situation is significantly different between countries and regions in the former Soviet Union, in Chechnya at least the turn to Islam seems to be driven primarily by political factors. That Islam is experiencing a revival as well as a transformation in postwar Chechnya is clear. Last year, the Chechen government announced a ban on alcohol sales and introduced Islamic law—*sharia*—and established *sharia* courts in the republic. Grozny also carried two public executions of people convicted under *sharia* law, one of which was televised. While on a trip to Turkey, Chechen President Maskhadov announced that he would transform the republic formally into an Islamic state, renaming it "The Islamic Republic of Ichkeria." Thus Chechen government is the only government in the former Soviet space to have officially embraced Islam as a state religion.

On the face of it, Maskhadov is an unlikely candidate to turn Chechnya into an Islamic republic. He is a former Soviet army colonel (he was a Chief of Rocket and Artillery Forces in Lithuania who returned to Chechnya in 1992 at the request of Dzhokhar Dudaev, the late Chechen president), and like most military officers prior to the Soviet collapse he appears to have been relatively Sovietized. To my knowledge, there is no evidence that he was a devout Muslim prior to the war, let alone an Islamic fundamentalist, which would have been very difficult to reconcile with being a member of the Soviet armed forces, particularly given the Soviet military's involvement in Afghanistan. In the context of Chechen politics, Maskhadov is a moderate who in the presidential elections at the beginning of 1997 handily defeated a number of candidates, including the then acting president and former vice president under Dudaev, Zelimkhan Yandarbiev, who were considerably more radical in their support for Islam as

well as in their opposition to any kind of compromise with Russia.

Nor does Chechnya's turn to Islam appear to result from the intensity of traditional Chechen commitment to Islamic beliefs and practices. If anything, the evidence suggests that Islam was less well entrenched in Chechnya prior to the war in 1993-96 than it was in many other parts of the former Soviet Union. Chechnya, unlike Bukhara or the Middle Volga region of Russia, and to a lesser extent Daghestan as well, was not known as a center of traditional Islamic learning. In the Soviet period, the Muslim religious board of the North Caucasus was in Makhachkala, the capital of Daghestan, not in Grozny. Indeed, Islam came rather late to the North Caucasus, and later to Chechnya than to Daghestan. It spread gradually from the southeastern North Caucasus into the northwest, and arrived in Chechnya in the late eighteenth century, much later than it did in Azerbaijan, Central Asia, or Tatarstan. The Chechen language, on the other hand, is one of the oldest languages on earth—linguists date its origins to some four to six thousand years ago. Accordingly, Chechen culture and some form of common Chechen identity predated Islam by many centuries, conceivably even millennia. This was not true, for example, of the Azeris, for whom a key marker of their ethnic distinctiveness was the fact that they were Turkic-speaking Shi'a Muslims.

Moreover, when it arrived in Chechnya, Islam mixed with traditional religious beliefs and practices, which may help explain why the brand of Islam adopted by the Chechens for the most part was Sufism—a mystical form of Sunni Islam that involves

the “journeying” of a disciple (the *murid*) under the tutelage of an adept toward God and that in part rejects *sharia* law in favor of customary law (*adat*). In this respect, Sufism was particularly amenable to the Chechen's traditional highlander culture, with its village-based individualism, egalitarianism, traditional practices, respect for elders, and opposition to hierarchy.

Islam, however, was only one part of the multifaceted self-definition of the Chechen people. Prior to the 1917 Revolution, the Chechens, like most peoples, had multiple political identities, and the salience of those identities was at least partly situational—that is, a particular identity would be activated by particular events and situations—most dramatically, of course, by war. One of these multiple identities was being a Sufi Muslim, but others included being North Caucasian, a member of the Chechen-Ingush linguistic family and cultural community, a Chechen (which essentially meant being a Chechen-speaker), a member of a particular *teip* or clan based on blood ties (there are some 150 *teipy* today, twenty of which are particularly old and prestigious), a member of a particular Sufi order (the so-called *tariqats*, of which there are two main ones in Chechnya today, the Naqshbandiias and the Qadiriias), a highlander or lowlander, an urban or rural dweller, and finally, and doubtless most importantly most of the time, a member of a particular village and particular family. Additional identities were then added or strengthened after the Revolution, including those of being a member of a particular class (worker, intelligent, peasant, etc.) and of being a Soviet citizen. Certainly some Chechens,

