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## WRITING NATIONAL HISTORIES: COMING TO TERMS WITH THE PAST

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## Analysis

### Interpreting the Past – From Political Manipulation to Critical Analysis?

By Oliver Reisner, Tbilisi

#### Abstract

Georgian historians are not alone in taking a bifurcated view of Russia, with some seeking closer ties and others blaming it for Georgia's problems. Over time, these views have influenced the writing of Georgian textbooks. The first generation of textbooks published after the collapse of the USSR simply included superficial updates to Soviet versions. The second generation critically redefined Russia's role in Georgia's past. The most recent, third, generation focuses on equipping young Georgian citizens with the tools of critical analysis. However, unless there is more dialogue between the two camps of historians, politicians will continue to manipulate history for their narrow purposes.

#### Two Approaches to Georgian History – Academic and Reformist

The issue of Russia weighs heavily on Georgia and has divided the community of Georgian historians into two camps. One group seeks closer ties with the northern neighbor, while the other blames it for many of Georgia's problems.

On 27 March 2009 several Georgian scholars, mainly historians, who are members of the Historical Legacy non-governmental organization (NGO), addressed an appeal to Russian President Dmitry Medvedev, expressing their concern about the deterioration in relations between Russia and Georgia during recent years. Stating that the Georgian people gratefully remember "Russia's great historical contribution to the survival of the Georgian nation" and that Russian soldiers died for the return of Georgian autochthonous territories (!). On the other hand, they note that Georgians contributed to building Russia's state, culture and science over the last three hundred years, and claim that one of the main factors driving the catastrophic relationship between the two states is the "elaborate falsification of the history of our countries due to distortion of facts and false interpretation of historical actors." They assert that the "cleansing of the historical memory" that disconnected the generations finally led to clashes between the brotherly peoples and provoked bloody conflicts to solve "the geopolitical tasks of third powers." Implicitly this statement argues that the current pro-Western leadership subordinated Georgia to US foreign policy interests at the price of its national values and past.

Consequently the same historians claim that they are preventing the Georgian people from being turned into a blind weapon in the hands of anti-national powers and reviving the memory of the great and tragic history of Georgia among their compatriots. They assert that especially the young generation should realize "the true past

of their own nation." That is why they established the Historical Legacy NGO in Tbilisi with the intention of conducting "objective research" on the most important periods of Georgian history to overcome the "distortion of historical facts for political purposes". Thus, they intend to demonstrate Georgia's "real" situation in the 16<sup>th</sup> to 18<sup>th</sup> centuries and Russia's role in common fights with foreign foes in the 19<sup>th</sup> and 20<sup>th</sup> centuries, as well as the cultural interactions between the two peoples. Hoping that both the Georgian and Russian publics will well receive these activities, ideally scholars in the Russian Federation should take up similar efforts not only to collaborate in re-establishing the historical truth for a better understanding of the young generations of the Russo-Georgian historical community, but also to pay respect to their great ancestors.

Ten members of Historical Legacy signed this appeal (two from the National Academy of Sciences of Georgia, among them a former minister of education under president Zviad Gamsakhurdia, two from Ivane Javakhsishvili Tbilisi State University, one president of the NGO "For a Neutral Georgia", one deputy chair of the Georgian Union of Journalists, one representative of the Georgian Alumni Union of Moscow State University as well as one Georgian vice-president of the Russian Academy of Social Sciences and the *igumen* of the Bezhini monastery), which the Russian president published on his official website. This group of academicians, mainly coming from Soviet-style *intelligentsia* organizations, which since the Rose Revolution no longer represent the Georgian state, seek to mobilize public support for their own contested and authoritative interpretation of the past as "true history". Since *perestroika* started in the late 1980s, most of them condemned Russia's influence and impact in modern Georgian history.

As in the late Soviet and early independence period, various political actors used history to articulate and legit-

imize political positions and demands for national independence as well as territorial integrity against Abkhaz and South Ossetian separatists, charging that their alternative interpretation of history was mere falsification. History became a tool for political competition. In fact, the letter to Medvedev and its intentions indicate the scholars' longing for their lost status as a national *intelligentsia* with the sole authority to interpret the "true" past.

In the opposing camp, we have the group of pro-Western reformist intellectuals like Ghia Nodia, Aleksandre Lomaia and Gigi Tevzadze. They are attached either to the Ministry of Education and Science or the newly formed Ilia Chavchavadze State University. They introduced major changes to the general school curriculum five years ago. The most important change concerning history is the introduction of an integrated program for social sciences, covering history, geography and civic education. Their latest "National Plan for the School Year 2008–2009," seeks, in addition to historical and geographical knowledge about Georgia, to spur the development of patriotic minded and responsible Georgian citizens and to support the pupils' independent orientation within a broader world. To achieve these objectives, several special skills are highlighted: orientation within time and space, historical interpretation, application of historical and geographic concepts, and the elaboration of a position, its critique and defense. Additionally, it seeks to develop general skills, such as problem definition, analysis and solving, finding and organizing information, creativeness, communication, research, team work, etc. In contrast to the previous subjects "History of Georgia" and "World History" that were taught in an authoritarian style, now the pupils should be empowered to draw their own conclusions from a past presented from different angles in an integrated manner. This approach is in line with European methods of history teaching, as defined by the latest resolution of the Parliamentary Assembly of the Council of Europe.

But they implemented the whole reform process in a top-down manner, from the Ministry of Education and Sciences to the schools and universities without much consultation on the ground, which caused a lot of dissatisfaction and resentment. After five years, the school reform process that seriously shifted the subject of history from authoritative, knowledge-based teaching towards more skills-based learning is in jeopardy because it is implemented by ill prepared and badly paid history teachers and academics. These instructors neither want, nor are able to comply with the new requirements for teaching and textbook writing, which represents an appreciated source of income for the academics.

Now textbooks are mainly prepared by reformist historians and practitioners as well as political and social scientists. A large gap remains between the intended objectives outlined in the ministerial regulations and their skilful implementation.

### Three Generations of History Textbooks: What is New?

Georgia's textbooks have evolved considerably since Georgia gained independence. The first generation of history textbooks, published immediately after the demise of the Soviet Union were just reprinted older textbooks with only the state symbols and some obsolete textual expressions about the Soviet Union replaced with those of independent Georgia.

