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THE CENTRAL ASIA-CAUCASUS ANALYST

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Analytical Articles require a three to four sentence Key Issue introduction to the article based on a news hook. Rather than a general, overarching analysis, the article must offer considered and careful judgment supported with concrete examples. The ideal length of analytical articles is between 1,100 and 1,500 words. The articles are structured as follows:

KEY ISSUE: A short 75-word statement of your conclusions about the issue or news event on which the article focuses.

BACKGROUND: 300-450 words of analysis about what has led up to the event or issue and why this issue is critical to the region. Include background information about the views and experiences of the local population.

IMPLICATIONS: 300-450 words of analysis of the ramifications of this event or issue, including where applicable, implications for the local people's future.

CONCLUSIONS: 100-200 words that strongly state your conclusions about the impact of the event or issue.

Field Reports focus on a particular news event and what local people think about the event. Field Reports address the implications the event or activity analyzed for peoples' lives and their communities. Field Reports do not have the rigid structure of Analytical Articles, and are shorter in length, averaging ca. 700-800 words.

Those interested in joining The Analyst's pool of authors to contribute articles, field reports, or contacts of potential writers, please send your CV to: <scornell@jhu.edu> and suggest some topics on which you would like to write.

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A CHINESE MARSHALL PLAN FOR CENTRAL ASIA?

Temuri Yakobashvili

Twenty years after establishing diplomatic relations with the Central Asia states, China's economic engagement in the region has expanded to billions of dollars in investments, loans, and energy sales. President Xi Jinping's September tour concluded with extended aid sums reminiscent of the Marshall Plan. Agreements focused on the fields of energy, trade and finance, and infrastructure, cementing China's role as Central Asia's primary economic benefactor. China continues to outpace Russia in both bilateral trade and foreign direct investment measures, though President Xi Jinping is careful not to challenge Russian political primacy in the region. China's contributions to Central Asia should not discourage the West from participating in regional integration projects and enjoying the rewards.

BACKGROUND: Evoking the 1948 Marshall Plan is a popular technique used by countries in transition to request aid for infrastructural and economic development. Academics studying developing states often use the success of the Marshall Plan in their arguments to promote investments as well as attract financial and development aid. In these instances, the intent is not to enact a policy directly mirroring the Foreign Assistance Act of 1948, which provided reconstruction aid to European nations following World War II. Instead, to draw upon the Marshall Plan today implies that such programs be comprised of political and financial elements. First, programs must have a specifically defined policy focus. Second, substantial financial engagement must be extended in order to stimulate economic development. It is the hope that policy-focused programs, accompanied by robust financial engagement, will trigger economic growth.

From 3-13 September 2013, the President of the People's Republic of China, Xi Jinping, traveled to Turkmenistan, Kazakhstan, Uzbekistan, and Kyrgyzstan. Discussions between President Xi and the nations' leaders aimed to secure Chinese access to the abundant energy deposits and construct land-based transit routes to export these resources and transport Chinese goods to European markets.

During the ten-day tour, President Xi Jinping signed an estimated US\$ 48 billion worth of investment and loan agreements, with a focus on the energy, trade, and infrastructure sectors. This figure includes export agreements totaling over 100 billion cubic meters (bcm) of natural gas through a network of Chinese-funded pipelines.

Though the sum of the Turkmen agreements is not published, the leaders agreed to increase gas exports, complete the construction of a gas production plant, and begin



transitioning the Galkynysh natural gas project into Phase Two of development with Chinese financing. In Kazakhstan the China National Petroleum Corporation's (CNPC) purchase of ConocoPhillips' shares in the Kashagan oil project was finalized and the two Presidents commissioned the first phase of the Beineu-Bozoi-Shymkent gas pipeline, and signed twenty-two contracts worth US\$ 30 billion. With thirty-one agreements worth US\$ 15 billion signed in Uzbekistan, the Presidents discussed increasing bilateral trade to US\$ 5 billion by 2017 and constructing another eastbound natural gas pipeline. Additionally, China continued to extend scholarships for Uzbek students to study in China. Finally, in Kyrgyzstan about half of the total US\$ 3 billion in signed agreements is allocated to extend the Turkmenistan-sourced gas pipeline, generating US\$ 40 million per year in transit fees for the Kyrgyz. This agreement is accompanied by loans to modernize a heating plant, build an oil refinery, and construct a North-South highway.

The sheer number of contracts and robust financial investments garnered throughout the tour raises the question: is this economic engagement

in Central Asia a demonstration of China's unique version of the Marshall Plan?

IMPLICATIONS: It is evident that, among individual actors engaging the countries of Central Asia, China is unmatched. This is in spite of the global impression that Central Asia is within the Russian Federation's sphere of influence and that the Central Asian nations are integrated – economically and strategically – with Russo-centric organizations, like the Commonwealth of Independent States, Eurasian Customs Union, and Collective Security Treaty Organization. However, bilateral trade and foreign direct investment (FDI) data contradict the claim that the Central Asian states operate solely as members of Russia's sphere and instead support the reality of China's growing economic influence. Presently, bilateral trade between the Central Asian states and China is a hundred times greater than in 1992. On average Chinese trade with the region, including Tajikistan, surpassed Russian bilateral trade by US\$ 3.7 billion in 2012. Business with the Chinese accounted for an average 33.3 percent of trade in each nation, compared to Russia's 14.7 percent average. Considering foreign direct investment in Kazakhstan, Russia has been outpaced by China since 2010 – reaching US\$ 2 billion in 2012 against Russia's \$392.8 million – and in Kyrgyzstan since 2011 – with \$131.7 million against US\$ 3.9 million that year.

In the energy sector, both natural gas and petroleum pipelines flow increasingly eastward. Sales of

Turkmen gas to Russia's Gazprom are steadily declining from a peak 46.3 bcm in 2008 to 10.7 bcm in 2010. This drop coincides with China's US\$ 8 billion loan to support Phase One of the Galkynysh project in 2008 as well as the construction of Lines A, B, and C of the Sino-Turkmen pipeline, with an agreement on Line D signed during the September 2013 trip.