No Peace, No War in the Caucasus: Successionist Conflicts in Chechnya, Abkazia, and Nagorno-Karabakh

by **Edward W. Walker**

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particularly those in urban areas, lowlanders, those with higher education, and those who were engaged in certain kinds of professions such as the military, became more Sovietized than others. The weakest identity, given the political irrelevance of the institutions of the RSFSR, was that of being a citizen of the Russian Soviet Federated Socialist Republic.

Being a Muslim, in short, was only one of many alternative identities for Chechens during the Soviet period. It was also an identity that was deliberately undermined by the Soviet state—substantially more so than other aspects of traditional Chechen beliefs and practices. Beginning in the 1920s and intensifying in the 1930s, Soviet authorities launched a systematic assault on organized religion generally and on Islam particularly. While the intensity of this pressure abated after the war, and while the assault clearly failed to wipe out Islamic beliefs among Chechens and other Muslims entirely, it is my impression that it was rather successful in undermining religious faith, particularly among those living in cities. This appears to have been as true for Chechens as for other Muslims in the USSR (Chechens did, however, remain substantially more rural than the Soviet population as a whole—according to the 1989 census, 27 percent of Chechens lived in cities, which probably meant that they were able to maintain their religious beliefs and practices more than other nationalities). Moreover, I am not aware of any evidence that Chechens were particularly devout among the Muslims of the former Soviet Union; by all accounts, most Chechen men drank alcohol, smoked cigarettes, ate pork, and so on, while Chechen women did not cover their faces and participated in the labor force.

This is not to say that the Chechen's Muslim identity was unimportant or absent in the Soviet period. Rather, being a Muslim was but one of many components of the very strong sense of ethnic identity of the Chechen people. Chechens had very high rates of native language retention (98.1 percent in 1989, compared for example to a rate of 87.0 percent for Ossetians), and Chechens clearly had a strong sense of being a distinct people different not only from Russians and other Slavs but also from the other traditionally Muslim peoples of the North Caucasus, the only partial exception being their close linguistic cousins, the Ingush.

For that matter, although this flies in the face of much conventional wisdom, it is not clear that the Chechens were radically anti-Soviet in the pre-

perestroika era. Moscow officials seemed to have *feared* that the Chechens were more anti-Soviet than other nationalities, as suggested by the fact that the first communist party first secretary of the Chechen-Ingush ASSR (Chechnya and Ingushetia did not formally split until early 1992) who was an ethnic Chechen, Doku Zavgayev, was appointed in the Gorbachev era. But many Chechens fought hard and very effectively for the USSR during World War II, and there is no evidence, Stalin's charges notwithstanding, that they collaborated with the Germans any more than did other nationalities residing in areas occupied by the Wehrmacht (the Germans actually occupied only a small part of Chechnya in 1942). It is also doubtless true that the anti-Soviet sentiments of the Chechens were deepened by their deportation in 1944, when the entire nation was sent into internal exile and a great many Chechens died as a result. And certainly Chechen national myths of resistance to outside oppression remained a central theme in their self-identity. But the Chechens were not the only deported people in the Stalin period, and their demands in the pre-*perestroika* era appear to have been similar to those of other nationalities. Nor is there any evidence that resentment at their treatment by Moscow was particularly colored by their religious identity or by the belief that they were targeted simply because they were Muslims.

In fact, during most of the Gorbachev period Chechnya, like neighboring Dagestan, was generally thought to have had a conservative and pro-Communist leadership and to have been a rather conservative pro-Communist place that was effectively under the control of Zavgayev and the local party apparatus. Indeed, the Chechen-Ingush Autonomous Republic was late to declare sovereignty—it did so only on November 26, 1990, later than most other autonomous republics in the RSFSR. Although turnout was low (58.8 percent), its electorate also voted overwhelmingly for the preservation of the USSR in Gorbachev's March 1991 referendum (75.9 percent). The republic then voted decisively in favor of Yeltsin (76.7 percent) in June 1991, and it was generally assumed in Moscow at the time that the reason was that Yeltsin, who had visited Grozny earlier that year, had struck some kind of deal with Zavgayev and that Zavgayev was able to turn out the electorate in support of Yeltsin.