The second generation introduced a national narrative of Georgian history that had formerly been a "dissident" view. It presented a Georgian history in which Georgians fought back foreign invaders in a number of glorious wars and battles. National heroes were re-established as those who made history. The historians critically redefined Russia as an aggressive colonial power that did not adhere to commitments undertaken in the Treaty of Georgievsk concluded in 1783. Instead of providing protection, Russia annexed Georgia twice: in 1801 (Kartli-Kakheti) and in 1921 (Democratic Republic of Georgia). The diverse consequences of the integration of Georgia into the Tsarist as well as Soviet state were presented as colonization and expansion by the Russians intent on subduing the Georgian nation. These books remained silent about Georgian participation in the leadership of the Russian empire and the USSR even though Georgian nobles held high positions in the Imperial military, Bolshevik party and secret police (NKVD). Georgia's cultural revival in the second half of the 19<sup>th</sup> century was interpreted as resistance to Russianization, ignoring the indebtedness to asymmetric intercultural exchange with Russian influences. The 20<sup>th</sup> century history of Georgia as part of the Soviet Union was mostly ignored, even though a lot of Georgian families fell victim to the "Great Terror".

The second generation of textbooks from the late 1990s aimed at strengthening patriotic feelings to counterbalance the serious and traumatic defeats in Georgian state-building of the early 1990s. They ascribed all the problems of the recent past to Russia and absolved the Georgians from any responsibility for what happened in the previous decades. Even if these textbooks were translated into Russian, Armenian and Azeri, these minorities received no mention. The history of Georgia seemed to be a Georgian affair.

The latest, third generation of textbooks reflects serious changes in Georgia's educational policy and approach

to teaching and learning history. Seventh grade pupils are not confronted with a chronological chain of events of national or world history, but rather are introduced to the concept of time and different forms of calendars, space, economics, state and administration over the centuries. They also study modern forms of state building in the 19<sup>th</sup> and 20<sup>th</sup> centuries (France, Russia, Georgia during its first independence 1918–1921, USA, Fascist Germany, Soviet Union, contemporary Iran and China) and different cultures and religions (Judaism, Islam, Christianity) and their diverse appearances in Georgia.

The new 10<sup>th</sup> grade textbooks ask pupils “What is history?” and attempt to explain to them the specifics of historical knowledge and different kinds of historiographies. In a second step they ask “How do we study history?” explaining the different possible approaches to coming to terms with the past. In one of the textbooks the authors decided to take the annexation of Georgia by the Tsarist Empire in 1801 as one of the examples for the possibility of different interpretations by contemporaries and later historians. This type of discussion represents a huge step towards a more reflective, multi-perspective approach towards national history. (Unfortunately I did not manage to analyze the reformed 9<sup>th</sup> grade curriculum covering a full chronological course of the history of Georgia in the latest textbooks.)

Methodologically, the new textbooks replace an author’s narrative with short introductions and several extracts from different kinds of historical sources, major terms are explained to the students and open questions proposed for discussions. In most cases, a teachers’ handbook accompanies the textbook advising on possible applications of the given topics and explaining how to achieve the learning outcomes. Since there are different textbooks available, the pedagogical council of each school can choose the one most convenient to it.

Obviously all the textbook authors implemented the national curriculum differently, but most of the authors who wrote the first and second generation textbooks did not produce a textbook of the third generation. The older academicians refused to apply the new requirements of issue-based, more student-centered and learning-outcome-oriented textbooks. Many of the new textbooks do not adhere to a chronological order of historical narration.

Still missing are representations of minorities as well as majority-minority relations in Georgia as part of the Soviet system and the Soviet nationality policy. Surely,

Georgians profited from this policy for their consolidation as a titular nation in academia, state structures and the arts. The new historians presented the Georgian national narrative mainly as a victim of Russian power, a position that allowed them to describe minorities as Moscow’s “fifth *colonna*” and make claims of “historic” Georgian territories that justified neglecting the minorities living there and their rights as minorities – including denial of a right to unilateral secession. The general problem is that the new textbooks cannot rely on sufficient new research or historical syntheses, especially about Stalinism in Georgia. Therefore, the newly introduced history curricula are not perfect, needing revision and sincere feedback from history teachers.

### Towards an Independence of Georgian History as Historiography?

In parallel to the ongoing political processes between government and opposition, there is no dialogue between the representatives of the two historical camps, which inhibits the achievement of a post-Soviet consensus about the history of Georgia that in the future might be further elaborated and revised. Both sides continue to use history as a tool for their political struggles. Interestingly, the Museum of the Russian Occupation opened by President Saakashvili in 2006 in the premises of the National Museum on Rustaveli Avenue holds Russia responsible for all the faults of Soviet rule, as if Georgians did not participate at all in the Soviet enterprise. Saakashvili himself relied on a historical narrative introduced by dissidents in the 1970s, politicized by journalists and students during *perestroika*, and finally further elaborated by professional historians in the 1990s. This currently dominant historical narrative about Russia’s role in Georgian history is a target of criticism for academicians in the above mentioned appeal to President Medvedev, even though they once defended it. Similar to the conclusion of the Georgian cultural scientist Zaza Shatirishvili, who once defined the antagonism between the “Old” intelligentsia and the “new” intellectuals as one of personal relations rather than principles, we can conclude that in the field of Georgian history there is no possibility that historiography will be independent from political interference as long as there is no professional dialogue between the two camps. Without such dialogue, history will continue to be misused to define the status of opposing groups.

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## Analysis

### A Short Sketch of One Century of Azerbaijani Historical Writing

By Zaur Gasimov, Mainz

#### Abstract

After the collapse of the Soviet Union in 1991, Azerbaijani historians gained the opportunity to take a new perspective on their country's past, before, during, and after the Communist era. The history of Azerbaijan's short-lived independence during 1918–1920 was, and remains, among the favorite research topics. Also, the subject of Karabakh and the history of Southern Azerbaijan figure prominently on the research agenda of historians. Obstacles for their work include the fact that many Azerbaijani historians have limited facility with foreign languages, problems created by the authoritarian conditions imposed by the Aliev regime, and corruption in the country's science and educational system.

#### Writing History in Soviet Times

During the Soviet era, Azerbaijani historiography developed within the paradigms of Marxist theories, which regarded historical development to be the result of a permanent struggle among the classes. Most Soviet Azerbaijani historians (e.g. Pista Ezizbeyova) viewed Russia and the Soviet Union as progressive forces. They glorified Russia's "progressive proletariat" and intelligentsia for having a positive impact on the modernization of Azerbaijan from the time of colonization in the early 19<sup>th</sup> century and after the beginning of Sovietization in the early 1920s. The view of history as a permanent class struggle at times took absurd turns, such as when Azeri historians described the 8<sup>th</sup> century anti-Arab rebel Babek as a "pre-Communist leader" simply because he used red banners.

Soviet historiography and school history textbooks issued during the Soviet occupation described almost all personalities in Azerbaijan's past who criticized Islam and had any affiliation to Russia as particularly enlightened. Soviet-Azerbaijani historians condemned the period of the short-lived independence of Azerbaijan in 1918–1920 as anti-national. To mark the anniversaries of the October Revolution or the beginning of the Sovietization campaign in Azerbaijan, the authorities produced a huge number of publications praising the "eternal friendship" between Azeris and Russians.