China's position on Central Asia fulfills the two requirements of modern Marshall Plan programs. China's policy aims to economically unite the region as a transportation corridor for goods traveling from China to markets in the Middle East and Europe. Since the model of cooperation is economically based and without provisions for political integration, China will not challenge Russia's official political primacy.

Even so, the distinct choices of Turkmenistan, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, and Uzbekistan to favor economic agreements with China over Russia are founded on three aspects. First, the purpose of China's economic focus on Central Asia is to integrate the region, not create barriers, contradictory to Russia's inclusive economic operation in the form of the Eurasian Customs Union. Second, China possesses a surplus of capital to offer, resulting in immediately deliverable and robust investments and loans; any other single-nation investor is incapable of the same feat. Third and finally, China's financial support is not contingent upon concessions – particularly political – made by the beneficiary, unlike conditional circumstances

surrounding support promised by Russia.

Thus – despite political and economic alliances with the Russian Federation – in actuality the Central Asian states are more closely engaged with China economically, revealed by the shift of the economic vector of development, and even the flow of the pipelines, from North to East.

President Xi's September tour signaled a reinvigorated economic commitment to Central Asia. The US\$ 48 billion in agreements is a demonstration of China's unique version of a modern Marshall Plan, fulfilling both requirements with a policy focused on uniting the region through the development of transportation infrastructure and significant financial contributions. President Xi's personal visit to each of the four nations is evidence of China's intentions, and the exchange of high-level officials will continue to promote engagement with the Central Asian states. However China's actions should not discourage the West, but instead prompt their increased participation to collaborate in the region.

CONCLUSIONS: Noncompetitive cooperation in projects like the Eurasian corridor will not only benefit Central Asia and China, but also Western Europe. The corridor's capability to connect European and Chinese markets directly by land accelerates the shipment of goods three times faster than transport by sea, and drives the growth of small and medium-sized businesses along the route –a win-win scenario for everyone involved. Therefore, the

competitive advantage of speed over sea transit must be exploited. The West commits substantial assistance to support the energy sector with about US\$ 26.4 million of energy development assistance from the U.S. in 2011, US\$ 50 million of funding for energy and transport projects by the EU from 2007 to 2010, and US\$ 88 million dedicated by the EU to the Investment Facility for Central Asia. These Western investments support China's mission to integrate Central Asia as a transportation corridor, adding more contributors to the team of Central Asian benefactors, thereby increasing the project's chances at success. In addition, the products of investment in the energy sector from Western investors – including production consortium partners like ExxonMobil, Shell, and Eni – provide

not only the extra revenue, but also infrastructure to support such lofty transportation developments as the Eurasian corridor.

Using the successes of these pioneering investments in the energy sector as a foundation, the West, Russia, and China will be able to effectively contribute to the development and economic stability of Central Asia. All parties, including the Central Asian states, must favor cooperation over competition in terms of economic engagement in the region in order to aid the developing states, and China's Marshall Plan is only the first step.

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TURKEY-GEORGIA-AZERBAIJAN: TRILATERALISM AND THE FUTURE OF BLACK SEA REGIONAL GEOPOLITICS

Michael Hikari Cecire

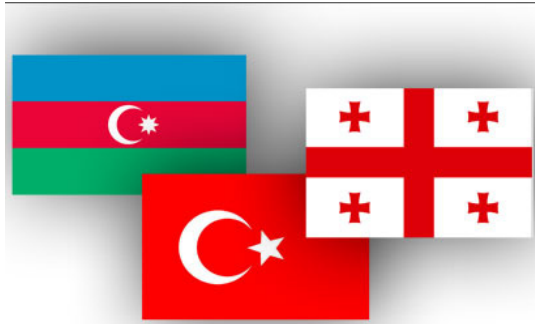
Though one of the quieter subplots in Black Sea geopolitics, the emergence of an increasingly cohesive trilateral grouping between Turkey, Georgia, and Azerbaijan is reconfiguring the regional balance of power. This entente was officiated in the 2012 tripartite Trabzon Declaration, but is rooted in growing economic and strategic interdependencies. While the grouping remains vulnerable to both pressure from Moscow and internal challenges, this trilateral entente has the potential to be the prevailing player in the South Caucasus if it maintains its upwards trajectory, and its interests largely overlap with those of the West.

BACKGROUND: In June 2012, the foreign ministers of Turkey, Georgia, and Azerbaijan met in Trabzon to sign what is now known as the Trabzon Declaration, which codified the growing links between the three Caucasus powers and signaled the pooling of their efforts within a common format. The signatories pledged to support each other's candidacies within international organizations, including, crucially, Euro-Atlantic integration. The Declaration also reiterated the three states' longstanding policy of the inviolability of sovereign borders - a direct nod to Georgia and Azerbaijan's separatist conflicts.

Especially over the past decade, relations between the three countries have powerfully increased due to a convergence of economic and geopolitical interests. While trilateral relations have older roots, it was not until the vision of the Baku-Tbilisi-Ceyhan (BTC) pipeline began to take shape in the 1990s that the three

states began to cooperate as something resembling a joint grouping. After the BTC came online, later followed by the South Caucasus pipeline, other projects began to emerge. Ankara's economic and geopolitical strategy depended on the stable and voluminous flow of hydrocarbons from Azerbaijan and the Caspian to not only provide Turkey with badly needed energy, the lifeblood of its economic growth, but also offered diversification away from Russian "strings-attached" energy to Central and Eastern European markets as well. This had the added effect of helping realize Turkish aspirations to transform from a peripheral state to a "hub" or "bridge" state, as the Euro-Atlantic space was essentially expanded to the Caspian.

Turkish foreign minister Ahmet Davutoglu outlined the Justice and Development Party (AKP)'s foreign policy vision in his 2001 book *Stratejik*



Derinlik - "Strategic Depth." Strategic Depth refers to Turkey's latent influence in its surrounding regions, which Davutoglu surmised could be harnessed to reorient Turkey from a Western flank to an independent pole of power. Although most attention has centered on the Middle East, efforts in the Balkans and the Caucasus have also been targets of Strategic Depth. In the Caucasus, Turkey's energy needs and strong partnership with Azerbaijan acted as a cornerstone for Ankara's strategy. Georgia was also included given its strategic location as a physical link between Turkey and Azerbaijan. For Georgia, cooperation with Turkey, a NATO member state and in a customs union with the EU (as of 1995), acted as a window to the Euro-Atlantic.