As this suggests, the turn toward radical nationalism in the republic came quite suddenly, after the August 1991 coup, when Dzhokhar Dudaev and his

allies managed to throw out Zavgayev and the traditional nomenklatura leadership. Zavgayev's ouster came as a surprise to many in Moscow, but despite Zavgayev's apparent support for Yeltsin during the June 1991 presidential elections, his failure to oppose the putschists during the coup led Yeltsin's allies to welcome, at least initially, his ouster. It was only after the radical character of Dudaev's program, which provided for the independence of Chechnya from Russia, that Yeltsin's "team" began to express its concern about what was happening in the republic. These concerns intensified after Dudaev was elected president in very hastily arranged and rather suspect elections in late October 1991, at which point he promptly declared independence.

It is worth noting that the Chechen vote for Dudaev (official returns had him receiving 90.1 percent of the vote) is not dispositive about Chechen preferences for full independence or even separation from Russia, let alone for the establishment of an Islamic state. All the union republics except Kazakhstan and the RSFSR had already declared "independence" by then, but the majority were also still committed to the so-called "Novo-Ogarevo process" and the effort to reach agreement on some form of a new union. What "independence" actually meant was therefore unclear. Nor was it clear whether the Chechens were voting at the time primarily against Communism, against Soviet power, against Zavgayev, for Dudaev and his allies, or for independence. Indeed, I believe that it is very possible that most Chechens would have been willing to settle for something short of full legal independence but that the political elite on both sides failed to explore the possibilities. What the Chechens were clearly unwilling to accept, however, was the dispatch of Russian troops to their territory to restore central writ, which they viewed as a foreign invasion of their homeland. When Yeltsin declared a state of emergency in the republic after the declaration of independence in November 1991, it quickly became clear that the Chechens would resist the "invasion" by force of arms, at which point Yeltsin (wisely) ordered his interior ministry troops to withdraw. This led in turn to the standoff between Grozny and Moscow that was to last until the full-scale Russian invasion at the end of 1994.

Again, it is worth emphasizing that Dudaev, like Maskhadov after him, was a relatively Sovietized Chechen. He had risen through the ranks of the Soviet Air Force as a pilot and had served loyally in Afghanistan as leader of a bomber wing, apparently uncon-

cerned by orders to bomb the villages of Afghan Muslims. He was also one of the very few Chechens who attained the rank of general in the Soviet military, his last position being commander of a division of Soviet strategic bombers in Estonia from 1988-91, and he was reportedly very proud of having been an officer of the Soviet military. He was married to an ethnic Russian, lived only very briefly in Chechnya as a boy (he spent most of his youth in Kazakhstan), and spoke Chechen poorly. There is therefore no reason to believe that prior to 1990 he was deeply anti-Soviet or a devout Muslim, or even a closet Chechen nationalist—indeed, the story at the time was that he was asked to become a leader of the fledgling Chechen nationalist movement in late 1990 as a compromise candidate who was not closely associated with a particular clan or influential *tariqat*. And finally, Dudaev himself quickly became very unpopular in Chechnya, despite or perhaps because of his erratic behavior and provocative anti-Russian stance. For all these reasons, then, initial popular support for Dudaev does not suggest irresolute opposition among Chechens to any kind of status within the Russian federation, let alone support for radical and politicized Islam.

At least until the early months of the war itself, the conventional wisdom was that Islam had very little to do either with the standoff between Moscow and Chechnya between late 1991 and late 1994 or with the fierce Chechen resistance to Russian occupation after the invasion in December 1994. Indeed, the Chechen constitution adopted under Dudaev (which admittedly had a Potemkin village-like quality to it) was decidedly liberal in substance. It established a secular democratic state and provided for freedom of religion and expression, apparently in part because Dudaev hoped for, and expected, support for Chechen "self-determination" from the West. Dudaev's secularism began to change only after it became clear that the West would not support Chechen demands for independence, at which point he began to look to the Islamic world for support. At one point, he visited Iran and called for a *jihad* against Moscow (which did little to endear him to Yeltsin, or to Western leaders, for that matter). Still, my impression at the time was that this was a purely instrumental move by Dudaev. Indeed, he reportedly gave a press conference at the time in which he made the mistake of saying that good Muslims were required to pray four, rather than five, times every day, a mistake he shrugged off by saying that five times was even

better than four. Nor did it seem that Dudaev's appeals to Islam were resonating with the Chechen people at the time.