#### "Perestroika" in Azerbaijani Historiography

These trends dominated until the Perestroika years, 1988–1989, when a number of young Azeri historians began to publish articles presenting an alternative view of history. In this period, it became fashionable to examine topics which were previously considered taboo. Historians such as Nesib Nasibli, Nesiman Yaqublu, Shirmemmed Hüseynov and Cemil Hesenli published several articles and booklets on the foreign policy of the Azerbaijani government in 1918–1920 and on its leader Mammad-

amin Rasulzade (1884–1955). These authors completely revised the historical role of Russia. They portrayed the role of the Soviet Union in annexing Azerbaijani territory and eliminating its independent statehood as negatively as the Tsarist Empire's colonial war against the Azeri Khanates in the first quarter of the 19<sup>th</sup> century.

Challenged by the liberalization brought on by Gorbachev's Glasnost and the conflict with Armenia over Karabakh, the Institute of History's main journal became a forum for Azerbaijani historians who sought to revise the national version of history. The Karabakh issue became a point of conflict for historians on both sides. The young historian Isa Gambar and one of the patriarchs of the Soviet Azerbaijani historiography Ziya Bunyadov were particularly active in the disputes with their Armenian counterparts. They challenged the artificially propagated myths of the "eternal friendship of all Soviet nationalities" and thereby proved the existence of nationalism among the non-Russian nations in the USSR.

During this period, the History Faculty at Baku State University (BSU) became the second most important history-writing institution after the Bakykhanov Institute.<sup>1</sup> The History Faculty is the oldest center for historical research in Azerbaijan; it opened when the national government founded the university in the fall of 1919. By staying in the shadow of the Bakykhanov Institute, the faculty gained more freedom to evaluate Azerbaijan's past.

<sup>1</sup> The Baku noble Abbasqulu Aga Bakykhanov (1794–1847) founded Azerbaijani historiography (tarixshünasliq) by writing a booklet about the history of Azerbaijan and Dagestan entitled "Gülüstani-Irem" in Farsi. Bakykhanov was engaged as a translator by the Tsarist authorities in Tiflis. He translated the peace negotiations between the Persians and Russians in 1828, which resulted in the division of the territory settled by the ethnic Azerbaijanis. The Institute of History of the Academy of Sciences of Azerbaijan was named after Bakykhanov and can be considered since its foundation in 1945 as the main history writing institution in the republic.



The events of January 1990, when Soviet troops intervened in Baku and killed many people, marked the beginning of a new period for Azerbaijani historians. From that time, the works of émigré and Western historians began to appear in the major historical journals in Baku. In particular, translations from the work of Polish-American historian Tadeusz Swietochowski about “Russian Azerbaijan” in 1905–1920, were published and had a strong impact on Azerbaijani historiography. His work had originally been published in the USA and was based on detailed research in the archives of Europe and Baku. Swietochowski visited Soviet Baku in the 1980s and was well known at the Academy of Sciences. As his field of research was devoted to the period of Azerbaijani independence in 1918–1920, his works became very popular once the Soviet Union disintegrated and critical research into this former taboo-area became possible.

Almost revolutionary were the publications about the Azerbaijani legions, soldiers serving on the side of the German Wehrmacht against the Soviet Army. Questioning the meaning of the “Great Patriotic War” was nothing less than breaking with probably the most important legacy of Soviet history. Other topics that Azerbaijani historians no longer feared to broach were the Stalinist repressions against the Azerbaijani intelligentsia in the 1930s and the activities of the Azerbaijani émigrés in interwar Europe. Articles written by Mammadamin Rasulzade and other émigrés (Cahangir Zeynaloglu, Mirzabala, Hilal Münshi) during their stays in Poland, Germany and Turkey were for the first time published in Azerbaijan and Azeri historians wrote introductory texts for these publications.

Yet the period 1989–1991 for Azeri historiography was also an ambivalent one: On one hand, this period witnessed the publication of books and historical essays, such as those by Manaf Suleymanov and Fazil Rahmanzade, which criticized the Stalinist regime and described the policy of Russification in frank detail. On the other, Soviet ideology did not disappear overnight; the military historian Rizvan Zeynalov in 1991 published his dissertation on the development of the Azerbaijani army in 1920–1941 in a manner that completely corresponded with the Marxist-Leninist approach.

### Orientation Towards Azerbaijan’s Ancient Roots

In 1992, when the Popular Front Movement with the orientalist Abulfaz Elchibey at its head came to office, Azerbaijani historiography focused on the Turkic-speaking world. The philosophical book-length essay of the Kazakh writer Olzhas Suleymenov “AziYa” was trans-

lated into Azerbaijani and Dede-Qorqud explorations were dominant in historical and literary research. Elchibey saw Azerbaijan as a crown of the Turkish world and was known for his anti-Russian and anti-Persian position. For Azerbaijani historians who were members of the National Liberation Movement in the 1980s and the first political parties of Müsavat and the Popular Front that meant a revolt against “indo-European domination.”

Some historians began to concentrate on the pre-history of the Turkish settlements in the region of the Caucasus and revised the Soviet approach represented in Azerbaijan by the historian Iqrar Aliyev (1924–2004). Since 1960, Iqrar Aliyev published several works on the history of Media (1960), Albania (1962) and Atropathene (1989). The last one was translated into Persian and published in Tehran. The Median state, which is considered a proto-Azerbaijani state formation, was settled by an Iranian-speaking population, according to Aliyev. The opinion that Media and the more ancient state formation Manna were settled by Turkic tribes became dominant under Elchibey. The key representative of this school was Professor Yusif Yusifov of the Pedagogical Higher School in Baku and Aliyev’s attacks against it failed. Yusifov, an ancient history specialist, published with Moscow historians (Dyakonov and Yankovskaya) a broad monograph on the history of Elam in 1968. In 1987 he co-authored with Serraf Kerimov a manual of toponymy, explaining the semantic origins of historical names for cities in the Caucasus.

In 1994, Yusifov together with Bünyadov published the “History of Azerbaijan from ancient times until the beginning of the 20<sup>th</sup> century”, which was accepted at the universities of Azerbaijan as a manual on Azerbaijani history. It continues to serve as the dominant historical narrative in Azerbaijan. Some historians concentrated intensively on Turkish and Central Asian history. Similar to the period at the beginning of the twentieth century, Baku became the second most important center of Turanism after Istanbul. The books of the Turkish thinker Ziya Gökalp were translated into Azerbaijani and published in Baku and school history books discussed his life work. Additionally, the books on Azerbaijani and Central Asian history written by Azeri and Turkish historians in Turkey were brought to Azerbaijan.

### The Nationalization of History

Under Elchibey, a further de-Sovietization of Azerbaijani historiography took place. This movement dropped a number of terms, which were commonly used in Soviet historiography. For example, the war between the Soviet Union and Germany was not called the “Great Patriotic

War” anymore but simply referred to as World War II. The Sovietization of Azerbaijan beginning in 1920 was now called the “April occupation” (Aprel istilasy).