Trilateralism grew from Turkey's need for energy, Azerbaijan's ability to supply it, and Georgia's physical location to bring the two states together. Undergirded by Strategic Depth, cooperation gradually increased and barriers fell away. In 2012, the Trans-Anatolian Pipeline (TANAP) was announced, adding yet another trilateral energy artery. And the recently-announced Trans-Adriatic Pipeline (TAP) will ensure that

Caspian hydrocarbons will make their way to European markets. In addition, the trilateral Baku-Tbilisi-Kars railway (BTK) project, scheduled for completion in 2014, will add further capacity for the transport of energy, goods, and people. Significantly, BTK is the final piece in a contiguous Eurasian rail corridor between London and Shanghai to rival Russia's Trans-Siberian Railway. To take advantage of the economic potential of the projects, Turkish President Abdullah Gül has called for establishing a joint trilateral economic space. Turkey already has free-trade and passport-free agreements with Georgia and is reportedly in negotiations with Azerbaijan for the same.

IMPLICATIONS: The economic and geopolitical aspects of trilateralism are closely intertwined. The economic projects integrate the three states and bolster the geostrategic significance of the entire South Caucasus region. This also enhances Ankara's position as a South Caucasus power, despite a traditional bias towards Europe and the Middle East. One facet has been growing trilateral cooperation in the realm of defense. Georgia and Azerbaijan, which each face unique difficulties in procuring armaments abroad, have prioritized the development of domestic arms industries. Under newly-appointed Georgian defense minister Irakli Alasania, a bilateral working group was created to cooperate in the production of defense materiel, reportedly including armored vehicles, drones, and even warplanes. Given Turkey's relative success in this area,

Turkish counterpart ministries are increasingly involved as technical advisers and even, in growing respects, as participants. The three states also recently held their first trilateral military exercises and have already planned several more for the future, including Tbilisi's request that Azerbaijani and Turkish forces be included in Georgia's annual exercises with U.S. forces next year.

Geopolitically, trilateralism represents a convergence of their strategic objectives. For Turkey, energy needs and the Strategic Depth vision make its involvement in the South Caucasus natural. Additionally, the unraveling of Strategic Depth in the Middle East - chiefly exemplified by Syria, Iran, and Egypt - has cast its growing influence in the South Caucasus into sharp relief. To Georgia, Turkey has transitioned from a portal to Europe and strong trade partner into a potentially legitimate regional counterweight to Russia and even a possible hedge against the glacial rate of progress towards NATO membership. And trilateralism not only offers Azerbaijan more reliable and friendlier markets for its energy, but amplifies Baku's geopolitical prominence. In each of these cases, the three states' narrower national interests are superseded by the broader benefits of trilateralism itself.

Although the three states have made pains not to overtly portray their grouping as an anti-Russian bloc, the practical consequences of the alignment make such a characterization unavoidable. Not only does the grouping explicitly omit

Armenia, Russia's local client, but also actively isolates Yerevan through its pipelines and the BTK railway. In addition, the expansion of Turkish influence comes at Russia's expense. This is primarily a consequence of Moscow's overbearing regional policies - well-exemplified by the invasion of Georgia and the misguided decision to recognize Abkhazia and South Ossetia. That Turkey is able to at least partially fill this vacuum is unsurprising, but nonetheless regarded suspiciously by Russia's leadership, which continues to regard the South Caucasus as its exclusive domain. At least some analysts saw Russia's Black Sea naval exercises coinciding with the second meeting of Turkish, Georgian, and Azerbaijani foreign ministers under the Trabzon format as an expression of Moscow's displeasure.

Beyond Russia, other challenges exist. Although Georgia has sought to moderately normalize its relations with Russia since the Georgian Dream coalition came to power, Georgian foreign policy remains much less multi-vectored than that of Azerbaijan or even Turkey - which both depend on Russia for trade or energy. More concerning is the paucity of depth of trilateralism below the intergovernmental level. While Turkey and Azerbaijan have closely related cultures, languages, and religion (though predominantly Sunni and Shiite, respectively), Christian Orthodox Georgia is very much culturally and linguistically distinct. And in Georgia, a rash of xenophobia across the country since late 2012 has

contributed to tensions between the Christian majority and its Muslim minorities. Though this has not yet become an international issue, that possibility should not be discounted. However, the effects of trilateralism should percolate below the governmental level over time. Indeed, this appears to be already happening in Georgia to some extent. The popularity of Turkish soap operas has even sired a common joke in Georgia that the television serials have conquered Georgia in a way that the Sultans of old could not.

CONCLUSIONS: Turkish-Georgia-Azerbaijani trilateralism is already an emerging force in the South Caucasus. Though not an explicitly anti-Russia bloc, it is clearly an alignment that actively bypasses Russia and its local client, Armenia. The opening of the

BTK railway could mark yet another milestone for the axis, which could contribute to ever-greater economic integration and mutual interactions. In time, however, Moscow is likely to eventually take a harder line in opposition to the grouping, particularly after the Sochi 2014 Winter Olympics. Despite these and other challenges, this trilateral entente has the potential to be the prevailing player in the South Caucasus if it maintains its upwards trajectory. Given largely overlapping interests, the West has and should continue to support the development of South Caucasus trilateralism.

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CENTRAL ASIA AND SOUTH CAUCASUS PROMOTE CHEMICAL WEAPONS DISARMAMENT

Richard Weitz

The Central Asia and South Caucasus governments welcomed the decision of the Nobel Prize Committee to award the Organization for the Prohibition of Chemical Weapons (OPCW) its annual peace prize. They also supported Syria's formal accession to the Chemical Weapons Convention (CWC) and the Russian-U.S. agreement and subsequent UN Security Council Resolution that establishes a framework for eliminating Syria's chemical weapons (CW) arsenal. While the Central Asia and South Caucasus states' experiences with eliminating the consequences of the Soviet nuclear weapons activities on their territory is well known, they have also had to manage the effects of the massive Soviet-era CW infrastructure that persists even to this day.

