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THE CENTRAL ASIA-CAUCASS ANALYST

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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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PAKISTAN AND AFGHANISTAN-INDIA COOPERATION

Sudha Ramachandran

Afghan President Ashraf Ghani's recent overtures to Islamabad have contributed to a perception of him as pro-Pakistan. There is concern in India that the strong relationship it built with Kabul during Hamid Karzai's presidency is under threat and that it is losing ground to Pakistan. However, India should not be unduly worried on this score. Ghani's recent visit to Delhi, though long overdue, underscored Delhi's and Kabul's shared vision on regional trade.

BACKGROUND: President Ghani's visit to Delhi on April 28-29 was his first to India since he was sworn in as Afghanistan's president in late September. While it took him seven months to visit India, he visited Pakistan twice in the same period. Pakistan was the destination of his second state visit after assuming the presidency, the first being China. Some analysts in Delhi have interpreted this as signaling India's falling priority on Afghanistan's foreign policy radar, and have described Ghani as pro-Pakistan.

Ghani's predecessor, Hamid Karzai, was seen as pro-India. He was often openly hostile to Pakistan, even accusing its intelligence agency, the Inter-Services Intelligence (ISI), of masterminding terrorist attacks in Afghanistan. Ghani's approach to Pakistan has been conciliatory so far. It is believed that his overtures are aimed at winning Pakistan's support for Afghan reconciliation. He has sent Afghan army officials for training in Pakistan's military academies and responded positively to Islamabad's request for military operations against Pakistan Taliban hideouts in eastern

Afghanistan. His government has arrested several suspected Pakistan Taliban fighters on Pakistan's request and has allowed ISI officials to interrogate terrorists in Afghan jails.

Ghani is hoping that Pakistan will respond to his overtures by using its influence over the Afghan Taliban to nudge it to the negotiation table. He has roped in China too to facilitate the talks and to participate in Afghanistan's economic development. The influence of Pakistan and China in Afghanistan has grown remarkably in recent months.

India's profile in Afghanistan grew in the wake of the Taliban's ouster in 2001, through major contributions to Afghanistan's reconstruction. India has funded infrastructure, health, education and capacity-building projects to the tune of US\$ 2 billion, making it the sixth largest donor in the war-torn country. In 2011, the two countries signed a Strategic Partnership Agreement.

However, in recent months India appears to be losing ground in Afghanistan, raising the question

whether Ghani is tilting towards Pakistan and China. In November, he shelved a request made by Karzai for military aid from India, a decision ostensibly made under pressure from Pakistan. Is Ghani's warming to Pakistan and China putting the close Delhi-Kabul relationship built during Karzai's presidency in jeopardy?



(Source: S. Sutherland, Wikimedia Commons)

IMPLICATIONS: Ghani's visit to India may not have produced grand outcomes – no agreements were signed – but it signaled that his wooing of Pakistan notwithstanding, Kabul and Delhi remain on the same page on economic issues. The two countries share a vision for regional trade.

During the visit, India and Afghanistan decided to sign within the next three months an extradition treaty, a mutual legal assistance treaty, an agreement on the transfer of sentenced persons, a bilateral motor vehicles treaty and a consular pact for diplomatic passport holders. The proposed pacts may not be as headline-grabbing as lucrative defense deals. But they are important. Take the proposed motor vehicles agreement, for instance, which aims at facilitating the entry of Afghan and Indian vehicles into each other's territory. If it materializes, it has the potential to transform regional trade;

goods from Kolkata could travel overland to Kabul and beyond to Central Asia and vice versa. South Asia's trade with Central Asia could grow manifold.

However, the India-Afghanistan motor vehicles treaty seems a non-starter. It can work only if Pakistan is also a part of the agreement, as it is the shortest overland route between India and Afghanistan. But Islamabad is reluctant. At the South Asian Association for Regional Co-operation (SAARC) summit at Kathmandu in November last year, it was the only member-state to hold out on signing the SAARC Motor Vehicles Agreement.

At present, Pakistan permits Afghan trucks carrying goods for India only up to its last checkpoint at Wagah near the India-Pakistan border, and not to the Indian checkpoint at Attari, which is situated less than a kilometer away. During Ghani's visit, India's Prime Minister Narendra Modi announced that India is ready to receive Afghan trucks at Attari. Will Pakistan respond positively?

Ghani has made his impatience, even anger, with Pakistan's obstructionist attitude to regional trade quite clear. In an interview to *The Hindu* he called on Islamabad to allow direct trade with India via the Wagah border, warning that if it did not do so, his government would not "provide equal transit access to Central Asia [for Pakistani trucks]." It is a violation of "sovereign equality", he said, drawing attention to the "national treatment" clause in the Afghanistan-Pakistan Transit and Trade Agreement, 2011, which provides

both countries with equal access up to each other's national borders.

India need not worry over Ghani's outreach to Pakistan. Reconciliation in Afghanistan is important. An end to the turbulence there is essential not just for the Afghan people but to the entire region. Stability there is essential for the security of India's investments in Afghanistan, for the realization of its trade and other ambitions in Afghanistan as well as Central Asia.

If China and Pakistan can help bring the Taliban to agree to a negotiated settlement of the conflict, India should welcome it as it could pave the way for India playing a larger role in Central Asia. It is true that Ghani was late in coming to India but if he was busy visiting China, Saudi Arabia, Iran, the U.S. and the UK – all countries whose backing he needs to push Islamabad to mend its ways – India should not be unduly anxious.