At the same time, the main principles of Azerbaijani historiography survived the collapse of the Soviet Union. Azerbaijani historians saw the past of their country in the context of a five thousand year old civilization and Azerbaijan as an heir of Media, Atropatene, Caucasian Albania, and the state formations that existed under Arab rule and afterwards on the territory of modern Azerbaijan, for example, the state of Atabegs (Bünyadov), Shirvan-Shahs (Ashurbeyli) and the medieval states Ag and Qara Qoyunlu (Mahmudov), which are assumed to have had relations with European states.

Currently, Baku historians are actively exploring both the religious traditions of the monotheist Caucasian Albania (Farida Mammadova and Rashid Göyüşev), where Christianity is as old as the Armenian and Georgian Churches and there was strong resistance to Islamization under the Arabs, and Islamic traditions, particularly those under Shah Ismayil Khatai.

In 1993 a monument for Khatai was opened in one of the districts of Baku. Being an ethnic Azerbaijani from the Safavid dynasty, he ruled the Persian Empire and is considered as one of the founders of Azerbaijani classical literature, since he wrote several poems in Azeri. Khatai remains a favorite subject of research for many historians of literature as well. While many acknowledge Azerbaijan’s ancient history, most historians concentrate their research on the period of the late 18<sup>th</sup>, 19<sup>th</sup> and 20<sup>th</sup> century.

### Main Trends in Modern Historical Writing

One should differentiate several currents in modern Azerbaijani historiography:

*Karabakh:* Beyond a doubt, the history of Karabakh and its political, economic and social development has been the key topic for Azerbaijani historiography. This issue is omnipresent since the beginning of the conflict over Karabakh in the 1980s. Prominent historians like Ziya Bünyadov and Iqrar Aliyev and the historian-geographers Budaq Budagov and Giyaseddin Geybullayev wrote about the Karabakh issue in the 1990s, although neither regional history nor contemporary history was their main field of specialization.

In the last decade, a new generation of Karabakh-historians emerged in Azerbaijan. Zemfira Hacıyeva published in 2004 her analysis of the Tsarist description of the Karabakh province of 1823. The historian and ethnographer Arif Yunusov published a book on the past and present of Karabakh in English in 2005. A year later,

Ilqar Mammadov published in Tula a monograph on the history of the Armenian-Azerbaijani conflict over Karabakh. In 2004, the Füzuli-Institute on Manuscripts at the Academy of Sciences in Baku prepared an almost 400 page long bibliography of Karabakh’s history. In the context of Karabakh, Azeri historians (Solmaz Rüstəmova-Tohidi) concentrated intensively on the ethnic clashes between Armenians and Azeris, which took place in Baku in March 1918. The main trend in the writing on Karabakh is the aspiration to prove its historical bond with Azerbaijani khanates, state, the Azeri speaking population and its meaning for Azerbaijani culture with Shusha as its center.

*Regional history:* Regional and local history has gained in importance in present Azerbaijan. Historians write about the provinces of Nakhichevan, Zangezur, Shusha and Jerevan, which had in the 19<sup>th</sup> century an ethnically mixed population (mostly Armenians, Muslim and Yezidi Kurds and Azeris). “Local history” has also become an attractive topic. Baku is still the favorite subject of explorations, but the book of the historian Sara Ashurbeyli (1906–2001) remains the fundamental research on the city’s history. More publications about the history of the villages around Baku, like the city of Mashtaga, emerged recently. Research on the local history of Nakhichevan has a clear political context, since the president’s family is of Nakhichevani descent and this region was of paramount importance in Heydar Aliyev’s political career after 1990–1991. The explorations of the other cities and cultural centers, like Gandja and Shamakhy, spring from the initiatives mostly of the young historians.

*Russian and Soviet colonization:* Russian and Soviet colonization, settlement policy in Azerbaijan and the repressions against Azerbaijani cultural elites in the 1930s constitute one of the key trends in Azerbaijani historiography, particularly since the publication of the bibliography of sources on Azerbaijani history prepared by the historians Süleyman Eliyarov and Yaqub Mahmudov. This publication includes documents on the colonial policy in the 19<sup>th</sup> century and echoed strong feelings held in Azerbaijani society. In 1990, the same collection of documents was issued in a Russian translation. Three years later, in 1993, Ziya Bünyadov’s book “Qirmizi terror” (The Red Terror) appeared in Baku’s book stores. In 1998, the historian Mammad Djafarly published his work on the “Political Terror and the Destiny of Azerbaijan’s Germans”. More recently, the fundamental works of the contemporary historians Eldar Ismayilov and Cemil Hasanly on the Stalinist and post-Stalinist regime in Azerbaijan emerged.

*Military history:* Examining military history was one innovation that took place in Azerbaijani historiography before 1991. During the Soviet occupation and shortly after 1991, Azerbaijani historians published some books, including Steklov's 1927 polemical volume on the Musavat Army and Musa Qasimli's work on World War I and II. Once neglected, military history is now becoming more popular. Azerbaijani military traditions during the first period of independence are a particularly popular theme. The development of the army in 1918 and the biographies of Tsarist military leaders of Azerbaijani descent are the favorite topics. In 1991, Pervin Darabadi published his dissertation on the military aspects of Azerbaijani history at the beginning of the 20<sup>th</sup> century. Other key works on the military are devoted to the first Republic, its military ministers and World War II. Nesiman Yaqublu issued the biography of Fatalibey-Dudanginski, the Azerbaijani officer who served both in the German and Soviet Army during World War II, stayed in Europe after its end, and was eliminated by the Soviet KGB in the 1950s. In the same year, Yaqublu issued a book on the liberation of Baku by the Osman and Azeri troops from the Bolsheviks in September 1918. Qilman Ilkin wrote a book on the "Turkish troops in Baku" in 2003. Shamistan Nazirli and Naila Velikhanly are the most famous military historians of the republic. In 2004–2006 Nazirli published two books on the officer Yadiqarov and General Shikhliniski and issued a monograph on persecuted military figures. Nazirli has been writing short articles about military history in newspapers like "Ayna" and "525ci qezet". Velikhanly edited the catalogue "Azerbaijani generals", which was published by the Academy of Sciences in 2005. Alas, the attempts of the Azerbaijani historians to concentrate on military history are also a part of the post-communist search for identity, which was damaged by the defeats during the Armenian-Azerbaijani war for Karabakh.