BACKGROUND: The CWC prohibits the development, production, acquisition, stockpiling, transfer, and use of offensive chemical weapons. Many of the Central Asia and South Caucasus states have found meeting their CWC obligations challenging. They have not executed or enforced all their national implementation requirements, are situated along prime CW trafficking routes between Russia and the Middle East, and find themselves torn between their desire to exchange chemical technologies and their fear of contributing to CW proliferation through lax export controls. Thanks to globalization, these countries are experiencing rapid growth in their commercial chemistry industries, which taxes their national safety and security regulations and capabilities. These were rapidly developed in the 1990s and are designed to manage twentieth-century chemical threats, before the advent of

global supply chains, micro reactors, and biochemistry.

Most of the former Soviet Union chemical weapons infrastructure was located in Russia or Ukraine, but a few chemical facilities were built and operated in other parts of the USSR, often as dual-use facilities with civilian components designed to conceal their military activities. After the Soviet Union collapsed, the newly independent states of the South Caucasus and Central Asia destroyed some of these plants and tried to convert others into purely commercial enterprises. Armenia, Kazakhstan, and Uzbekistan housed Soviet CW facilities that have since been shut down. A single CW facility in Kazakhstan was shuttered in 1987, before its construction was completed and before any CW could be produced. It took Uzbekistan until 1999 to come to a bilateral agreement with the U.S. to dismantle its Soviet-era CW facility, a



project completed in 2002. Armenia was quicker to address its inherited CW, signing an agreement to return its stocks to Russia in 1992. The U.S. has been working with many Eurasian governments, under various programs, to hinder the smuggling of CW and other WMD-related items through their porous borders.

These countries all encountered difficulties in converting their dual-use chemical industry into purely commercial ventures. The post-Soviet economies have struggled with weak currencies, high inflation, low national incomes, limited entrepreneurial skills among local managers, poor law enforcement, flimsy intellectual property protection, and upheavals in potential foreign markets. It has only been in the last decade that rising global commodity prices and other benign developments have created more favorable conditions for their national ambitions to become leading global chemical producers, using latest-generation technologies and processes that complicate national and international monitoring and verification regimes.

IMPLICATIONS: In eliminating their chemical weapons and other WMD stockpiles, many of the former Soviet republics required and received considerable foreign assistance. The U.S. provided substantial help under

its Cooperative Threat Reduction Program (CTR, also known as Nunn-Lugar, after its two main Senate sponsors), the U.S. Export Control and Related Border Security (EXBS) Program, and other initiatives. These funds supported chemical weapons elimination programs as well as projects to strengthen border security against WMD trafficking. For example, the U.S. government made strengthening the porous borders of the South Caucasus, and strengthening maritime security in the Caspian Sea region, priorities of its CW nonproliferation efforts. European governments and Russia have also provided financial and technical assistance to strengthen regional border and export controls and tighten the physical safety and security of WMD-related materials and technologies.

Tajikistan, Turkmenistan, and Georgia, though they do not possess CW, are still among the most highly trafficked smuggling routes in the region.

Other aid came through the G-8 Global Partnership against the Spread of Weapons and Materials of Mass Destruction, launched at the 2002 G-8 summit. Despite some tensions over U.S. activities in the former Soviet Union, including recent Russian accusations that Washington is supporting a biological weapons laboratory in Tbilisi, Russia and the U.S. have also undertaken several special joint projects to remove insecure WMD material from several former Soviet republics to safer locations in Russia, the U.S., or elsewhere. Although the narrower

Framework Agreement on a Multilateral Nuclear Environmental Program in the Russian Federation (MNEPR) that replaced the CTR framework earlier this year has decreased joint WMD elimination activities in Russia, Washington and Moscow have pledged to cooperate against WMD threats in third countries.

This continued assistance will be needed as the Central Asia and South Caucasus countries still face major WMD threats, not least related to the so-called frozen conflicts in the breakaway regions of Georgia and Nagorno-Karabakh. For decades these separatist regions have operated beyond the law enforcement and other agencies of their national governments. As a result, these ungoverned spaces have become a magnet for terrorists and criminals who, among other malign activities, have engaged in WMD trafficking, with several instances of extremely dangerous nuclear materials being offered for sale in the South Caucasus. Trafficked chemical weapons are likely to come from the same source: the massive WMD stockpile Russia inherited following the Soviet collapse. Although the safety and security of Russia's chemical weapons have improved, and some three-fourths of the original stockpile has been eliminated, the large volume and opportunities to find corrupt insider collaborators are too great to rule out further Russian WMD leakage through the South Caucasus or other regions. The chemical weapons threat in Central Asia has been less than that

presented by the former Soviet nuclear and biological weapons activities in this region, which ruined local environments and whose consequences have been enormously expensive to eliminate. But Central Asia has been highly penetrated by narcotics traffickers who convey Afghan-made opium products through several routes that traverse the region as they move illegal drugs to China, Russia, and Europe. These could easily serve as transportation routes for chemical weapons. The deterioration in Afghanistan's security that could ensue following the withdrawal of most NATO combat troops from that country in late 2014 would worsen this problem, since neither of the two main multinational security institutions active in Central Asia, the Shanghai Cooperation Organization and the Collective Security Treaty Organization, has made countering WMD trafficking a priority.

