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THE SOUTH CAUCASUS AND THE UKRAINE CRISIS

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(Non) “Russian World”, (Non) Soft Power: Putin’s Serpentine Policy in the South Caucasus

By Andrey Makarychev, Tartu, and Alexandra Yatsyk, Kazan

Abstract

This article provides an overall introduction to this issue of the Caucasus Analytical Digest, describing the nature of Russia’s relationships with Georgia, Armenia, and Azerbaijan in light of the Ukraine crisis.

Introduction

One of the most immediate effects of the crisis in Russian–Ukrainian relations for the South Caucasus is the growing realism in regional politics. As a mainstream Russian author suggests, with power (geo)politics back, “responsible stakeholders in Tbilisi, Yerevan and Baku have realized that should there be serious warfare in the region, no international institutions will be powerful enough to stop it, nor will any great European powers be ready for a head-on military collision to defend their clients’ interests.”¹ To put it simply, countries of the “near abroad” cannot expect any external help if they face security problems with Russia. What stems from here is another argument widely articulated by Kremlin loyalists after the crisis in Ukraine: the time for multi-vectoral policies is over, and most post-Soviet countries are supposed to get ready to make their—deeply political—choices², each one coming with a political price.

Evidently, Russia intends to force the West to recognize the inclusion of eastern Europe and the south Caucasus into the Russian sphere of interests.³ Yet in the south Caucasus Russia faces a reality substantially different from that in eastern Europe, with the key distinction being a limited space for the “Russian world” ideas. In fact, Moscow can use the “Russian world” only as an element of its policies toward South Ossetia and Abkhazia—two break-away territories that nicely fit in the wider Russian strategy of supporting separatism and secessionism as a political tool.⁴ This makes Russia develop its policies toward Georgia, Armenia and Azer-

baijan as a combination of economic and military security instruments, which often brings controversial results.

Russia–Georgia

Georgia, which has a record of military confrontation with Russia and signed the Association Agreement (AA) with the EU, is the most troublesome country for the Kremlin. Russia prefers to couch its Georgia strategy mainly in soft power terms that content-wise are based on a number of arguments.

First, accentuating cultural and religious affinity with Georgia is for Moscow a political instrument that allows for emphasizing the incompatibility of “traditional” Orthodox values with the liberal emancipatory agenda of the EU that allegedly “calls for respecting sin” and “forgets about nations and patriotism.”⁵ Politically this approach leads to the direct projection to Georgia of the Kremlin’s Ukraine discourse—as exemplified, for example, by the presidential advisor on Ukraine Sergey Glaziev, who is known for his harsh rhetoric toward the EU.⁶

Second, as in the case of Ukraine, Moscow insists that the “color revolution” in Georgia led by Mikhail Saakashvili was socially ineffective and politically self-defeating. Ultimately it was conducive to the drastic deterioration of Georgia’s relations with Moscow and the loss of Abkhazia and South Ossetia in 2008.⁷ Saakashvili’s support for the EuroMaidan in 2013–2014 is interpreted as a continuation of his attachment to the idea of “color revolutions” that ultimately marginalized him politically within Georgia.⁸ The EuroMaidan was

1 Maxim Suchkov. Echoes of the Ukrainian Crisis in the South Caucasus. Moscow Carnegie Center, 24 October 2014, available at <<http://carnegie.ru/eurasiaoutlook/?fa=5705>>

2 Fyodor Lukianov. Konets mnogovektornosti, Rossiiskaya Gazeta, 4 June 2014, available at <<http://www.rg.ru/2014/06/04/mnogovektornost.html>>

3 Sergey Markedonov. Rossiya i konflikty na Bol’shom Kavkaze: v poiskakh optimal’nykh resheniy. Russian Council on International Affairs, 24 April 2014, available at <http://russiancouncil.ru/inner/?id_4=3583#top>

4 Paul Goble. Putin Said ‘Organizing Separatist International’ Against Europe, Windows on Eurasia, November 12, 2014, available at <<http://windowoneurasia2.blogspot.com/>>

5 Nana Devdariani. Evrodesant v Patriarkhii, “Rossiya-Gruzia: Expertniy Dialog” web portal, 26 May 2014, available at <<http://www.georgiamonitor.org/detail.php?ID=562>>

6 Archil Chkoidze. Rossiya ne ispol’zuet potentsial svoikh storonnikov, kotorye est’ v Gruzii. NewsGeorgia, 12 February 2014, available at <<http://newsgeorgia.ru/point/20140212/216365535.html>>