### Populist Historical Writing in the Aliyev Dynasty

Since the unstable democracy under Elchibey transformed itself into the stable authoritarianism under Aliyev senior (1993–2003) and junior (since 2003), Azerbaijani historiography obtained a new field which can hardly claim to be objective. Only in the last decade, Azeri historians wrote or edited a huge number of pseudo-scientific publications on Aliyev (Aliyeviana). Dozens of Aliyev biographers have described the life of the "Ulu önder" (Sacred Leader) of Azerbaijan. Among them one can find the publicist Elmira Akhundova, who has been working on a six-volume biography (!) of Heydar Aliyev and

regularly publishes short articles about his career in a variety of periodicals.

The head of the Bakykhanov Institute, Yaqub Mahmudov, stresses the role of Aliyev in Azerbaijani history in his publications, interviews and public lectures. A huge photo of Heydar Aliyev adorns not only the homepage of the BSU Department of History, but also the school history textbooks, which were published and edited by Mahmudov in the last decade.

Since the period of Perestroika, the theme of the first Republic (1918–1920) and its leader Resulzade is still in fashion. In spite of this fact, the Bakykhanov Institute, BSU History Department and other institutions try to concentrate on the history of the Azerbaijani Democratic Republic while neglecting to give prominent attention to Rasulzade, who is a potential rival of Heydar Aliyev as an "Azerbaijani Ataturk." Nevertheless, the historians close to the Musavat and Popular Front parties (Yaqublu, Balayev) continue to publish actively on this theme. After the main works of Rasulzade written in Turkish, Azeri and Russian from the time of his exile were reprinted in Baku at the beginning of the 1990s, historians began to analyze the different aspects of Rasulzade's thinking, including religion, language, and political orientations. The historian Müsteqil Agayev published a book on the philosophical views of Rasulzade in 2006.

Azeri historians during the Perestroika period devoted considerable attention to the topic of Turan since it had been taboo earlier. At the moment, it is still of interest but is no longer as popular as it once was. The basic works of the Turanist authors like Gökalp, Akchura (2006) and Hüseyinzade (2007) have been translated into Azeri and re-printed in Baku.

A variety of other topics garner considerable attention. "Ayriliq" is the title of one of the most famous songs in Azerbaijan and means "mourning because of partition". Initially performed by the singer Rubabe Muradova, "Ayriliq" remains in the repertoire of Azeri divas like Googoosh and Flora Kerimova. It refers to the partition of the Azerbaijani territories between Russia and Persia in 1813–1828. Both during the Soviet occupation and in post-Soviet Azerbaijan, this topic remains a key part of Azerbaijani historiography. The historian Shovket Tagiyeva published in 1990 a monograph on the Tabriz rebellion of 1920. The medievalist Kerim Shukurov issued the chronology of the Turkmenchay treaty of 1828. All history textbooks for secondary schools and universities have the map of the "United Azerbaijan", which includes the modern Republic of Azerbaijan and the so-called "Southern Azerbaijan", the territory of Iran



which has been settled by ethnic Azeris (including the cities of Tabriz, Ardabil, Urmiyya and Maraga).

Overall, Azerbaijani historiography changed considerably after the emancipation period of Perestroika and the restitution of state sovereignty in 1991. These changes are clearly visible not only in the themes of most dissertations and historical publications, but also in the way that history is taught at school and in the way that history books are written. Even the language is different: while most historical articles and books were written in Russian before 1991, the absolute majority of publications in modern Azerbaijan now appear in Azerbaijani.

### Shortcomings in Modern Historiography

Despite these changes, Azerbaijani historiography continues to suffer from a vast number of problems:

First, Azeri historians, like their Russian colleagues, have to work in an authoritarian state, which limits the freedom of scientific expression. Azeri contemporary historians may not write objectively about the 1970–1980s

and the period after 1993, since Heydar Aliyev was in office during this time (eventually followed by his son) and one has to depict it in positive terms. In reality, this time was a period marked by total stagnation throughout the entire USSR, while the 1990s meant immense losses for Azerbaijan in the war with Armenia, and the crack-down on democracy.

Second, the knowledge of Western languages among the historians in Baku leaves much to be desired. An overwhelming majority of them are able to read only in Russian and Turkish. That is one of the reasons that most Azeri historians have quite poor contacts with other research institutions abroad. They do not have access to the publications on Azerbaijani history that emerged recently in Western countries.

Third, the problem of corruption is pervasive not only throughout the educational system at Azerbaijan's universities, but also in research institutes at the Academy of Sciences. Some students rely on bribes to complete their PhD and post-doctoral programs.

#### *About the Author*

Dr. Zaur Gasimov is a researcher at the Institute for European History (IEG) in Mainz (Germany).

#### *Further Reading*

- Volker Adam, "Umdeutung der Geschichte im Zeichen des Nationalismus seit dem Ende der Sowjetunion: Das Beispiel Aserbaidschan," in *Osmanismus, Nationalismus und der Kaukasus. Muslime und Christen, Türken und Armenier im 19. und 20. Jahrhundert*, eds. B. Bonwetsch and F. Adanir. Wiesbaden 2005, pp. 21–41.
- Zaur Gasimov, "Azerbaijan's Lost Statehood: The Post-1980s Historiography of Occupation," *The Caucasus & Globalization* 1, 5 (2007): 144–149.
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## Analysis

### Armenia's Attitude Towards its Past: History and Politics

By Sergey Minasyan, Yerevan

#### Abstract

How do perceptions of the past manifest themselves in the public discourse of the Armenia of today? In what way do historical myths shape the political development of the country? To what extent and how do politics impact on historical narratives and the development of history writing? The following text attempts to seek answers to these questions and thus addresses the very broad question of the role of history for Armenians and Armenia in the 21<sup>st</sup> century.

#### Reconstructing the Past in the Post-Soviet Space

It is obvious that the various strands of historical narratives play an important role in the political development not only of Armenia, but all the post-Soviet countries. In order to cement a national identity distinct from the former supranational Soviet identity, the national elites, together with historians, have played and still play an important role in driving the process of history-writing, thereby striving to find a consensus on their nations' past as a basis for national mobilization. Naturally, this past is presented in a way that the elite and public would like to see.

Political elites and historians in certain authoritarian countries, such as Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan and Belarus, are obliged to write and create national histories practically "from scratch". Other post-Soviet countries, for instance the Baltic countries, Ukraine, and Georgia, have to come to terms with some of the "dark pages" of their past. Having been parts of the Tsarist Empire and then the USSR, the new historical narratives now seek to use this past as part of a political and propagandistic fight against the new Russia. In Azerbaijan, there is a notable process of putting the nation into the context of ancient civilization and using this as an argument in the country's struggle against Armenia over Karabakh. In Russia, the historical discourse fluctuates between "neo-imperial nostalgia" and attempts to critically reconsider the Soviet Communist past.

#### Perceptions of the Past in the Public Awareness of Today's Armenia

The rewriting of the past and the search for an often mythical "golden age" as the basis of nation-building are features in all the post-Soviet states. Presenting their nations' development and aspirations for independence as an outcome of "heroic" struggles against often stronger enemies is certainly a very effective way to create an ideological basis for national identity-building.