Both Central Asia and the South Caucasus have seen their chemical industries grow in size and sophistication since the end of the Soviet Union. Although this trend should be welcome for many reasons, including the jobs these industries bring and the fillip they can give to the regions' economic development, national regulators find it challenging to expand the scope and improve the quality of their safety and security measures, which were adopted at the time the states became independent and when their chemical sectors were rudimentary. Modern chemical plants can easily be converted from producing commercial chemicals to

manufacturing weapons-grade agents. Even unsophisticated chlorine plants can become mass destruction weapons if they are set ablaze. Trains and other vehicles transporting chlorine can also be attacked. In Iraq, the insurgents laced conventional bombs with chlorine to increase their shock effect and complicate defusing. More modern chemical plants can be misused to create more deadly weapons. If Central Asian and South Caucasus governments succeed in developing biotechnology and nanotechnology, these new capabilities would present even more serious proliferation challenges since they could be used to create new forms of deadly biotoxins and miniaturized CW delivery systems.

CONCLUSION: The OPCW's Nobel Prize has highlighted the value of that organization and the CWC that it administers. But they will both need more support from their member

states to counter the threats of chemical weapons proliferation and use that, while most common in the Middle East, could also increase in the South Caucasus and Central Asia due to the security challenges and economic developments in both regions. It is especially important that the local governments and private sector actors developing new scientific and technological industries in these regions receive adequate foreign technical assistance as well as pressure to upgrade their safety and security procedures to prevent these highly sophisticated capabilities from being misused for making weapons rather than pursuing peaceful scientific or commercial endeavors.

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RUSSIAN ARMY TURNS DOWN CONSCRIPTS FROM THE NORTH CAUCASUS

Valeriy Dzutsev

The exclusion of North Caucasians from the pool of conscripts to the Russian military signifies steady a plummeting of the single national identity in the Russian Federation. As the insurgency warfare drags on in the North Caucasus, the Russian military is increasingly unwilling to draft ethnic non-Russians from the North Caucasus. Apart from security concerns, the government is wary of constant clashes between the North Caucasians and ethnic Russians in the army. The separation of the North Caucasians from the civil duty, mandated by the state, further increases the divide between ethnic Russians and North Caucasians.

BACKGROUND: On September 17, at a meeting with the public board of the Ministry of Defense, Russia's Defense Minister Sergei Shoigu announced that the Russian armed forces would drastically cut the number of army conscripts. Shoigu declined to announce the exact figures, but promised the cuts would be measured in "tens of thousands." Despite the government's repeated promises of transition to a professional army, the Russian army is still based on a military conscription service that is mandatory for men aged 18 and older. Approximately 300,000 conscripts are drafted every year in two rounds, in spring and fall. The unpopularity of military service and the country's negative demographic trend result in a chronic understaffing of Russian military units. Over 200,000 potential conscripts evade military service through various loopholes. The modern Russian army has only 82 percent or about 800,000 of the military servicemen it needs, and the

deficient number of conscripts is projected to plague the army in 2014 and the years to come. Hence, Russian strategists plan to increase the number of contracted soldiers, although financial constraints prevent the complete transition to a professional army any time soon.

As the Russian military faces steep challenges in finding enough servicemen, it leaves the reserves of the conscripts in the North Caucasus largely untapped. According to military planners, Chechnya alone can potentially provide 80,000 conscripts. According to some estimates, an additional 40,000 men could be drafted in Dagestan during a single military conscription campaign. Nevertheless, the military does not plan to draft any conscripts from Chechnya and the draft plan for Dagestan this fall is only 179 people. The conscripts from Dagestan will primarily be ethnic Russians, while



ethnic Dagestanis will serve in the forces of the Ministry for Emergency Situations, which are not part of the Ministry of Defense. In comparison, until the government started to impose limits in 2009, Dagestan supplied 15,000-20,000 conscripts every year. The North Caucasians are also on average much more willing than ethnic Russians to join the army. This is partly an effect of the region's relative poverty and of the local traditional military culture. Thus, while many ethnic Russians seek to evade conscription, North Caucasians look for ways to be drafted to the army.

Limitations on the military draft from the North Caucasus started in Chechnya. The two wars that pitted Chechens against Russians made military draft among ethnic Chechens to the Russian army all but impossible. Some Chechens were still drafted, but they served in units under Ramzan Kadyrov's control or the Russia's Interior Ministry in Chechnya. In the 2000s, the Russian command attempted to draft Chechens to the Russian military several times to demonstrate that the hostilities in Chechnya were over, but all these attempts failed. In 2009, the policy of rejecting Chechen conscripts was unexpectedly expanded to other republics of the North Caucasus, most

profoundly to Dagestan and Ingushetia, and later to North Ossetia, Kabardino-Balkaria, Karachaevo-Cherkessia and Adygea.

IMPLICATIONS: There are different reasons for the cease of military recruitment in the North Caucasus. Since the region is rife with insurgency-related violence, the Russian government is concerned about the effects of military instruction provided to soldiers from the North Caucasus. After receiving military training in the Russian army, the conscripts might defect to the insurgents and fight the Russian army using skills they have acquired from the army itself. However, the restrictions were imposed not only on Chechnya, Dagestan, Ingushetia and Kabardino-Balkaria, which all feature persistent insurgency movements, but also on relatively quiet regions such as North Ossetia. Another important explanation for the Russian government's reluctance to draft young North Caucasians is the widespread hazing problem in the Russian army. Ethnic Russians and North Caucasians constantly clash in the army and hazing scandals regularly shook the military until draft from the North Caucasus was constrained.

Russian and previously Soviet military draft was based on the extraterritorial principle, so that conscripts from different ethnic groups and locations would mix. For many young men, this was their first opportunity to learn about other ethnic groups through personal interaction. However, the political and military battles in the country appear to have changed the

Russian army's status as a "melting pot." Some sources in the Russian military point out that the problem is not only about the insurgency warfare and hazing problems in the army.

According to a source in the Ministry of Defense, quoted by *Nezavisimaya Gazeta* on October 2, multiethnic military units where North Caucasians would serve alongside people from central Russia (i.e. ethnic Russians) have fallen out of favor with the Russian military command. The Ministry of Defense official claims that "This rule [to exclusion of North Caucasians] is tacitly enforced not only in the lower level military units, but also at the level of the central command of the Ministry of Defense, where there are almost no officers from Dagestan and Chechnya ... Monoethnic, primarily Slavic military units, is a road to nowhere. This gives the [North] Caucasians a reason to regard such units in their homeland as occupation forces." *Nezavisimaya Gazeta's* source in the military preferred to remain anonymous, which in itself indicates how unpopular such inclusive views have become in the Russian army.