CONCLUSIONS: Rather than feeling insecure with the recent Kabul-Islamabad rapprochement, India should wish Ghani well in his outreach to Pakistan. The Afghan president is testing the waters on how to go about the peace process and Delhi must be patient. His visit to India should have allayed anxieties in Delhi that the Kabul-Delhi bond has enough substance to hold it together.

Meanwhile, India must press ahead with its plans for trade with Afghanistan via the Iranian port of Chabahar. It has dragged its feet on this option for far too long. Accelerating this Afghan-Iran-India venture will open up the full potential of regional

and inter-regional trade. Drawing China into this project will, in fact, put pressure on Pakistan to fix its short-sighted vision.

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TURKEY, ARMENIA, AND THE POLITICS OF GENOCIDE RECOGNITION

Emil Souleimanov

April 24th marked the centennial of what many have referred to as the first genocide of the 20th century. The anniversary of the tragic events in eastern Armenia that claimed the lives of hundreds of thousands of predominantly ethnic-Armenian subjects of the Ottoman Empire sparked renewed interest in the historical circumstances of the massacres which the Turkish authorities have refused to acknowledge as an act of genocide. Consequently, the political context of the genocide recognition has again come to the forefront of international reflections on the 1915 events.

BACKGROUND: For decades since its establishment in the early 1920s, modern Turkey has vehemently denied that genocide took place in the late years of its predecessor's existence. Initially, the issue of genocide and its international legal recognition was raised by influential Armenian diaspora communities, based predominantly in the U.S. and France. Importantly, members of these communities, being stripped of their historical homeland and having lost their relatives, have usually been the direct descendants of Anatolian Armenians. This made the memory of the 1915 events among diaspora members particularly painful, their stance on Turkey and the Turks oftentimes outright racist, and their demand to achieve the recognition of the massacres as genocide uncompromising.

It was not until 1965 that Moscow for the first time enabled Soviet Armenians to mark the anniversary of the massacres and refer to them officially as an act of genocide.

References to genocide (*tseghaspanuthiun*) were made in Armenian history textbooks, while in 1967, a monumental memorial complex was built on one of Yerevan's hills, Tsitsernakaberd, to commemorate the 1915 events. Still, Soviet authorities made no effort whatsoever to push forward the recognition of the Armenian massacres on the international scene. Until the late 1980s, the issue remained isolated as a republican – and largely apolitical affair – with April 24th being commemorated annually as a day of national mourning. In this period, the memory of the genocide became a centerpiece of Armenian national identity as Armenians were self-portrayed as a nation of much suffering (*mnogostradal'nyi narod*), with religious overtones as a highly civilized “first Christian nation” that was destined to bear the cross of suffering. In the final years of the Soviet Union, the issue of Armenian genocide became strongly politicized due to the growing tensions between Armenia and

Azerbaijan over the status of Nagorno-Karabakh, with Azerbaijanis being increasingly and overtly associated with the (Ottoman) Turks particularly following the pogroms against Armenians in Sumgait (1988) and Baku (1990).

However, even the emergence of an independent state in Armenia in 1991 did not place the issue of the Armenian genocide recognition on post-Soviet Yerevan's foreign political agenda. The government of the republic's first president, Levon Ter-Petrosyan, refrained from raising the issue internationally, in a bid not to deteriorate relations with its strong neighbor and Azerbaijan's key ally, Turkey, and to alleviate Armenia's regional isolation imposed by the Karabakh war.



(Source: S. Sutherland, [Flickr User OpenDemocracy](#), [Wikimedia Commons](#))

IMPLICATIONS: The situation changed dramatically in the late 1990s, when a new government was formed in Armenia by Nagorno-Karabakh-born Robert Kocharyan, the republic's second president and the first representative of the emerging "Karabakh clan." Back then, Armenian authorities made substantial efforts, in concert with diaspora Armenians, to push forward the genocide recognition.

Curiously, Kocharyan's ascent to power was largely associated in local public opinion with the infamous shooting in the parliament in fall 1999, in which two influential and popular politicians, Prime Minister Vazgen Sargsyan and parliament speaker Karen Demirchyan, were murdered. In addition, Kocharyan's presidency was accompanied with the massive appointment particularly in key executive positions of his fellow Karabakh Armenians, a case of regional clannishness hitherto unprecedented in Armenian politics. Kocharyan's efforts, presumably dictated by his desire to build a reliable power base in the country, brought about significant indignation in the republic, with many Armenians referring to the newcomers, in allusion to their distinct dialect, culture, and behavior, as "Turks" or "Turkified Armenians."

Against this backdrop, Kocharyan soon picked the genocide recognition issue in order to mobilize local public opinion in his favor, presenting himself as a devoted Armenian patriot at the nation's service. In addition, Kocharyan – and his successor, close friend and fellow Karabakh Armenian Serzh Sargsyan – were both eager to rally the support of nationalist diaspora Armenians. Using the genocide recognition theme has also enabled Yerevan to raise money from the diaspora and deploy it as a tool in international political and economic affairs. From a different angle, the issue of the Armenian genocide recognition, with its strong emotional overtones, is believed to help maintain national identity in Armenian diaspora

communities, particularly among the youngsters, preventing them from assimilating entirely into mainstream communities. This issue has become all the more important given the continuous exodus of hundreds of thousands Armenians of young age to Russia, Europe, and the U.S.