In Armenia, all the above mentioned historical narratives (with the exception of the neo-imperial discourse, which is mainly a specific Russian feature) are present. Like in other small countries of the post-Soviet space, perceptions of the past are heavily influenced by the ethnic factor. It is obvious that history is not only the last harbor of ethnic consciousness, but also a source of nutrition feeding it. The destruction of the former Communist totalitarian system coincided not only with the creation and formation of new independent states, but also with a sharp rise in nationalism beginning in the end of the 1980s. This surge in nationalism, in turn, stimulated great interest in national history.

Unfortunately, the narrow focus on ethnically-defined history has often led to the over-simplification of certain historical conceptions regarding Armenians and Armenia. This simplification resulted in great part from the Karabakh conflict, which favored the "ethnic" component of history writing. Armenian researcher Alexander Iskandarian called this the "Karabakhization" of Armenian history writing. The prevailing vision of history in post-Soviet Armenia has been that of a nation constantly struggling for independence in its "historical" territories, including Nagorno-Karabakh, but being overwhelmed by various empires or aggressors. The present independent Republic of Armenia is thus seen as a logical continuation of a centuries-long quest for national independence, a vision which has in fact no relevance for many periods of history. In fact, prior to the short-lived Armenian Republic in 1918–1920, Armenians have only had (or strived for) national statehood for brief and very distant stretches of history.

For Armenian society as a whole (referring not only to Armenians living in Armenia, but the large Armenian Diaspora), history is extremely relevant and probably meets a broader public interest than in any other post-Soviet society. For many Armenians the past is more than just history, it is a protective reaction to problems of the present. Armenians lived through a similar experience to what they see today already in the first quarter of the

20<sup>th</sup> century, when they suffered from the trauma of the 1915 Genocide in the Ottoman Empire and when they failed to construct an independent nation state after the disintegration of the Tsarist Empire in 1918–1920.

The first half of the 20<sup>th</sup> century can be called the “golden age” of Soviet Armenian historiography, as historians focused specifically on exploring their countries’ ancient and medieval history. At that time, immersing themselves in history gave the Armenian intelligentsia and some groups in society a means of escape from the daily burdens of Communism and Soviet totalitarianism. Similarly, the occupation with history during the difficult years of the 1990s, when Armenia suffered from socio-economic difficulties and the hardships caused by the Karabakh war, meant for many Armenians an escape from realities and search for a better future.

The fact that the history of Armenians as an ethnic group is very ancient has made history an over-important factor in nation-building. In 301 A.D. the medieval Armenian kingdom was the first state to accept Christianity as an official religion and state ideology, and the Armenian alphabet (created at the beginning of the 5<sup>th</sup> century) began to be used for writing historical chronicles of Armenia. In this aspect Armenians are similar to Georgians in that their perceptions of religious, linguistic and historical identity are linked to very ancient history and tightly interwoven. Even now, many Armenians, especially in the intellectual elite, do not perceive the future of their country as that of a modern nation but in endless reconsideration of the historical past in a paradigm of religious dissent and a struggle against aggression.

### **The Development of Historical Science: The Situation in Soviet Times**

Examining the development of the historical discipline in Armenia is the best way to understand how the past is perceived. In Soviet Armenia, as well as in the other republics of the former USSR, history was the most politicized of the social sciences. Accordingly, Communist censors and ideological monitors exercised great control over history writing in Armenia through the end of the 1980s and historians were often forced to carry out propagandistic functions.

In Soviet Armenia, the politicization of history embraced not only certain critical events in history, like the 1917 revolution and the way that the process of Sovietization of Armenia in the 1920s was presented, but also the merger of the eastern part of Armenia to the Russian empire in the 19<sup>th</sup> century as a result of the numerous Russian-Persian and Russian-Turkish wars. This fact was presented as the salvation of the Armenian

nation from attempts of assimilation on the part of the Persian and Ottoman Empires, enabling Armenians to preserve their ethnic, religious and linguistic identity on part of their historical territory.

Even after the dissolution of the USSR, some Armenian researchers continued to write about history in the previous Soviet style, presenting it under the banner of “brotherly” relations and even in the Marxist context of class struggles. However, while these researchers still have a strong impact on history writing, they also represent a fairly senior, and thus fading, generation of Armenian historians.

### **The Role of the Diaspora for History Writing**

A unique influence on the development of historiography in Armenia (distinguishing it from other Soviet republics) stems from the numerous historical works written by representatives of the Armenian Diaspora. Their contribution is especially valuable in providing systematic in-depth studies of the First Republic of Armenia (1918–1920) and the 1915 Genocide. Research on the Genocide includes comparative analyses of the Holocaust – an area of research that historians in Soviet Armenia could not have carried out. Additionally, Diaspora historians (such as Richard Hovhannisian and Ronald Suny) have made an invaluable contribution to investigating the history of Armenian political movements and parties which were founded in the late 19<sup>th</sup> century in the Russian Empire and were active throughout the Soviet years in the Armenian Diaspora. Since independence, these parties have become active in the Republic of Armenia and are known as “traditional parties” to distinguish them from the political parties newly formed in post-Soviet Armenia. In Soviet times, studying the history of the First Republic and the role of Armenia’s traditional parties was an extremely politicized theme; works published at that time had to be approved by the ideological censor and were mostly total falsifications.

When Armenia gained its independence in 1991 and abandoned Communist ideology, many of the studies written by Armenians in the Diaspora were published in Armenia. Since most of the research on contemporary history written by Soviet Armenian historians became irrelevant, historians representing the Diaspora gained a leading role in the re-conceptualization of Armenian history and the development of a new Armenian historiography.

### **Key Topics in Modern Armenian Historiography**

With the outbreak of the Armenian-Azerbaijani war over Karabakh, the subject of Karabakh has become a major

theme of research for historians in Armenia and has also had a strong impact on the development of the country's historiography. They place a special emphasis on the period of the early 1920s, when the territory of Karabakh was transferred by decree to Azerbaijan. Another topic which has been and remains high on the historians' agenda is the Armenian-Azerbaijan relationship.

Another very popular theme which interested Armenian historians during the period of perestroika through the beginning of the 1990s was the short-lived history of the First Republic of Armenia (existing from 1918 to 1920), as well as related themes examining the history of Armenian traditional parties and the Armenian liberation movement in the western part of Armenia in the late 19<sup>th</sup> and early 20<sup>th</sup> centuries.

The end of the Soviet Union and the fall of Communism also motivated historians to look into chapters of their history which were considered taboo in Soviet times. Such black spots concerned relations between Armenia and its neighbors, including Russia. In particular, from the second half of the 1990s onwards, numerous works appeared which were dedicated to the history of Armenian-Georgian relations, as well as new works researching relations between Bolshevik Russia and Kemalist Turkey during the 1920s and the impact of these relations on the development of Armenia.