Thus it was only *after* the war broke out that Islam began to become an important theme for the Chechen resistance movement. Chechen resistance fighters, the *boeviki*, drew inspiration from the Afghan *mujahadin* and their struggle against the Soviet military, and they began to wear green armbands and headbands. Dudaev and the Chechen field commanders also began to adopt more of the symbols of Islam. In part, this may have been because they wanted help from Islamic groups and countries abroad. But it was also because Islam provided such an effective ideology of resistance for the Chechens. Not only did the appeal to Islam draw on the cult of the *mujahadin*, but it taught that those who gave their lives for the cause were martyrs who would go straight to heaven. The war, in short, led to the politicization of Islam—politicized Islam did not lead to war.

Let me say a few words at this point about Wahhabism in Chechnya and the North Caucasus, a subject that has received a great deal of attention recently. Wahhabism is an Islamic puritan movement that emerged in the early eighteenth century and was adopted by the Saudi ruling family in 1744. It is fundamentalist in the true sense of the word, advocating a return to the original teachings of the Koran and Mohammed and opposing changes in Islamic doctrine. It is still the version of Islam embraced by the Saudi royal family and the Saudi state, and is now widespread not only on the Arabian peninsula but also increasingly in other areas, such as Pakistan.

In Russian and other Soviet successor states, however, the term “Wahhabism” tends to be used very loosely to refer to any kind of politicized Islam or non-sanctioned Islamic organization. This is particularly true for state officials alarmed by what they see as increasingly radical Islam. The extent of this concern was suggested recently by the Russian Minister of Justice: “We believe,” he asserted, “that the greatest threat [to Russia] comes from Islamic fundamentalism, namely Wahhabism. It is a special form of political extremism similar to terrorism.” These concerns were heightened after a recent attack on a Russian Interior Ministry post in the town of Buinakdk, in Daghestan, an attack that was reportedly carried out by forces loyal to Emil Khattab, a Jordanian citizen (his ethnicity is unclear, although he does not appear to be a Chechen) who was a commander of a resistance unit

known as the Islamic Battalion during the war. According to alarmists in Moscow, Khattab is a Wahhabi who has set up Wahhabi guerilla training camps in Chechnya and Daghestan and is dedicated to the establishment of an Islamic state encompassing not only Chechnya but Daghestan, Ingushetia, and even the western part of the North Caucasus.

Available evidence suggests that there are indeed self-described Wahhabis in the North Caucasus but that Wahhabism is considerably less widespread than many in Moscow fear. Wahhabism began to establish a presence in the region after Soviet Muslims began to travel to Saudi Arabia for the *hadj* in the *perestroika* era. It seems unlikely, however, that the Saudi government, which is extremely conservative and worries about terrorist threats of its own, is engaged in financing armed Wahhabi militants in the former Soviet Union. On the other hand, rich individuals from Saudi Arabia, Kuwait, or elsewhere have been contributing funds for the construction of mosques, financing the *hadj*, and so on, and some of this money may also be going to militant Wahhabi groups with decidedly political agendas, which may account for the claims coming out of Moscow about external efforts to promote instability in Russia's ethnic republics.

In the North Caucasus (and indeed in most other parts of the former Soviet Union), Wahhabism is opposed not only by the traditional clergy, which tends to see the Wahhabis as a threat to their influence and position, but also by the political elite. This is true in Daghestan, for example, where the political elite is trying to keep a lid on the delicate ethnic balance in the republic and is worried that militant Wahhabis with support from Chechen militants will make claims on Daghestani territory.