In the meantime, since around the 1990s Turkey has seen a liberalization of its political and public space and Turkish authorities have somewhat modified their stance towards the 1915 events. While Ankara's unwillingness to recognize these events as a genocide has prevailed, Turkish authorities, politicians and mainstream intellectuals have to various degrees acknowledged that hundreds of thousands of ethnic Armenians perished during the final years of the Ottoman Empire. Yet, their argument proceeds, this was not the result of a deliberate state policy of annihilating a distinct ethnic or ethno-religious community, but rather the outcome of a civil war which took the lives of a similar number of the empire's Muslim subjects. According to Turkish authorities, Armenians were deported to distant areas due to their co-ethnics' anti-state activities; the collaboration between Armenian armed bands and the advancing Russian army and their rebellions in Eastern Anatolia, where thousands of Turks and Kurds were killed.

Turkey's unwillingness to recognize the 1915 events as an act of single-minded massacre or genocide has been conditioned by a number of factors. First, admitting the fact of genocide would be tantamount to a "defilement"

of the entire Turkish Army, a bearer of statehood, the authority of which was immense until recently. Second, with Turkish nationalism on the rise, a genocide recognition would be considered a slap in the face by a significant portion of Turkish society, especially if the ground is not paved in advance in public for such a move as the authorities have consistently referred to the 1915 events as the "so-called Armenian genocide" and "Armenian lies."

Moreover, many in Turkey have come to interpret the entire genocide recognition issue as a mere tool in the agenda of Turkey's enemies in the European Union to block its accession or to "humiliate" the Turks by means of fabricated accusations. Fourth, in off-record talks, many Turkish – and for that matter Armenian – intellectuals admit that following Turkey's possible genocide recognition, Armenia may pave the ground for either claiming some sort of monetary compensation from Ankara, laying territorial claims on Turkey, or both.

Yet what Armenians have commonly claimed as part of their historical homeland, Western Armenia, has also been claimed by Kurdish nationalists as Northeastern Kurdistan. Hypothetically, in the unlikely case of Turkey becoming weakened to the point of disintegration, it is impracticable that Armenians numbering several millions would be in a position to take possession of the contested land, being confronted with dozens of millions of Kurds.

CONCLUSIONS: It was against this background that Turkey's then Prime Minister Recep Tayyip Erdogan made a historical statement on the eve of the Armenian genocide's 99th anniversary last year, offering his condolences to the Armenians over the "inhumane" events which he referred to as "our common pain." Although Erdogan sought to relate to the 1915 events as a civil war, his words were deemed by many as the boldest declaration so far of a high ranking Turkish official. However, pushed by Armenian diaspora communities and hardcore elements in both Turkey and Armenia, little progress has been made in Turco-Armenian relations since the failed attempt to establish diplomatic relations between the two countries in 2009. The issue of genocide recognition that has long been heavily politicized is simply too sensitive for Ankara to deal with beyond a "package agreement" with Armenia.

Yet should Ankara and Yerevan find a common ground for evening out their relations, Turkey's current regime may be facing surprisingly less internal obstacles to recognize the fact of the Armenian massacres in one form or another, given the unprecedented weakening of the Army. After all, in the light of Turkey's gradually mutating state ideology away from nationalism to a more pronounced religious identity, current Islamic elites may ascribe the 1915 events to the "godless" reign of the Young Turks, who masterminded the massacres, thereby disengaging themselves morally from the perpetrators.

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KAZAKHSTAN TO REFORM ITS CULTURAL SECTOR

Rafis Abazov and Andrey Khazbulatov

In his presidential election campaign, Kazakhstan's President Nursultan Nazarbayev pledged special attention to cultural policy through implementation of the Concept of Cultural Policy, envisioned to streamline the country's policies on culture, cultural education and arts to strengthen what he calls "the genetic [cultural] code of the nation." In introducing this Concept, Kazakhstan's government emphasizes cultural policies despite the current financial crisis and significant budget cuts due to falling oil prices in the international market. But will reforming its cultural sphere deliver expected outcomes and results?

BACKGROUND: Public policy in the field of culture is closely watched in this young multi-ethnic nation, which continues to work hard on nation-state building and strengthening its national identity. Indeed, the past efforts could be called a cultural revolution, as during the 1990s and early 2000s the country radically changed its cultural and artistic landscape. The government, however, did not introduce an umbrella policy or law designed to guide cultural change, nor did it establish a dedicated government body for coordination and implementation of the numerous changes in the country's cultural policy. Instead, it used an ad hoc approach in addressing emerging issues and concerns, assigning different ministries and government agencies to deal with each issue as it arose, and implementing a variety of actions.

Among many changes taking place in the young nation, the government focused on strengthening the national Kazakh identity by changing the

cultural and artistic landscape and environment. These actions included deconstructing the legacies, symbols and policy approaches of the Soviet era and promoting "Kazakhization" of many aspects of cultural life. Among the most visible changes were the gradual replacement of Soviet monuments with ones reflecting Kazakh history and culture, abandoning Soviet-style architecture, building a Kazakh culture-based repertoire in theaters and film studios, supporting traditional Kazakh handicrafts, and subsidizing numerous craft festivals seeking to popularize the traditional arts and cultural legacy. The government also invested in cultural academic studies by creating several higher education institutions, such as the Zhurgenov National Academy of Arts, the National Kazakh Institute of Culture, the new multi-million dollar National History Museum in Astana, and many open-air museums and historical sites across the country.

Several breathtakingly large-scale cultural projects have been implemented in the capital city Astana to the tune of US\$ 10 billion, completely transforming this small and sleepy industrial city into an amazing futuristic metropolitan center reflecting the country's quest to become the leading power in the Central Asian region. Kazakhstan's oil wealth has made it possible to pursue the creation of a "livable" city utilizing and displaying 21st century technologies and innovations.