The fall of the Soviet Union and Communism lifted ideological constraints on history writing. However, a new form of constraint has been imposed, which is typical not only to Armenia, but all post-Soviet states. The trend is towards "antiquating" history, meaning that nation-building is presented as a long-term process, dating back hundreds, if not thousands of years. The "geographical scope" of history has also been increased to include all lands in which ethnic Armenians had lived in the past; the history of modern Armenia is thus replaced with the history of the Armenian ethnic group and the territories on which it was settled during various historical periods, including very ancient ones. However, research into ancient and medieval history is put into political context much less often than modern history.

Current political trends exert a strong influence over Armenian historiography. For example, in parallel with Armenia's efforts to move closer to Europe, there has been more research examining Armenian communities in the states of East and Central Europe, the USA, and elsewhere. At the same time, the number of books concentrating on Armenian-Russian relations has decreased to a minimum, whereas, expanded scientific contacts with Western colleagues, especially those in France, Belgium and the USA, have created conditions for carry-

ing out new research by Armenian scholars of those historical periods when Armenian kingdoms were closest to Europe, i.e. the Hellenistic period and the medieval Armenian Kingdom of Cilicia that had strong cultural, dynastic and political ties to medieval Europe.

Additionally, new studies have provided fresh insights on the historical relations between Armenia and Iran, Byzantium and other countries without the "ideological enmity" and political restrictions of the Soviet period.

Research on the Genocide of Armenians in Ottoman Turkey has made new strides forward in independent Armenia. Even during the Soviet era, the communist authorities tolerated, and even encouraged, Armenian historians to conduct research on the Genocide. After Armenia gained its independence, the creation of the Museum-Institute of the Genocide of Armenians (MIGA) in 1995 played a large role in spurring further studies of the massacres. As a result of MIGA activity, new studies of the Genocide were published in foreign languages; the museum has made special emphasis on preparing and publishing collections of historical documents from archives in other countries.

More recently, Armenian historians and publicists took a new interest in the history of Soviet Armenia, however they are no longer constrained by the stereotypes of the Soviet period. The activity of many famous political and state figures from Soviet Armenia began to be interpreted as the works of pragmatic and patriotic leaders, compelled to work in the conditions of totalitarian oppression and the restrictions of a communist system. Typically these works are published in the form of historical biographies. Additionally, research dedicated to the dissident and anti-Soviet movement in Soviet Armenia has also appeared.

### **In Lieu of a Conclusion: History as a Facilitator or Constraint for the Political and Social Development of the New Armenia?**

In at least one aspect, the current vision of history is impeding rather than promoting nation-building in Armenia. The prevailing concept of Armenians as a persecuted ethnic group with no nation-state of their own, doomed to reside in empires and constantly struggling against efforts towards assimilation and/or extermination, sharply contradicts the vision of a modern nation. In the "persecuted ethnic group" paradigm, Armenians, including Armenian historians, tend to view any state ruling over ethnic Armenians on their "historical" lands as an oppressor and aggressor, and this vision frequently spills over to the modern Republic of Armenia.

For example, in their criticism of Armenia's political leadership, opposition groups label it as a "foreign yoke", provoking a strong response from the society. Enhanced by the lack of tradition for national statehood, this "ethnic persecution complex" creates an opposition between ethnic identity and any form of statehood, clearly hindering the emergence of Armenian national identity.

Yet, despite the inertia of the Communist past and the influence of current politics, the tendency towards objec-

tivity and a separation from politics is already apparent in Armenian historiography. Of course, the use of Armenian history as a political instrument will continue for a long time (and most likely, as in other countries, it will be impossible to eradicate this practice completely), but nevertheless, Armenian historians have taken the first steps.

*About the Author*

Dr. Sergey Minasyan is head of the Political Studies Department at the Yerevan-based Caucasus Institute.

## Opinion

### Time Turned Back: On the Use of History in Georgia

By Giorgi Maisuradze, Tbilisi

“Forward to David Agmashenebeli!” is one of the most famous slogans of Georgian President Mikheil Saakashvili's government. This evocation of the great Georgian ruler from nearly 1,000 years ago, known for his military and administrative reforms, symbolizes the basic attitude towards history in post-Soviet Georgia as well as the tendency to use history as a political instrument.

Contemporary Georgian politicians see history not as the past, but as a way to shape the future. This tendency highlights Georgians' peculiar attitude towards the representation of time. This forward-looking attitude makes it difficult to interpret the past objectively and draw lessons from it. At the same time, it hinders the state modernization process to the extent that such a process requires a realistic appraisal of the present and its problems.

At the end of the 1980s, Mikhail Gorbachev's Perestroika stimulated a national movement in Georgia and in parts of Georgian society. This movement created a so-called “contra-representational myth” of Georgian history, retelling Georgian history in a way that contradicted Soviet and pre-Soviet versions, but presented new myths as fact, which has become the foundation of contemporary Georgia and seeks to define its future direction. This myth is anchored in an idealization of the past which serves to compensate on a psychological level for the difficulties of the present. The transformation of history into some form of “contra-representational myth” began in the 19th century as an integral element of a burgeoning nationalist movement work-

ing to stimulate nation-building processes under colonial conditions.

#### The Development of History Writing as a Profession in Georgia

At the end of the 19th century, a professional group of historians appeared in Georgia. One of the main objectives of its founder Ivane Javakhishvili was demystifying the past as part of an effort to understand the overall sweep of Georgian history. Javakhishvili's *The History of the Georgian Nation* is the first Georgian historical narrative on which this whole new Georgian historiography is based.

The objectives of Georgian historiography changed considerably in the Soviet period, particularly starting in the 1940s, when the Stalinist regime began to use history writing as an instrument of policy and ideology. Stalin defined a nation as a group based on an historically established language, territory, economic life and psychological structure. On this basis, history became an element of Soviet nationality policy and a major instrument for advancing political claims, legitimized as representing “historical justice”. The most remarkable example of this use of history as an instrument was an article entitled “About our legal claims towards Turkey” written by the Georgian historians Niko Berzenishvili and Simon Janashia on a direct order from Stalin and published in December 1945. In this article, the “legality” of Georgia's territorial claims against Turkey were represented as being determined by history.



## History and Ethnic Conflict

The instrumentalization of history under Stalinism also established a Soviet paradigm of historical thinking according to which history became both a way to build nations and a tool to be used in the political relations and legal treaties between nations. The results of this paradigm are visible in Soviet historiography following Stalin's death, when history became an important space for expressing nationalist feelings and fantasies, i.e. it became a key factor in building national pride. At the same time, Soviet nations were forming a certain parallel reality by reconstructing their past while simulating non-existent national foreign policies.