In Chechnya, Maskhadov has clearly expressed his opposition to Wahhabism and is trying to paint Wahhabi sympathizers in the republic as Arab sympathizers who are introducing a militant and fundamentalist brand of Arab Islam into the republic that is alien to the traditional “Turkish” orientation and moderate Islamic practices of the Chechen people. Wahhabis also have to contend with the traditional Sufi loyalties of the Chechen people. To the extent that Wahhabism actually *is* finding a significant base of social support in the North Caucasus, it is likely to be among militant youths who have no employment opportunities, were members of militia units to which they remain loyal and that provided—and continue to provide—them with security and a sense of belonging to a community, and

who have little to do other than continue the armed struggle against some enemy, whether it be the Russians, the traditional religious elite, political moderates, or occupiers of traditionally Chechen lands in Daghestan.

More generally, it does not appear that there has been a great turn to Islam, particularly to fundamentalist Islam, among the Chechen population at large. As suggested earlier, the extent to which Chechens prefer secularism and internal order to radical Islam was suggested by the victory of the more moderate and secular Maskhadov over his more radical “Islamic” opponents in the presidential elections of January 1997. Most Chechens with whom I have spoken are adamant that the great majority of Chechens are not sympathetic to “Arab” fundamentalism.

If so, then why has Maskhadov called for the establishment of an Islamic state in Chechnya? The answer, I believe, lies in the anarchic situation in the republic and the extent to which the Chechen political elite is increasingly polarized. Not only is Chechnya physically devastated, but Maskhadov faces powerful opposition from the eighteen or so field commanders who operated very autonomously during the war, now control their own militias, and do not feel answerable to the Chechen president. Their opposition to Maskhadov intensified after the Chechen president decided to sign a “no use of force treaty” with Yeltsin in May of last year. At the same time, the republic has a heavily armed population, extraordinarily high unemployment, and suffers from endemic kidnappings. Finally, the multiple potential identities of most Chechens and cleavage lines within Chechen society still exist—Chechen, Muslim, North Caucasian, member of a *teip*, member of a village or town, member of a *tariqat*, member of a particular family, and so on. All of these factors are combining to make it enormously difficult for Maskhadov to establish state authority in the republic.

Thus Maskhadov faces a huge state building challenge in the face of significant political opposition.