Yet, many issues and problems have remained unaddressed. These include the chronic underfunding of cultural programs at a local level outside the major metropolitan centers, and the falling prestige of working in the cultural sector among young people.

Despite the spending of several billion dollars over the last two decades, the cultural sector has been quite inefficient, demanding even more subsidies and failing to develop a sustainable business model by seeking out and utilizing opportunities such as public-private partnership or offering competitive cultural services to the local population and the 6 million foreign visitors who come to Kazakhstan annually. Nevertheless, cultural services could form a very sizable part of the nation's increasingly service-oriented economy, as according to World Bank estimates about 60 percent of Kazakhstan's GDP was produced in the service sector in 2014. The Concept of Cultural Policy was envisioned as an attempt to strengthen cultural policies by streamlining all

efforts, actions and policies – which were previously spread among various ministries – under the umbrella of the Ministry of Culture and Sports.



(Source: [Flickr User areyougonnaeatthat](#))

IMPLICATIONS: The Concept was introduced just a few months before the financial crisis in Kazakhstan created by a double-hit from tanking oil prices (energy exports are the main source of hard currency revenue for Kazakhstan) and rapid devaluation of the Russian ruble which hit the competitiveness of Kazakhstan's exports to its main trading partner. These events led to significant budget cuts introduced by the government in January-February 2015 which in turn very negatively affected the country's ability to fund and reform many public programs and projects, especially in the cultural area. In this environment, the previous model of cultural policy, which was built on the assumption of never-ending subsidies and an active role of the state in cultural areas, came under significant pressure. For example, despite the financial crisis and significant budget cuts in many areas, a large number of Kazakh citizens still prefer taking holidays abroad, spending up to US\$ 3-4 billion on tourism and cultural services in Turkey, the Middle East and Eastern Europe, citing poor

services and little choice back home. According to *Kapital* newspaper estimates, the country's tourism potential is utilized only by 5-10 percent of its population.

The Concept might have a significant impact on the national cultural landscape and economy if properly implemented. First, it suggests developing several cultural-geographic clusters, which would lead to the creation of cultural and tourism complexes not only around the capital Astana, but also in all major provinces across the country, ultimately attracting local and international tourists and creating much-needed jobs in many economically depressed regions. Second, the Concept emphasizes increasing the efficiency of certain cultural institutions by delegating to them some level of independence in managing and planning. Third, it provides a framework for developing public-private partnership in cultural areas, paving the way to attract private initiatives and private international and local funding for some promising cultural and tourism projects. Fourth, it streamlines the training and retraining of cadres for cultural institutions in order to introduce a new approach to management. To this end, all educational institutions are to be transferred under the umbrella of the Ministry of Culture and Sports, so that students may engage in internships and work placements within the same ministry (in the past all educational institutions were part of the Ministry of Education and were apparently ill

prepared to interface with the cultural sector).

The international experience, and especially the experience of the former Socialist countries of Eastern and Central Europe, suggests that the cultural sector can receive a robust boost and can become a dynamic and integral part of the national economy if and when it is supported not only by state subsidies, but also by collaboration between the public and private sectors. State subsidies can provide critical support for preserving cultural heritage and saving historical sites. However, in order to integrate the cultural sector into the national economy, especially with services such as the tourism industry, there is a need not only to preserve such cultural sites, but also to increase efficiency in using public funding, generating revenue from cultural activities and creating jobs.

CONCLUSIONS: The government of Kazakhstan should promote public policies which provide more autonomy and flexibility to all cultural institutions within the Concept of the Cultural Policy. It should also actively integrate the 224 existing museums (2014, official est.), national parks, UNESCO-designated World Heritage sites and archeological excavations into a tourism network offering high quality services to all domestic and international visitors. And last but not least, the cultural institutions in the country should adjust themselves to the changing environment by introducing a western-style, market-oriented managerial approach, becoming more proactive and innovative in attracting

local and international visitors, and engaging in fundraising activities in collaboration with the private sector.

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WILL TURKISH STREAM COMPETE WITH THE SOUTHERN GAS CORRIDOR?

Natalia Konarzewska

The Turkish Stream pipeline, envisaged to transport Russian natural gas via the Black Sea to the Turkish-Greek border, is again gaining political momentum and raises interest in the region. On April 7, during a meeting in Budapest, the Foreign Ministers of Hungary, Serbia, Macedonia and Turkey expressed their countries' interest in participating in the project and discussed possibilities of building European infrastructure for Turkish Stream. As this Russian-backed project targets the same region and is intended to supply roughly the same markets as the Southern Gas Corridor, the question arises whether Turkish Stream will eventually compete with TANAP and TAP in natural gas deliveries to Turkey and Southeast Europe.

BACKGROUND: Turkish Stream will transport substantially larger volumes of gas than the Southern Gas Corridor (SGC) and will be directed at roughly the same South European and Turkish markets. Upon completion, both projects have the capacity to be expanded. Turkish Stream's route can be extended to supply Greece and other South and Central European states with natural gas. On the other hand, the European Union and Azerbaijan have taken steps to attract additional gas suppliers for the Southern Gas Corridor, which can in the future be expanded as soon as Shah Deniz II and other Azerbaijani gas fields are fully operational. Hence, both projects can possibly compete in terms of gas volume, market share in the consumer states along their routes and geopolitical significance in the region.