At the end of the 1980s historiography debates directly nurtured ethnic conflicts. In particular, this trend can be seen in the Georgian-Abkhazian conflict whose "ideological foundation" had been established through decades of debates among historians. Since 1988 Georgian historians, writers and leaders of the national movement, especially Soviet dissidents Akaki Bakradze and Zviad Gamsakhurdia, opposed the desire for self-determination of the Abkhazian nationalists who based their arguments on the centuries-old history of the Abkhaz nation, referring to the settling of "ethnic Abkhazians", i.e. "Apsuas," in the 17th century on the territory of modern Abkhazia. In pursuing the logic of their argument, the Georgian historians claimed that Abkhazia was an integral part of Georgia on the basis of historical development and argued that Abkhazians' claims to self-determination had no historical basis and as such were not legitimate if one views legitimacy as defined by history.

The outbreak of the Georgian-Ossetian conflict was the result of similar processes. The use of the term "Samachablo" promoted by first president of independent Georgia Gamsakhurdia at the end of the 1980s and beginning of the 1990s in place of the legal term "Autonomous Region of South Ossetia" had the effect of linking contemporary political realities to the Georgian feudal state of the middle ages, de-legitimizing this regional-administrative unit through historical refer-

ences. In 1990, Gamsakhurdia presented the abolition of the Autonomous Region of South Ossetia by the Supreme Council of Georgia as a "victory" of history against existing political realities. This decision resulted first in armed conflict and, subsequently, South Ossetia's de facto secession from Georgia.

## Contemporary Myth Building

In parallel, the process of constructing a so-called "contra-representational myth" continued to develop, as politicians propagated a mythologized history as a political-ideological doctrine. An obvious example of this process is the book *Georgia's Spiritual Mission* based on one of Gamsakhurdia's speeches. In this book, Gamsakhurdia claims that the ancient population of Europe and western Asia are Georgians' ancestors, while Georgia is described as a source of Western civilization and, as such, has a particular mission regarding mankind. It should be noted that these ideas were not invented by Gamsakhurdia himself, he simply derived them from an esoteric modification of Georgian Soviet historiography. The transformation of history into a political mythology started once again in the latter part Shevardnadze's tenure when, in 2000, the country celebrated the 3000<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the Georgian nation and the 2000<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the Georgian Church.

The ideological instrumentalization of history culminated during the period of Saakashvili's governance by becoming the most important element in Saakashvili's political rhetoric together with references to the Orthodox religion. The slogan "Forward to David Agmashenebeli!" means to escape from the present problems and replace them with an idealized past. The use of such a slogan has the effect of trapping Georgia in a Soviet historical paradigm, while hindering a sober view of contemporary reality. This instrumentalization ultimately creates a situation in which Georgia perceives itself not as an independent state, but as a colony in which historical fantasies are the only form of political speech.

### *About the Author*

Dr. Giorgi Maisuradze is a research fellow at the Center for Literary and Cultural Research Berlin and a lecturer at the Humboldt University in Berlin.

## Chronicle

### From 25 June to 15 July 2009

25 June 2009	Georgian President Mikheil Saakashvili says he is ready to reopen the Zemo Larsi border crossing point with Russia
26 June 2009	A French frigate arrives in Batumi, Georgia, to make a three-day port call
27 June 2009	NATO and Russia resume political and military cooperation despite “differences” on Georgia at a meeting of the foreign ministers from the 28 NATO allies and Russian Foreign Minister Sergey Lavrov on the Greek island of Corfu
27 June 2009	A member of the opposition Republican Party in Georgia is arrested over arms-related charges
30 June 2009	The OSCE mission in Georgia closes seventeen years after it was established to facilitate the settlement of the Georgian-South Ossetian conflict
30 June 2009	Gazprom head Alexei Miller says Gazprom will purchase 500 million cubic meters of Azerbaijani gas starting from 1 January 2010
1 July 2009	The sixth round of the Geneva talks with negotiators from Georgia, Russia and the United States, as well as from the breakaway republics of Abkhazia and South Ossetia, take place
2 July 2009	A Russian soldier deserts a post in the village of Perevi on the administrative border with South Ossetia to seek asylum in Georgia
2 July 2009	Polish President Lech Kaczynski visits Azerbaijan
3 July 2009	Leader of the opposition party Democratic Movement-United Georgia Nino Burdjanadze confirms her meeting with Ukrainian billionaire and former Ukrainian President Leonid Kuchma’s son-in-law, Victor Pinchuk in Kiev
7 July 2009	US President Barack Obama says that state sovereignty is “a cornerstone of international order” referring to Ukraine and Georgia in a speech at Moscow’s New Economic School during his visit to Russia
7 July 2009	The European Union and Azerbaijan sign an agreement on cooperation in the field of aviation, lifting national restrictions for European air companies
8 July 2009	Syrian President Bashar al-Assad visits Azerbaijan
9 July 2009	United Arab Emirates Foreign Minister Abdullah bin Zayed Al Nahyan visits Azerbaijan
9 July 2009	Youth activists Emin Milli and Adnan Hajizada are arrested in Baku on charges of hooliganism after being involved in a fight in a restaurant
10 July 2009	The president of the State Oil Company of Azerbaijan (SOCAR) Rovnag Abdullayev discusses energy cooperation with Turkmenistan during a meeting with Turkmen President Gurbangulu Berdimuhammedov in Ashgabat
10 July 2009	A new public movement “Defend Georgia” is established in Georgia to support the opposition parties’ objective of calling for early presidential elections
11 July 2009	The Georgian Parliament approves, in the first of three readings, an amendments package for laws on rallies, police and administrative offences
13 July 2009	Turkey and four EU member states (Bulgaria, Romania, Hungary, and Austria) sign the Nabucco Intergovernmental Agreement, allowing work to start on the Nabucco gas pipeline
13 July 2009	Russian President Dmitry Medvedev visits the breakaway republic of South Ossetia
13 July 2009	The Georgian Ministry of Foreign Affairs condemns Russian President Dmitry Medvedev’s visit to the breakaway republic of South Ossetia
13 July 2009	Georgian President Mikheil Saakashvili attends the high level summit on the Nabucco gas pipeline project in Ankara
14 July 2009	A meeting between the Georgian and the Abkhaz sides, as well as the command of the Russian troops on the ground, took place in Gali at the administrative border between Georgia and Abkhazia with facilitation from the EU monitoring mission (EUMM) and the UN in the framework of incident prevention mechanisms
14 July 2009	A US warship makes a port call at Georgia’s Black Sea port of Batumi
15 July 2009	A Caspian Airline plane flying from the Iranian capital of Tehran to Yerevan in Armenia crashes in northern Iran

## About the Caucasus Analytical Digest

Editors: Iris Kempe, Matthias Neumann, Robert Orttung, Jeronim Perović, Lili Di Puppò

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