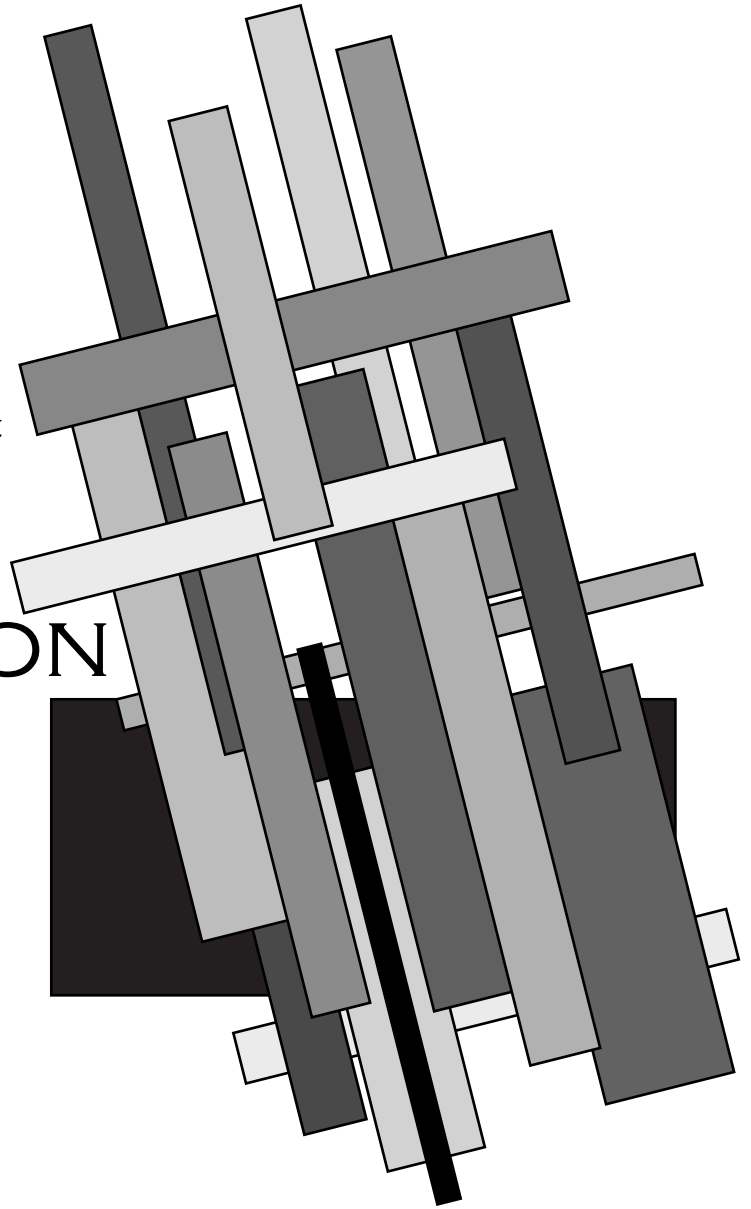
He therefore desperately needs some kind of ideological platform to help him restore order. But communism is dead, and western liberal democracy has been discredited by the refusal of the West to help Chechnya during the war. Moreover, liberal-democracy and capitalism are also said by many Chechens to be alien to Chechen traditions and have been deeply tainted in the minds of Chechens by their embrace (at least formally) by Russia. What is left is Islam—anti-Western, anti-Russian, and yet reasonably compatible with Chechen traditions. However, by embracing Islam Maskhadov is co-opting the platform of his most serious political rivals—Zelimkhan Yandarbiev, Salman Raduev, Movladi Udugov, and (increasingly) Shamil Basaev, some of whom (particularly Raduev and Udugov) have indicated considerable sympathy for Wahhabism, which as I mentioned earlier is both traditionally alien to the Chechens and likely to be rejected by those Chechens who resent the foreign ties of the Wahhabis, who wish to see a measure of order restored inside the republic, and who do not want to get involved in another war, this time in Daghestan. In short, *sharia* law provides a mechanism for bringing order to the streets and for enlisting the support of village elders for the authorities in Grozny.

Thus Maskhadov has apparently concluded that embracing Islam as a state ideology will help reestablish order while allowing him to outflank his rivals. He is not responding to a great upsurge in demand for politicized Islam from below. In this sense, borrowing from Ron Suny and his critique of the “Sleeping Beauty theory” of ethno-nationalism, it does not appear that a “Sleeping Beauty” theory of religious revival is borne out in the Chechen case. There is no evidence that politicized radical Islam was an “essentialist” or “primordial” component of Chechen national identity that was repressed by the Soviet state and then reawakened by the collapse of the Soviet state. On the contrary, politicized Islam is very much a political phenomenon rooted above all in the need to reestablish state authority in a devastated republic that feels abandoned by, and alienated from, the West.

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Boom or Bane? Oil Dreams Haunt the Caucasus and Central Asia

Marc Garcelon

Marc Garcelon was the Acting Executive Director of BPS for the 1997-1998 academic year. He is a Professor in the Department of Sociology at Middlebury College, Vermont, beginning the fall of 1999 .

On Saturday, May 16, 1998, the Berkeley Program in Soviet and Post-Soviet Studies held its third annual Caucasus conference. This year's theme was "The Geopolitics of Oil, Gas, and Ecology in the Caucasus and Caspian Basin." The conference explored the ramifications of the new drive for oil riches in the Caucasus and Caspian littoral region, and questioned some of the more sensational claims being floated in the media. Our theme thus turned out to be timely, as the promise of a new "Caspian oil boom" has recently become the focus of much media attention.