7 Nikolay Silaev. Vtoroe priglashenie, Lenta.ru, 27 October 2014, available at <<http://lenta.ru/articles/2014/10/27/dogovor/>>

8 Georgy Mdivani. Kak ukrainskie sobytiya poblyiali na rossisko-gruzinskije otnosheniya, “Rossiya-Gruzia: Expertniy Dialog” web portal, 19 March 2014, available at <<http://www.georgiamonitor.org/detail.php?ID=561>>

perceived by Georgian nationalists, the logic goes on, as at attempt to take revenge and come back to the old agenda of pushing Russia out of the post-Soviet area.⁹

Third, Russia tries to explore skeptical attitudes within Georgia to Western institutions, claiming that the AA puts this country in an unequal position.¹⁰ Hypothetical prospects of the possible deployment of NATO military infrastructure in Georgia are lambasted as challenging the idea of Georgian–Russian normalization.¹¹

Russia also transposes into the South Caucasus its (mis)interpretation of the AAs as documents conducive to the relegation of the signatories' sovereignties to the EU, to which Russia reserves a right to respond by more closely incorporating break-away territories. Against this backdrop, the political value of separatist territories for Russia's long-term strategy becomes more obvious: Moscow either threatens to absorb them in order to deter neighbors from a closer relationship with the EU, or attach these territories to Russia as a—mostly symbolic—compensation for a possible failure of deterrence.

Prospects for soft-power-based post-conflict settlement widened as soon as the Georgian authorities distanced themselves from the political heritage of former President Saakashvili. Moscow uses the criminal case opened against him as a proof of the validity of its interpretation of “color revolutions” as unfortunate and detrimental developments orchestrated by external powers. It is this argument that facilitates rapprochement between Moscow and Tbilisi—from the Caucasian Dialogue initiated by the Gorchakov Foundation to the resumption of commercial flights between the two countries. Yet all this could not prevent Georgia from signing the AA with the EU and seeking greater integration with NATO, to which Russia responded by fostering in October 2014 the Russian–Abkhaz Treaty on Partnership and Integration in which the military component was key. This suggests that Russia's soft power is heavily based on hard power resources. Zurab Abashidze, Georgia's special representative on Russia, confessed that the two parties remain standing on “radically divergent positions,” while Georgia's prime minister added that he does not see any headway in bilateral relations after Saakashvili

left the office.¹² It is not incidental that Georgia's AA with the EU unleashed a new wave of securitization in relations between Moscow and Tbilisi, with many in Georgia presuming that their country might be a possible “next target for the Kremlin” after Ukraine.¹³ In the Russian media one may find explicit references to the prospect of “the Ukrainian scenario” for Georgia, to which Russia would react not only by “defending” Abkhazia and South Ossetia, but also by “providing stability, security and economic safety for the population within Georgia through direct contacts with public authorities of individual Georgian regions.”¹⁴ To sum up, the multiple Georgian steps towards gradual rapprochement with Russia were not so far rewarded by Moscow, which keeps pursuing a highly controversial and inconsistent policy of both engaging Tbilisi in reconciliation and simultaneously threatening to further destabilize the country from the inside.

Armenia

Russia's policies toward Armenia, a country susceptible to Russian influence, are grounded in different premises. As opposed to the EU, Moscow's strategy is not about making a competitive offer that would ultimately change this country domestically, but rather about limiting Armenia's scope of choices to the point of eliminating the very possibility of alternatives to the pro-Russian orientation. It is not the adherence to common norms or values, but the security trump card that Moscow used to force Yerevan to discontinue its association talks with Brussels in exchange for security protection—a logic that is based on the fact that among the three South Caucasian countries, Armenia is the only one that was not traumatized by painful territorial losses.

It is at this point that the neocolonial nature of the Russian reintegration project comes to the surface.¹⁵ “If Armenians want to feel safe, they have got to speak Russian, Moscow's propagandist-in-chief, Russian media-personality Dmitry Kiselyov, has instructed Russia's

9 Nana Devdariani. Mайдan izmenil mirovoi poriadok, “Rossiya-Gruzia: Expertniy Dialog” web portal, 16 March 2014, available at <<http://www.georgiamonitor.org/detail.php?ID=558>>

10 Giorgi Mdivani. Pravila igry ES s Gruzией nel'zia schitat' ravnopravnymi, “Rossiya-Gruzia: Expertniy Dialog” web portal, 21 May 2014, available at <<http://www.georgiamonitor.org/detail.php?ID=578>>