Turkish Stream's envisaged annual capacity is 63 billion cubic meters (bcm), of which 16 bcm will supply the

Turkish market, and the remaining 47 bcm will be delivered to a hub located in the Epsila region near the Greek-Turkish border and made available to interested European customer states. Turkish Stream will therefore terminate at roughly the same location as TANAP, raising questions about possible competition over the market share. In comparison, Azerbaijan can at this stage export a modest 6 bcm of natural gas annually via TANAP to the Turkish market, whose annual demand stands at 45 bcm and is predicted to grow to 81 bcm by 2030. Moreover, Greece, which is also participating in the SGC project, has already expressed interest in buying Russian gas from Turkish Stream, hoping to enhance the country's role as one of the main gas hubs in the continent and attract international investors.

Following Russia's annexation of Crimea in March 2014, Baku intensified its diplomatic efforts to attract new gas

producers to the SGC to make it more commercially viable and geopolitically significant, viewing Turkmenistan as one potential participant. If successfully implemented, the Trans Caspian Pipeline (TCP) can carry around 30 bcm of natural gas annually, which will significantly increase the SGC's capacity. Moreover, the EU considers Iran as a possible natural gas supplier for the SGC. If sanctions are lifted, Iran may acquire a stake in TANAP and supply an additional 40 bcm of gas annually. Regardless of whether additional suppliers are found for SGC, Azerbaijan plans to expand its input into TAP and TANAP respectively from 10 to 20 bcm/a, and 16 to 31 bcm/a. The additional supplies will be available from 2020 when the Shah Deniz II gas field is further developed and several other gas fields become operational to supply the small niche markets in the Western Balkans and even Central Europe via the interconnector network.



(Source: [Wikimedia Commons](#))

IMPLICATIONS: Russia's current precarious economic situation might not allow it to finance such a large scale infrastructure investment as Turkish Stream without external help, which will be hard to obtain given the Western sanctions on Russian

companies. Moreover, it is at this stage unclear which infrastructure will be used to transport the gas delivered via Turkish Stream to the interested European consumer countries. It is highly unlikely that Moscow will agree to sell its gas at the border as a crude net producer, because that would give consumer countries too much leverage. Thus, it appears that this issue will be left at the interested consumers' disposal.

There are several possibilities to deliver gas from the Turkish hub to the European markets using interconnectors such as the previously proposed Italy-Greece-Turkey Interconnector or the planned Bulgaria-Greece Interconnector. However, due to the deterioration in EU-Moscow relations, Brussels will unlikely agree to allocate any funds for infrastructure intended to transport Russian gas or allow transit of Russian supply via EU co-financed interconnectors. Moreover, Greece's catastrophic economic situation prevents Athens from financing a dedicated pipeline on its own. Greece and Hungary may potentially play the role of brokers between Brussels and Moscow to reach an energy deal, however their chances for success are slim given both Athens' and Budapest's tense relations with Brussels. It is widely believed that Moscow is seeking to capitalize on its close ties with Greece and Hungary and both states' fragile position in the EU to jeopardize the EU's common policy towards Russia.

Turkey does not have such constraints. Not being an EU member, it is not

bound by Third Energy Package regulations and this will allow Russia to avoid costly disputes with the EU. Ankara has already signed on both to the SGC and Turkish Stream projects, hoping to become an important gas hub for Europe and find long term solutions to meet its booming domestic demand for natural gas. Its participation in two competing large-scale energy transit projects will allow Turkey to enhance its position vis-à-vis potential suppliers, making the Turkish market more competitive for external suppliers in the long-term perspective.

Nevertheless, the SGC, a modestly scaled project in comparison to Turkish Stream, is in a more advanced stage of development. Both TAP and TANAP already have volumes of gas under contract to supply European customers, whereas Turkish Stream is still only a political project. However, at this stage, the prospect of expanding the SGC by adding more suppliers looks grim. Several obstacles exist to Turkmenistan's participation in the SGC. Among them is the still unresolved dispute between the Caspian littoral states over the Sea's boundaries, delaying the construction of the TCP. Moreover, Ashgabat has shifted the majority of its export capacity to China. In Iran's case, the existing infrastructural constraints, such as location of the resources, the project will demand substantial additional funding in order to be successfully implemented. Even with additional volumes of Azerbaijani natural gas, at this stage the SGC's impact on the markets along its route is modest at best.

Nevertheless, the SGC project is strongly backed by the EU, which aims to diversify its gas supplies away from Russia. Simultaneously, the unresolved dispute between Russia and the EU over Gazprom's non-compliance with the Third Energy Package regulations and the recent standoff between Moscow and Brussels over the Ukraine conflict may seriously undermine the construction of European infrastructure for Turkish Stream.

CONCLUSIONS: It is far too early to tell whether Turkish Stream will compete with the SGC in terms of market share and geopolitical significance. At this stage, Turkish Stream is only a political project, whose commercial viability and implementation is uncertain given Russia's precarious financial situation. Even if this additional natural gas supply route from Russia to Turkey becomes a reality, the prospect of selling additional volumes to the European market are unclear. Europe already has a surplus of gas import infrastructure and both Turkish Stream and the SGC are targeting well diversified and economically stagnant South European markets. Turkish Stream therefore appears primarily to be a Russian political maneuver to undermine the EU's efforts to diversify its natural gas suppliers and Azerbaijan's strategy to build gas transit infrastructure bypassing Russian territory.

Yet the Russian-backed pipeline project could tighten competition between suppliers for shares of the Turkish natural gas market, which will in turn

affect gas prices. Given the booming demand for natural gas on the Turkish market, Ankara, which is seeking to ensure its long-term energy security, will welcome a surplus of supply from the Caspian or Russian direction.