Professor Terry Karl of Stanford University's Political Science Department presented the rather sober findings of her comparative study on the relation between oil-revenues and development in so-called "petro states." Of the many "petro states" that have emerged since the Second World War, she emphasized, the economic performance of all save one of these countries—Norway—has been very poor. In effect, Karl argued, the massive influx of oil revenues that an oil boom brings tends to foster a corrupt network of "rent-seekers" crisscrossing public and private sectors, a network that gains control of oil revenues and then "starves" other sectors of the national economy in its drive to expand oil-extraction infrastructures, "buy off" sectional interests through oil-financed state subsidies of consumption, and amass enormous personal fortunes. Only in Norway, where non-oil interests were

robust, legal institutions effectively constrained corruption, and the civil service remained strong and independent of oil interests, has a petro boom actually translated into balanced and sustained development for the economy as a whole. Where states are dominated by energy interests, civil servants are corrupt, and legal institutions are weak or nonexistent, oil booms have consistently led to a symbiotic dynamic of corrupt state leaders and oil barons creating the illusion of prosperity for sections of the population through the importation of consumer goods from abroad and the building of wasteful public works projects. In most cases, other economic sectors wither and decline, leaving these countries vulnerable to sudden "shocks" caused by swings in the price of oil on the world market. Indeed, we've seen this pattern again and again in recent decades, from Mexico in the early 1980s to, most recently, Indonesia.

Other speakers echoed Karl's argument throughout the conference, time and again warning of the danger of Caucasian and Caspian littoral states relying too much on promised oil revenues in formulating their developmental strategies for the future, and emphasizing the ominous dynamic of oil booms and intensifying corruption in a region that had been plagued by weak states and lawlessness for years. Professor Emeritus David Hooson of the Berkeley Geography Department, for instance, placed particular

emphasis on the economic potential of non-oil sectors like agriculture in the Caucasus, as well as the region's diverse and fragile microecologies. Hooson argued that unless energy revenues are used wisely and ecologically protected, the coming Caspian oil boom may in fact foreclose, more sustainable, diversified, and less environmentally deleterious development strategies in the region for years. He pointed out that the Transcaucasus could become "another California," but only if diversified development is not swamped by a growing dependence on oil revenues.

Robert E. Ebel, Director of Energy and National Security at the Center for Strategic and International Studies, and Onnic Marashian, Editor Emeritus and Consultant to Platt's Oilgram, a leading source of information on the international oil business, both emphasized the extent to which the size of the new Caspian reserves have been inflated in the press. Discounting as fanciful the hope that the Caspian basin may emerge as a rival to the Persian Gulf as a supplier of oil, both speakers emphasized that, according to the best information available, the Caspian is unlikely to supply more than 3 or 4 percent of the world oil supply at the point of peak production. Dr. Ebel detailed at some length how the current scramble for oil wealth in the region has rekindled some of the geopolitical dynamics which drove "the Great Game" between Great Britain and Russia in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, only this time with a broader cast of characters. He also argued that oil companies have carefully weighed the political risks posed both by the revival of great power rivalry over the region and by continuing local conflicts, and have decided to pursue the region's oil while at the same time striving to ensure access to oil revenues down the line. This has led to tensions between various multinational companies and the United States government, for instance, over the issue of selecting routes for the oil pipelines that will be needed to bring Caspian crude to market.

Onnic Marashian's presentation explored the dynamics of "pipeline route politics" in the region in great detail. A breathless game of maneuvering is currently underway, he argued, as the US and Turkish governments plans to build a gigantic but costly pipeline from the Azerbaijani city of Baku on the Caspian to the Turkish port of Ceyhan on the Mediterranean; the Chinese government angles to build pipelines from Kazakhstan to western China in pursuit of "energy independence"; and Russia and Iran scramble to secure

pipeline routes running through their own territories. Thus, Marashian emphasized, geopolitical maneuvering has become hopelessly entangled with oil companies' concern with economic considerations, environmental groups' concern for ecological protections, and continuing bitter conflicts between regional governments such as Armenia and Azerbaijan. Which pipeline routes will become reality, and which will remain pipe dreams, will thus turn on a host of complex variables whose interrelations often shift from month to month.

Scott Horton, a partner with Patterson, Belknap, Webb and Tyler LLP who specializes in international and commercial law, spoke about the conflict between the five Caspian littoral states—Azerbaijan, Iran, Kazakhstan, Russia and Turkmenistan—over ownership rights to the Caspian seabed and the mineral wealth that lies beneath it. Horton outlined how the collapse of the Soviet Union left the international status of the Caspian in a protracted legal limbo. He also explained why contemporary international law does not provide a ready solution to conflicts between the littoral states over seabed ownership rights, and outlined the reasons that have prevented the formulation of a solution acceptable to all the states. Despite this continuing impasse, movement toward bilateral agreements between some of these states is evident, as in the signing of the recent agreement between Russia and Kazakhstan over Caspian seabed rights. Combined with the determination of both Azerbaijan and many multinational oil companies to press ahead with development of Azeri fields despite the lack of a regional treaty, Horton argued that these emerging bilateral understandings will contribute to a gradual resolution of seabed ownership disputes.