11 Zaal Andzhaparidze. Primet li Gruzia oboronitel'nye systemy NATO? “Rossiya-Gruzia: Expertniy Dialog” web portal, 14 May 2014, available at <<http://www.georgiamonitor.org/detail.php?ID=576>>

12 Gruzia ne vidit politicheskogo progressa v dialoge s RF. The Voice of America, 17 October 2014, available at <<http://www.golos-ameriki.ru/content/georgia-russia/2487216.html>>

13 PM says Russia Lacks Levers to Deter Georgia's EU Association, Civil Georgia web portal, 16 January 2014, available at <<http://civil.ge/eng/article.php?id=26862>>

14 Mikhail Chernov. Rossiya vyidet na granitsy Armenii. Lenta.ru, 7 November 2014, available at <<http://lenta.ru/articles/2014/11/07/russianarm/>>

15 Babken DerGrigorian. Armenia's Membership in the EEU Raises More Questions Than It Answers. Asbarez.com, 17 October 2014, available at <<http://asbarez.com/127993/armenia%E2%80%99s-membership-in-the-eeu-raises-more-questions-than-it-answers/>>

closets Caucasus ally, Armenia.”¹⁶ Such incidents explain the widely spread criticism of the Russian soft power.

Russia intentionally deploys its relations with Armenia in the East–West confrontational dichotomy, which allows Moscow to play the role of defending its ally from “dark pro-Western forces”¹⁷ that are eager to detach Armenia from further integrating with Russia. In the meantime, Russia tries to implicitly take advantage of the traditionally securitized perception of Azerbaijan in Armenia by claiming, for example, that Baku considers a closer alliance with “Turkish countries,” including Kazakhstan and Kyrgyzstan, which might be harmful for Armenia.¹⁸ Russia also popularizes opinions of those Armenian experts who praise further association with Russia, claiming that in case of necessity, Moscow will defend Armenia militarily as it did in August 2008, applying military force to protect South Ossetia¹⁹—an argument that de-facto justifies not only the five-day war between Georgia and Russia, but also further recognition by the latter of the two break-away regions.

The references to Abkhazia and South Ossetia in this context are substantial for understanding one of pivotal arguments in the Russian discourse—that of the existence of a community of post-Soviet territories that seceded from internationally recognized countries in their bid for either independence or reintegration with Russia. This imagined community can be metaphorically dubbed “CIS-2”, to include Transnistria, Abkhazia, South Ossetia, Nagorno-Karabakh and, after the unleashing of insurgency in eastern Ukraine, the so called “Novorossiya”. It is at this point that the crisis in Ukraine became a trigger for the closer association of Abkhazia with Russia.²⁰ Within this logic, all cases of post-Soviet separatism and irredentism are elements of a wider picture of Western provocative policies of fueling conflicts that Russia ought to withstand.

In the meantime, Russia denies that there are grounds for political discussions on making a choice between the

EU and the Eurasian Union, which resonates within Armenia as well where many claim that the pro-Russian turn was not a matter of political choice but a rational—though enforced—calculation.²¹ Russia requests from Armenia not to improve its governance, but simply to “ensure political stability”, for which Moscow itself can be instrumental: thus, according to the director of the Shanghai Cooperation Organization (SCO) Business Club Denis Tiurin, “We in Russia do have legislation on foreign agents, and Armenian civil society might wish to positively assess this experience.”²² In fact, in countering the Western “democracy promotion” strategy, Russia ends up promoting autocracy in neighboring countries. Russia also ably uses in its interests the obvious fear of an “Armenian Maidan” that the ruling circles in Armenia display.²³

The military argument—Russian troops on the Armenian territory as a security protection against possible attempts to retrieve Nagorno-Karabakh back by Azerbaijan to whom Russia sells weapons—was the most instrumental in dissuading Yerevan from further rapprochement with Brussels. Yet a direct effect of Russia’s policy of blocking Armenia from signing the AA is the deeper entanglement with the conflict over Nagorno-Karabakh, which only complicates Russia’s policy of striking a balance between the two conflicting parties.