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REPUBLICANS STRENGTHEN POSITION IN RESHUFFLED GEORGIAN GOVERNMENT

Eka Janashia

On May 8, Georgia's parliament approved the reshuffled government with 87 against 38 votes. It was the third set of changes impacting the cabinet composition since the breakup of the Georgian Dream (GD) ruling coalition in the fall of 2014.

On November 5, 2014, one of the founding members – Our Georgia-Free Democrats (OGFD) party – left the coalition. The party's leader and then Defense Minister Irakli Alasania, along with the OGFD Ministers of Foreign Affairs and Euro-Atlantic Integration, lost their posts instigating subsequent changes in the lineup of the cabinet (see the 11/11/2014 issue of the CACI Analyst).

Shortly thereafter, another regrouping affecting senior and mid-level government officials as well as the GD leadership, took place allegedly due to former Prime Minister and oligarch Bidzina Ivanishvili's loss of confidence in his protégé PM Irakli Gharibashvili. The PM's trustees – the Minister of Interior, GD's Executive Secretary, the heads of the Special State Protection and State Security Services, and the Deputy Minister of Regional Development and Infrastructure (MRDI) were replaced by Ivanishvili's cadres. On April 21, the Minister of Regional Development and Infrastructure, Davit Shavliashvili, left the post reportedly for health reasons and was substituted by his Deputy Minister, Ivanishvili's close associate

Nodar Javakhishvili (see the [01/07/2015 issue of the CACI Analyst](#)).

A week later, the Minister of Environment and Natural Resources Protection, Elguja Khokrishvili and the Minister of Sport and Youth Affairs Levan Kipiani also resigned. Republican MP Gigla Agulashvili, chairman of the Parliamentary Committee for Agriculture and Taniel Khechikashvili, co-owner of one of Georgia's largest auto traders Iberia Business Group, were respectively named for the ministers' posts.

What came as a surprise was the nomination of the chairperson of the Parliamentary Committee on European Integration, Republican Tina Khidasheli as Minister of Defense. Although Khidasheli allegedly has long been at odds with Gharibashvili, she replaces the PM's confidant Mindia Janelidze on the post.

Through these alterations, the government lost a third of its members and according to Georgia's constitution, the new cabinet initially needs the president's signature and then a confidence vote in parliament. The president is not entitled to block or reject ministerial nominees but on May 1, President Giorgi Margvelashvili used another constitutional lever and delayed the signing and submission of the new cabinet nomination to parliament to the end of the statutory seven-day period.

“As the commander-in-chief, I want to ask a question: how frequently should we replace Defense Ministers?” Margvelashvili said and suggested that the PM and parliament to go through the proposed composition of government members once more. As an immediate response, Gharibashvili defiantly issued decrees of the appointment of nominated ministers. On May 8, the reshuffled cabinet won a confidence vote in the parliament.

The parliament approved a renewed cabinet in late July 2014 and after less than year, the government again needs to restore its mandate through the legislative body. While that reshuffle carried a much more cosmetic character, the regrouping conducted since November 2014 is indicative of the internal contradictions that GD has undergone after OGFDF's exit.

Several factors have contributed to undermining GD. Since fall 2014, Georgia's national currency, the Lari (GEL) has devaluated, dampening the overall social and economic climate in the country. A considerable share of the electorate has withdrawn its support for GD for this reason. The GEL crisis was coupled with two important events: OGFDF's exit from the coalition and Ivanishvili's endeavor to introduce new confidantes in the government, allegedly due to his changing attitude towards the once favored Gharibashvili.

OGFDF leader Alasania has publicly accused Ivanishvili of departing from Georgia's pro-western course and thwarting a crucially important defense

deal with France, likely as an effect of Russia's objection to it (see the [04/15/2015 issue of the CACI Analyst](#)).

The coalition was forced to reject Alasania's accusations and bring to the front the Republican Party (RP), which is aside from OGFDF GD's other founding member with a pro-western reputation. RP holds six out of 87 GD mandates in parliament. Despite its small number of seats in the legislative body, the party after the recent reshuffle enjoys three ministerial portfolios – Environment, Defense and Reintegration. Moreover, Defense Minister Khidasheli is the spouse of Parliamentary Speaker Davit Usupashvili.

Through the move, GD hopes to appease Georgia's western partners and simultaneously mollify the electorate supporting Georgia's Euro-Atlantic integration. Ivanishvili's need to retrench Gharibashvili's clout has in fact provided RP with an opportunity to increase its sway in the government. Given RP's partnership and ideological closeness with OGFDF, it has previously been speculated that the two parties could unite in opposition. In this scenario, RP and OGFDF would form a new coalition at the detriment of GD but at this stage, RP's leaders have chosen a different course of action.

The recent government reshuffle is part of a continuous internal redistribution of power within the ruling coalition, rather than an attempt to empower the executive team to deal with the collapsing economy.

KYRGYZSTAN TO HOLD ANOTHER CONSTITUTIONAL REFERENDUM

Arslan Sabyrbekov

On May 5, Kyrgyzstan marked the 22nd anniversary of its constitution. In a relatively short period, the country's basic law went through numerous changes, with the state remaining inefficient. The changes primarily aimed to centralize and strengthen the vertical of power of the first two ousted Presidents. Kyrgyzstan's current constitution, adopted via a nationwide referendum in the aftermath of the April 2010, has been an exception. Yet the country's prominent political circles recently suggested holding another referendum in the fall, together with the parliamentary elections.