Michael Clayton, a founder and member of the governing board of the Horizonti Foundation, a non-governmental organization based in Tbilisi, Georgia, spoke on the ecological dangers to Georgia and Azerbaijan posed by a vast new oil pipeline network in the region. Clayton detailed the many fragile ecosystems, protected areas, and habitats of various endangered species that intersect proposed pipeline routes across Transcaucasia. He also emphasized the tremendous environmental damage wrought in decades past by the Soviet oil industry on the Apsheron Peninsula in Azerbaijan, using this damage as a warning of the ecological perils that a new Caspian oil boom potentially entails. On the hopeful side, Clayton showed how the activities of environmentally-minded NGOs in

Georgia have been able to at least partially modify the retrofitting of the already existing Baku-Supsa pipeline in ways that should afford considerable protections to fragile ecosystems crossed by this line. In the end, he argued, the presence or absence of such NGOs may prove decisive in ensuring that the coming Caspian oil boom doesn't develop into a regional ecological bane.

Igor Zevelev, a Senior Research Associate of the Institute of World Economy and International Relations in Moscow, detailed how the weakness of the postcommunist Russian state and conflicts between the energy sector, the Russian Foreign Ministry, and militant nationalist groups have combined to prevent Russia from developing a coherent strategy for dealing with Caspian oil. On the one hand, the weakness of the Russian state has emboldened Russia's giant energy monopolies—Gazprom, LukOil, and Transneft—to pursue partnerships in the international consortia of energy companies now planning the development of Azeri and Kazakh oil reserves, often in direct conflict with the stated goals of Russian foreign policy. On the other hand, these stated goals have tended to shift arbitrarily and have often been in conflict with one another. Zevelev emphasized that the inconsistencies and erratic policy shifts toward the Caucasus and Caspian littoral states that have marked the Russian Foreign Ministry since the Soviet collapse reflect deep divisions between those wedded to the neo-imperialist dream of reviving Russian hegemony over the region, and those who believe that Russia is best served by participating in the joint ventures currently being formed to exploit Caspian energy resources. He stressed that Russian policy toward the region is likely to remain unstable until one of these two camps gains a decisive position in Russian politics. Zevelev concluded by arguing that the neo-imperialists appear to be

losing ground rapidly under the new Prime Minister, Sergei Kirienko, who favors Russian acceptance of Caucasian and Central Asian independence and Russian participation in joint ventures to develop regional resources.

The final speaker, Michael Ochs, a specialist in Russian history and a Professional Staff Advisor at the Commission on Security and Cooperation in Europe for the U.S. Congress, concluded the conference by outlining the views of the Clinton Administration and various groups in the Senate and Congress toward the Caucasus and Caspian littoral states. Ochs argued that the Congress and the Administration are closely aligned in terms of the broad outline of US policy toward the region, which focuses on consolidating the independence of the new states in the region, encouraging markets and democratization, and promoting the building of a multi-pipeline network that will minimize Russian influence over Caspian energy and exclude Iran from the anticipated petro-dollar bonanza. Tensions between the administration and the Congress cluster around the question of US policy toward Armenia, Azerbaijan, and the protracted Armenian-Azeri conflict over Nagorno-Karabakh. While the administration favors a more "even-handed" approach, casting the US government as an "honest broker" between Armenia and Azerbaijan, the Congress tends to view Azerbaijan as the aggressor in the conflict, and favors a strong American tilt in favor of Armenia and the Karabakh Armenians. Though this conflict has constrained the US government's room to maneuver in pursuing its goal of securing the selection of Caspian and Caucasian pipeline routes it sees as most favorable to American national interests, the US nevertheless continues to pursue its broad policy goals in the region assertively.

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