Polls repeatedly show that the dislike for North Caucasians among ethnic Russians exceeds anti-Semitism and dislike for other ethnic groups. The de facto exclusion of North Caucasians from military service further contributes to fragmentation between ethnic groups in Russia and ultimately of the country itself. Even if the ethnic groups in question cause many hazing incidents, the inability of the officer corps to tackle the problem of creating

a unified army indicates that the Russian state is largely unwilling or unable to integrate non-Russians. The new policy will have broad consequences in the North Caucasus and will increasingly alienate the Russian military forces from the local population, with the risk of the civil conflict in the region increasingly resembling an old-fashioned colonial war between the Russian central state and the ethnically divergent periphery.

CONCLUSIONS: The Russian government's imposition of constraints on drafting conscripts to the military from the North Caucasus will likely reduce Moscow's ability to retain control over restive region. The Russian state's internal crisis appears to preclude it from accommodating the interests of ethnic non-Russians and successfully co-opting their elites. This trend is contributing to a widening gap between ethnic Russians and North Caucasians as both groups have fewer real life opportunities to engage in various interactions. The decision to limit military draft among North Caucasians is also consistent with the general rise of Russian nationalism in ethnically Russian regions and is part of the general tendency to separate the North Caucasus from Russia, but retain control over it. This approach strikingly resembles an attempt to turn the region into de-facto colony of Russia.

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TURKMENISTAN, CHINA REACH NEW ENERGY DEALS

Tavus Rejepova

Turkmen and Chinese energy officials, in the presence of Turkmenistan's and China's Presidents Gurbanguly Berdimuhamedov and Xi Jinping, signed a number of new agreements and contracts on September 3-4 on the development of Turkmenistan's giant Galkynysh (Renaissance) gas field and to increase the supply of Turkmen gas to China to 65 billion cubic meters (bcm) per year by 2020. A total of thirteen bilateral documents including the energy sector deals were signed to bring the Turkmen-Chinese cooperation to a new strategic level.

On September 4, Turkmenistan's and China's presidents announced the completion of the first phase of construction of the Galkynysh gas field and launched the construction of the second phase. Within the framework of phase one development, UAE's Petrofac International LLC, China's CNPC Chuangning Drilling Engineering Company Limited and South Korea's consortium of LG International and Hyundai Engineering Co. Ltd. built three gas processing plants with a combined annual capacity of 30 bcm at the Galkynysh gas field, worth US\$ 9.7 billion. The commercial production is expected to reach 30 bcm a year by the end of 2014.

Berdimuhamedov and Jinping have also signed a Joint Declaration on Establishing a Strategic Partnership between Turkmenistan and China, stressing that the sides will also

expand cooperation in construction of infrastructure, telecommunications, chemical industry, textile industry, agriculture, healthcare, high technologies and implementation of large joint projects.

Turkmenistan's state concern Turkmengaz and the China Development Bank signed a cooperation agreement on financing the second phase of development at Galkynysh through an undisclosed loan to the Turkmen government. Turkmengaz and China National Petroleum Corporation (CNPC) also signed a contract for the purchase and sale of 25 bcm of natural gas to China and a contract for the design and construction of an upstream complex with a capacity to produce 30 bcm of additional gas sales.

According to these new contracts, Turkmenistan is going to supply China with 65 bcm of gas per year by 2020, up from nearly 24 bcm in 2012. Under a joint declaration made by the two presidents, the sides agreed to build a new natural gas pipeline, Line D, in addition to the existing Lines A and B, and Line C that is under construction. Unlike lines A, B, and C, the fourth line will be built through the territories of Uzbekistan (205 kilometers), Tajikistan (415 kilometers) and Kyrgyzstan (225 kilometers). This new route, with undisclosed capacity, is expected to be completed by 2016 and

will pump gas to China from Galkynysh.

The joint declaration stipulates that the sides agree to take measures to guarantee the safe and stable operation of Lines A and B of the Turkmenistan-China natural gas pipeline, as well as a sound implementation of their natural gas project in the Bagtyyarlyk gas field on the right bank of the Amu Darya River. The sides also vowed to cooperate to complete the construction of Line C by the end of 2014 and make it ready for gas transmission.

The Chinese president's two day visit and signing of major energy deals for the development of Galkynysh, the world's second largest deposit containing some 24 trillion cubic meters of gas, reconfirmed China's long-term commitment and interest in Turkmenistan's oil and gas sector and made China Turkmenistan's largest creditor in this sector. As per the estimates, China's loan to Turkmenistan in 2010-11 was US\$ 8 billion. Official sources in Turkmenistan reported that the trade

turnover with China reached US\$ 9 billion out of its total US\$ 35 billion trade turnover in 2012, and exceeded US\$ 4.5 billion in the first half of 2013. Since the launch of the Turkmenistan-China gas pipeline in 2009, the total volume of natural gas delivered to China is over 50 bcm. Energy analysts believe that the new Turkmen-Chinese deal for more gas imports may also provide China with some leverage in its long-lasting gas sale and purchase negotiations with Russia. In addition, the construction of Line D is also expected to bring Kyrgyzstan over US\$ 2 billion in transit fees and similar undisclosed income to neighboring Uzbekistan and Tajikistan. It has been suggested that Line D that goes via Uzbekistan, Tajikistan and Kyrgyzstan will also help reduce the frictions among these countries.

POLLS REVEAL GEORGIAN DREAM CANDIDATE IN LEAD AHEAD OF PRESIDENTIAL ELECTION

Archil Zhorzholiani

The presidential candidates nominated by “qualified political parties” will participate in TV debates at the Georgian Public Broadcaster (GPB) on October 17-18. Georgia's election code grants such status only to political forces which have won at least 4 percent of the vote by running either independently or along with other parties in the most recent parliamentary elections and gained at least 3 percent of the vote in the latest local elections.