Kyrgyzstan's first constitution as an independent state was adopted in 1993 after two years of heated debates in the country's "legendary Parliament," as it was termed at the time. Already in 1994 the constitution faced new amendments, under the slogan of creating two chambers of the Parliament, but in reality massively increasing the power of the country's first President Askar Akaev. A series of amendments were again introduced in 1996, 1998 and 2007 under the reign of the country's second President Kurmanbek Bakiyev, who just like his predecessor, was keen to manipulate the basic law to increase the authority of his own regime.

In 2010, Kyrgyzstan did what then seemed to be unthinkable in Central Asia by adopting a constitution that limited the power of the head of state,

in a region where personalization of power is the rule. Moreover, with the objective of preventing further manipulation and ensuring a form of stability to the new system, a Constitutional council comprised of 75 members decided to introduce a special clause, banning any changes to the basic law until 2020. After less than five years, the country's power holders are again eager to change it.

The talks on amending the 2010 constitution were activated a year ago, with some politicians advocating it from time to time. During a meeting of the country's Council on Judicial Reform last October, President Atambayev also supported the idea of changing certain articles in the constitution, as he put it, "if they are necessary to carry out full-fledged reform of the judicial sector." Without much subsequent public deliberation ever since, the initiators have presented a new set of amendments on April 28, stirring heated discussion and opposition from expert and civil society circles.

According to local political experts, the initiatives severely weaken the independence of parliamentarians. Under the proposed amendment, parliamentary factions can vote for early termination of the duties of individual MPs, if so proposed by the governing body of their respective political party. The initiators of the change justify this amendment, arguing

that voters vote for a party rather than individual candidates. Yet according to political analyst Tamerlan Ibraimov, “in the Kyrgyz political context, voters first look at the individuals who are in the party list and then decide which party to vote for. The amendment is simply an effort to establish a system of party dictatorship and will not increase the efficiency of the legislature whatsoever, as claimed by its initiators.”

Moreover, the proposed changes strengthen the role of the Prime Minister. He will be in a position to dismiss members of the government and directly appoint and dismiss heads of regional administrations, therefore clearly weakening the role and independence of local self-governments. This initiative has already led to speculations that it serves the interests of the current President, who could after his term in office become the country's next Prime Minister with extensive powers and no term limits, in close resemblance of the Kremlin scenario. Under the country's current constitution, the president serves one six-year term with no possibility for reelection. President Atambayev's term in office expires already in 2017.

Whatever the real motives are, a new amendment to the constitution will hardly improve pluralism in Kyrgyzstan's political life. Instead, it will strengthen the “vertical of power” and will gradually diminish the room for political competition, along with general legal culture. In more than two

decades of independence, the country's political elite has become accustomed to blaming the constitution for their own lack of capacity to launch public reforms. Therefore, the real problem lies not with the constitution, but with the unwillingness of the power holders to abide by it and their constant efforts to redraw it for their own benefit.

PRESIDENT SARGSYAN AND COUNTERPARTS COMMEMORATE ARMENIAN GENOCIDE

Erik Davtyan

On April 24, the Presidents of France, Russia, Cyprus and Serbia arrived in Yerevan upon the official invitation of Armenia's President Serzh Sargsyan to commemorate the Centennial of the Armenian Genocide in Yerevan. The event was attended by a myriad of representatives of states, international organizations and Christian churches. During his speech at the Tsitsernakaberd Memorial Complex, President Sargsyan expressed his gratitude to the four heads of state for attending the event and emphasized that "the Armenian people will always remain standing by the side of those who suffered from crimes against humanity" and that "the unyielding international struggle against crimes of genocide will remain an integral part of our foreign policy".

Following Sargsyan, the visiting presidents used the occasion to reiterate the official position of their states on the issue. Cyprus' President Nicos Anastasiades stressed that both Armenia and Cyprus are "victims of impunity," referring to Turkey's policy of denying the Armenian Genocide and its occupation of a part of Cyprus. France's President Francois Hollande underlined that Christians are endangered in the Middle East and even in France, and called for "the defense of all minorities and especially Christians of the East." Russia's President Vladimir Putin emphasized

that nowadays "neo-fascism rises in many regions of the world" and that "radical nationalists come to power." In referring to new expressions of russophobia, Putin undoubtedly implied the Euromaidan, the new authorities in Ukraine, and the current crisis between Russia and Ukraine over the fate of Ukraine's southeastern parts. Thus, all present heads of state issued specific messages to the international community about various current problems in international relations.

After the official commemoration ceremony, Sargsyan held separate meetings with the Presidents of France and Russia. Another meeting took place between Hollande and Putin, who discussed various issues of common concern including the Ukrainian crisis. Putin mentioned that a regress in bilateral relations is already noticeable and highlighted the importance of restoring Russo-French ties and improving the deteriorating trade turnover. The Presidents also discussed the €1.2 billion contract on the delivery of French Mistral warships to Russia. In November 2014, France suspended the contract due to Russia's involvement in Ukraine, therefore the problem is considered to be one of the key issues of the bilateral political agenda. However, the meeting in Yerevan yielded no results.

The fact that Putin termed the 1915 events a "genocide" received a very

tough response in Turkey. On April 24, Turkey's Ministry of Foreign Affairs issued a statement saying "taking into account the mass atrocities and exiles in the Caucasus, in Central Asia and Eastern Europe committed by Russia for a century; collective punishment methods such as the Holodomor as well as inhumane practices especially against Turkish and Muslim people in Russia's own history, we consider that Russia is best-suited to know what exactly 'genocide' and its legal dimension are." On April 25, Putin's spokesperson Dmitri Peskov responded by saying that he sees no reason for Turkey to make a negative evaluation and called on Turkish officials to read Putin's speech carefully.