Giorgi Margvelashvili from Georgian Dream (GD); Davit Bakradze from the United National Movement (UNM); Giorgi Targamadze from Christian-Democratic Movement (CDM); Koba Davitashvili from People's Party; Zurab Kharatishvili, nominated by the European Democrats of Georgia; Sergo Javakhidze from Movement for Fair Georgia; and Teimuraz Mzhavia, nominated by the Christian Democratic People's Party - fall under this category. Overall, the Central Election Commission (CEC) registered 23 candidates for the October 27 presidential election; the largest number since 1990 when Georgia held its first presidential election.

Among the popular candidates not enjoying the status of “qualified” runners are Nino Burjanadze, former parliament speaker and leader of Democratic Movement-United Georgia party (DMUG); Shalva Natelashvili,

leader of Labor Party; Akaki Asatiani, leader of the Traditionalists party; and Nestan Kirtadze, a former Labor Party member.

On September 23-26, the U.S. National Democratic Institute (NDI) released a survey conducted by the Caucasus Resource Research Centers (CRRC) from August 18 to September 3 through nationwide face-to-face interviews with 3,838 respondents. The survey shows a significant lead for the GD's candidate Margvelashvili over the other runners with a ten-percentage point increase since June. Responding to the question “whom would you like to see as the next president?,” 39 percent of likely voters named Margvelashvili, followed by the Bakradze with 18 percent. Notably, in a previous similar poll conducted in June, Bakradze gained 10 percent. 7 percent of the respondents chose Burjanadze as the preferred next president, whereas Targamadze and Natelashvili secured 3 percent each.

According to the polls, 16 percent of likely voters remain undecided, 6 percent refused to answer, while 4 percent rejected all candidates. Those who answered “don't know,” “no candidate” or declined to answer together comprise 26 percent. Meanwhile, 31 percent of the respondents anticipate a second election round while exactly the same

number of respondents disagree. However, in the event of a runoff, Margvelashvili secures a 25-point lead over the Bakradze and a 33-point lead over Burjanadze.

Conspicuously, the rating of the two major political parties has not changed significantly since June. 50 percent of the respondents dubbed the GD coalition as the “party closest” to them followed by UNM with 12 percent. Meanwhile, Prime Minister Bidzina Ivanishvili maintains a 69 percent approval rating. Although 71 percent of the respondents disapprove of his decision to resign before the end of his term, 62 percent say that the PM’s intention will not affect their choice of presidential candidates.

Another recent survey conducted by the Washington-based research and strategic consulting firm Greenberg Quinlan Rosner (GQR) during September 15-21 ultimately reiterates the tendencies depicted in the NDI polls. 43 percent of the respondents would vote for Margvelashvili if presidential elections were held tomorrow. For Bakradze this number stood at 22 percent and for Burjanadze at 8 percent respectively. According to GQR, 17 percent of the survey participants remained undecided.

On September 25, the delegation of the Parliamentary Assembly of the Council of Europe (PACE) assessed the electoral environment in Georgia

as “more open and equally competitive” compared to other recent elections. Georgia could conduct elections meeting European standards, according to PACE. To this end, however, the PACE statement stresses that the “cases of politically-motivated violence and intimidation of opposition supporters, pressure on officials to resign prematurely from their elected or appointed positions, and undue interference of local officials in the election process must be excluded during the election campaign.”

Drawing upon the polls conducted by NDI and GQR, several important dynamics can be outlined. Although the large number of uncertain respondents makes it difficult to predict the results of the first round as well as the possibility of a second round of the elections, Margvelashvili's victory in the first tour is likely. In the case of a runoff, his chances will only increase. However, Margvelashvili’s public approval rating is far behind that of the GD. On the contrary, public support for Bakradze is higher than that of the party by which he was nominated. These trends become more important in light of the PM’s decision to resign, which might shake the GD’s public support in general and the legitimacy of Margvelashvili as the potential next president in particular.

APP-GATE AND AZERBAIJAN'S PRESIDENTIAL ELECTION

Bakhtiyar Aslanov

On October 8, a scandal erupted over the new IOS and Android application that Azerbaijan's Central Election Commission (CEC) planned to launch for voters to follow the presidential election vote count on their mobile phones on Election Day, October 9.

Meydan TV published a screenshot of the application showing the outcome of the election in the 58th election constituency Hacigabul-Kurdamir under the caption "Initial Results of Elections." The results awarded 72.76 percent (11337 votes) for incumbent President Ilham Aliyev, 7.4 percent (1153 votes) for the single opposition candidate Jamil Hasanli, and 5.24 percent (817 votes) for Gudrat Hasanguliyev. The application also contained information regarding the election process, such as the turnout relative to the names of the polling constituencies and the time different votes were cast. Hebib Muntezir, a local blogger, argues that "the Central Election Commission obviously forgot to activate 'This section is currently closed' button," which resulted in an early release of the election results.

A few hours later, the developer of the application, Vusal Isayev, was identified. Muntezir, the Social Media Manager of Meydan TV, shared a screenshot of his online dialogue with Isayev, who introduced himself as the application's developer and requested that the news be removed from Meydan TV's web page. On his

Linkedin profile, Isayev states his profession as the managing director of the Happy Baku LLC digital marketing company, which developed the app for the CEC. Isayev claims that it was just a test version of the app and that it contained outdated information.

Meydan TV reports that Isayev has since deactivated his Facebook and LinkedIn profiles, prompting Meydan TV's director Emin Milli to ask, "If he is so confident that this was just a testing mistake, then why has he deleted all of his accounts?"

The CEC's spokesperson Azer Sariyev told RFE/RL that the new app was posted on the CEC's website at 7 am on Wednesday, October 9. He accused Meydan TV of staging a provocation and "seeking to cast a shadow over our democratic elections." Later during the day, the CEC issued a statement of apology, expressing "deep regrets" about the incident and calling it a "misunderstanding."