Turkey also reacted strongly to the part taken by Germany in the international recognition process, after President Joachim Gauck referred to the 1915 events as a genocide. The German president's speech at a memorial service at the Berlin Cathedral provoked an extremely negative response in Ankara. According to the statement issued by Turkey's foreign ministry, "contrary to law and historical facts, President Gauck has no right to attribute to the Turkish people a crime which they have not committed ... the Turkish nation will not forget and forgive President Gauck's statements." Germany is Turkey's largest trade

partner in Europe, with 3.5 million Turkish residents.

On April 24, Turkey organized events dedicated to the commemoration of the Centennial of the battle of Gallipoli, one of the most famous battles of WWI. The ceremony was attended by the presidents of Albania, Macedonia, Montenegro, Iraq, Azerbaijan, Mali, Pakistan, Senegal, Ireland, and others. Russia was represented by Sergey Naryshkin, the Chairman of the State Duma of the Federal Assembly.

AZERBAIJAN CRACKS DOWN ON ACTIVISTS AHEAD OF EUROPEAN GAMES

Mina Muradova

The Olympic torch has been lit in Azerbaijan and started a journey through 60 cities and regions of the country. In one month, Azerbaijan will host the inaugural European Games, a sort of continental Olympics that convene 6,000 athletes from more than 50 member countries of the European Olympic Committees (EOC).

The government's preparations include 18 competition venues, including a US\$ 500 million Baku Olympic Stadium, development of city infrastructure and an unprecedented crackdown on political dissent.

On May 12, Index on Censorship and a number of other organizations signed a joint letter to Lord Sebastian Coe of the British Olympic Association, to highlight violations against freedom of expression and threats to human rights defenders in Azerbaijan ahead of the European Games.

"On behalf of the Sport for Rights coalition, we are writing to bring your attention to the unprecedented and mounting crackdown in Azerbaijan, which has resulted in dozens of political arrests, including prominent journalists, human rights defenders, and political activists ... In the run-up to the European Games, which will take place in Baku on June 12-28, we ask you to publicly support the Azerbaijani people and the rights to free expression, association, and other fundamental freedoms," the letter says.

The authors of the letter asked Coe to publicly condemn the clampdown, calling for the release of Azerbaijan's political prisoners: "In making such a statement, you would send a signal to Azerbaijani civil society that they are not alone in their struggle for fundamental freedoms."

Last summer, a group of Azerbaijani human rights activists launched the Sport for Rights campaign. The campaign has a simple objective: to draw attention to the human rights situation in Azerbaijan in the context of the European Games. As indicated in hundreds of credible reports by media outlets, NGOs and governments, the Azerbaijani government has deployed a wide range of means to repress this initiative.

Observers say that since Baku was awarded the games in 2012, targeted political repression has increased drastically. In April, [Rasul Jafarov](#), an activist and organizer of the Sports for Rights campaign, was sentenced to six and a half years in prison. He was [sentenced](#) for illegal business activities, evading taxes, and abuse of power. But it is widely believed that these charges are false, and that his real "crime" was monitoring and reporting on criminal cases against journalists and his successful awareness campaigns highlighting violations of freedom of expression, assembly, and association in Azerbaijan. His "[Sing for Democracy](#)" and "[Arts for Democracy](#)"

campaigns drew attention to Azerbaijan's poor human rights record, and his planned "[Sport for Rights](#)" campaign would have done the same in the run up to the European Games.

A few days after Jafarov's conviction, the same court sentenced Intigam Aliyev, a leading human rights lawyer who has filed hundreds of cases with the European Court of Human Rights, to seven and a half years behind bars, again on bogus charges. Both had been detained since August 2014.

In early May, Faraj Karimov, a well-known social media activist and leading member of the opposition Musavat party, was handed a six-and-a half year sentence by a Baku court. He was arrested in July 2014 and accused of possessing illegal narcotics. So was his brother Siraj – also a Musavat member – who was given a six-year jail term this March.

Karimov was the administrator of ISTEFA (Resign), which was the largest Azerbaijani-language page on Facebook with 300,000 subscribers before it was closed down in July 2013. He then created a page called BASTA, which has 155,000 subscribers, and was also administrator of the Musavat party's website.

He declined to address the court at the end of his trial, saying, "I have been arrested for my struggle against an authoritarian regime. If I spoke at a trial that flouts the law, it would be of great benefit to those who ordered my arrest."

Amnesty International, which has designated both Karimov brothers as

prisoners of conscience, said last year that when Faraj was arrested, he was questioned about Facebook, not drugs.

In order to promote the Games, their organizers launched a campaign in social media by hijacking the official hashtag of the European Games, #HelloBaku. In March, the organizers announced a competition for the most creative photo – the winner would get tickets to the games' opening ceremony, and was announced in early May.

But as Index on Censorship later wrote, the contest backfired with "a number of social media users instead using #HelloBaku to highlight Azerbaijan's poor record on human rights. One such video was posted by Dinara Yunus, the daughter of Leyla and Arif Yunus who are imprisoned since last summer. She asked President Aliyev "What are you scared Mr. President? Why do you choose repression over freedom?"

According to the initiators of the Sport for Rights coalition, "In the run-up to the European Games, we believe that public condemnation of the crackdown by [international] bodies could help achieve tangible, democratic change at this crucial time."