On October 14, the Central Election Commission made a statement similar to that of Happy Baku LLC's explanation, posted on the company's webpage: "Our company implemented interim tests on one election constituency (Hajigabul-Kurdamir Con.EC # 58) for a certain period of time on October 8, 2013 to ensure the accurate, effective and purposeful usage of the software. After the work was successfully completed, we forgot to inform the users that we were

testing the software.” The real names of the candidates running in the presidential elections the next day were added to the software developed by Apple. Commenting on votes, Happy Baku LLC notes that it used “statistical data on previous elections and different surveys held during these presidential elections for ensuring the success of the test.” The company expressed regret that it caused a misunderstanding among the users and provided those seeking to question the legitimacy of the election with another argument.

The National Council of major opposition parties and their supporters argue that the app scandal reaffirmed that the CEC has decided to declare Aliyev president without considering the real results of the election. For this reason, they stressed their distrust of the accuracy and legitimacy of the final results of the election to be announced by the CEC. Indeed, this “AppGate Election Scandal” by Meydan TV motivated several western newspapers to cover Azerbaijan’s 2013 presidential election in their top news. Western news outlets have mainly focused on the legitimacy of the election result by suggesting that the final result announced by the CEC was already predetermined.

However, western news outlets have been accused of failing to conduct thorough fact-checking in their zeal to find a “gotcha” moment in Azerbaijan. In a detailed article, the Internet news portal [The Eurasian](#) accuses Max Fisher, the author a Washington Post

article named “*Oops: Azerbaijan released election results before voting had even started*” of diffusing inaccurate information about the election in Azerbaijan. *The Eurasian* states that “the screenshot clearly says that the results are for ‘district 58, Hacıqabul-Kur...’ but Mr. Fisher fails to mention it and, quite the opposite, tries to lead his readers to the conclusion that it [refers to the] overall outcome.” Furthermore, the article notes that the information on the number of precincts and voters in the screenshot do not correspond to the precinct’s real numbers, suggesting it was indeed a dummy.

After the exit poll results indicating Aliyev’s victory with 83 percent of the votes became public, BBC World News broadcast a brief interview with Murad Gassanly of the Azerbaijani National Council of Democratic Forces and Polad Mamedov, a representative of the incumbent government. Gassanly termed the release of the app information an “indication that vote rigging was pre-planned.” In response, Mamedov said, “as in previous elections, if there are cases and strong evidence showing that there have been irregularities in the election, I am sure that they will be investigated by the CEC.”

The CEC proclaimed Aliyev’s victory in this year’s election by 84.55 percent of the votes. The only candidate in opposition to Aliyev, the candidate of the National Council of Democratic Forces, Hasanli, received only 5.53 percent.

VIOLENT PROTESTS IN KYRGYZSTAN OVER KUMTOR GOLD COMPANY

Arslan Sabyrbekov

On October 7, hundreds of protesters gathered in front of a regional administrative building center of the Issyk-Kul province, demanding the nationalization of Kumtor Gold Company, the country's most lucrative asset and the largest source of tax revenue. The demonstration, which started off peacefully, later turned into violent clashes with the government's authorized representative in the region taken hostage and with over twenty rally participants detained.

Protests started on October 7 with the initial participation of 15-20 people, which increased significantly by the afternoon. The government's authorized representative in the region approached the demonstrators to listen to their demands but was taken hostage and forced into a car poured with gasoline. The protesters threatened to set him on fire if the officials failed to meet their demands to nationalize the company. Regional law enforcement officials used stun grenades and tear gas to disperse the protesters and freed the official taken captive. As a result of this incident, 23 people were detained and the prosecutor's office launched investigations on charges of hostage taking, using violence against state officials and death threats. The remaining protesters demanded the immediate release of their comrades and blocked a highway in the region.

The Canadian-run Kumtor gold mining company accounts for more than 12 percent of Kyrgyzstan's gross domestic product and remains a great source of social and political turmoil. The Kyrgyz government and the Kumtor Operating Company have recently reached a memorandum of understanding under which the sides agreed to form a joint parity ownership venture with a Kyrgyz representative as Chairman of the Board of Directors. This agreement is currently being discussed in the country's parliament with opposition factions demanding the government to conduct tough negotiations and increase the country's share to at least two-thirds, otherwise threatening a no-confidence vote. The leader of the majority coalition Felix Kulov stated that "the current memorandum will not be supported by the Parliament and that the Government must carry out further negotiations to better Kyrgyzstan's position." Several other members of the Parliament stated that they do not exclude denunciation of previous agreements with the Company. The discussions were postponed and will resume in two weeks' time. This leaves time for the government to continue holding further negotiations.

President Almazbek Atambayev rejected the demands of the protesters, arguing that the company cannot be nationalized without huge financial losses for the country's economy. In an effort to discredit the

opposition, he invited them to take the lead in the negotiations with Kumtor with the implication that they would not be able to achieve any more than the current agreement. The President went on to describe the protests in the north of the country as simple "banditry" and "terrorism" and stated that the demands for nationalization of the company is simply a cover for the main objective of violently overthrowing the current legitimate power structures. He called on the prosecutors' office to investigate the case thoroughly and bring the perpetrators, who went as far as to take a senior state official hostage, to justice. The president also called on the organizers of the violent protests to use legitimate means to come to power, i.e. elections, which according to Atambayev will be held in "a true democratic spirit."

Against the allegations of organizing the violent mass protests in the Issyk-Kul region, the leader of the recently created "Resistance Movement" Omurbek Suvanaliev denied his involvement in the demonstrations.

General Suvanaliev stated that he and his supporters were busy organizing a peaceful protest in the Talas region demanding the resignation of the current government and calling President Atambayev to stop power usurpation. This meeting took place on October 10 with a participation of around 150 people and its leaders expressed their readiness to organize similar demonstrations in other parts of the country.

Sergey Masaulov, the president of the Centre for Policy Studies, a representative of the Russian Institute of Strategic Studies in Kyrgyzstan, argued that the recent protests go beyond the demands of the local population to nationalize the Kumtor Gold Mining Company. Rather, they reflect the struggle between different political actors for power and represent a significant challenge to the current regime. Their inability to maintain public order, bring the violent protesters to justice and reach a final agreement with foreign investors could potentially result in serious nationwide destabilization.