Signals from Moscow in this respect are far from conclusive. On the one hand, Moscow has to be sensitive to the Armenian expectations of its membership in the Eurasian Economic Union as a means to get not only economic, but foremost security advantages in its conflict with Azerbaijan.²⁴ Col. Andrey Ruzinsky, commander of the 102nd Military Base at Gyumri in Armenia, affirmed Russia’s preparedness and intention to “join the armed conflict” against Azerbaijan if it “decides to restore jurisdiction over Nagorno-Karabakh by force.”²⁵ Some analysts predict that Russia will also seek to raise the role of the Collective Security Treaty Organization (CSTO), as opposed to the Minsk group.²⁶

16 Giorgi Lomsadze. Kremlin Propaganda-Chief Asks Armenians to Speak Russian, 12 June 2014, available at <http://www.eurasianet.org/node/68551?utm_source=dlvr.it&utm_medium=twitter>

17 Rossiya vlozhitsya v Armeniyu. Utro.ru web portal, 15 October 2014, available at <<http://www.utro.ru/articles/2014/10/15/1217006.shtml>>

18 RF i Armenia nuzhdayutsa drug v druge, zayavili uchastniki telemosta. RIA-Novosti Information Agency, 29 September 2014, available at <<http://ria.ru/politics/20140929/1026134399.html>>

19 Sergey Shakariants. Armenia poluchit ot vstupleniya v EAES suschestvennye vygody. RIA-Novosti Information Agency, 18 October 2014, available at <<http://ria.ru/world/20141008/1027434747.html>>

20 Yurii Kosov. Situatsiyu v Abkhazii nuzhno rassmatrivat’ skvoz’ prizmu Novorossii, Center for Support of Russian–Armenian Strategic and Public Initiatives (CSRASPI) web site, available at <<http://russia-armenia.info/node/9672>>

21 Levon Zurabyan, Kliuchi upravleniya protsessami na Yuzhnom Kavkaze—u Rossii. New Caucasus web portal, 1 November 2014, available at <<http://newcaucasus.com/index.php?newsid=7111>>

22 Ibid.

23 V Erevane obsudili veroyatnost’ provedeniya Maidana v Armenii, CSRASPI web site, October 10, 2014, available at <<http://russia-armenia.info/node/11143>>

24 Shushan Khatlamadzhan. EAES—vozmozhnost’ ukrepleniya bezopasnosti Armenii, CSRASPI web site, 10 July 2014, available at <<http://russia-armenia.info/node/10784>>

25 Alexandros Petersen. Russia Shows Its Hand on Karabakh, EU Observer, 18 November 2013, available at <<http://euobserver.com/opinion/122032>>

26 Irina Dhorbenadze. Strakhi Armenii. The Gorchakov Foundation, 28 October 2014, available at <http://russiacouncil.ru/inner/?id_4=3759#top>

Yet this policy is contested by those who are sure that in this case of overcommitments “Russia will have to sustain heavy losses fighting an enemy that it has itself armed to the teeth, which the Russian population will not understand or support.”²⁷ Moreover, as a member of the Russian Presidential Council on Human Rights ventured to state, Russia has to help the Azeri refugees come back to Karabakh, and excluded a chance for any support to a Russia-led military operation from the CSTO, since Karabakh is not part of any of its member states.²⁸

Azerbaijan

Russian Presidential advisor Sergey Glaziev presumed that taking into account both Armenia’s integration with the Customs Union and the conflictual state of its relations with Azerbaijan, Russia is interested in “a full-fledged participation” of the latter in the Eurasian integration.²⁹ Therefore, Russia sends amicable messages to Azerbaijan trying to prevent a possible alienation of this country as an effect of Armenia’s accession to the Eurasian Economic Union. For example, Deputy Prime Minister Dmitry Rogozin suggested that the Western sanctions against Russia only increased trade between Russia and Azerbaijan, and strengthened economic liaisons between them.³⁰ A journalist from the Kremlin-loyal “Rosbalt” agency even assumed that “for Moscow it would be more important to see Azerbaijan, not Armenia, in the Eurasian Union.”³¹

Russia’s policy is thus to leave the door open to Azerbaijan in both economic and security spheres. Against the background of the raising threats emanating from the Islamic State, Russia is claiming that Armenia, its military ally in the South Caucasus, is much better protected against radical Islamism than Georgia and Azerbaijan.³² There are even voices arguing that the Russian

military base in Gumri can serve as a protective force for the whole South Caucasus.³³ This reasoning is in line with the arguments of those who claim that the major goal of the Eurasian Economic Union is military security, namely “the creation of a strong military state in the post-Soviet territories and beyond.”³⁴

Conclusion

In this article, we argued that due to serious cultural and political constraints, Russia cannot rely on soft power—with the concept of the “Russian world” at its core—as an effective instrument in the South Caucasus. Therefore, ideas of civilizational proximity, shared values and historical commonality are of only limited use for Moscow’s diplomacy.

Yet it remains doubtful that reliance on material interests and physical dependence on Russia (from economy to security) constitutes a solid foundation for Russian long-term hegemony in the South Caucasus. Russia’s policies usually do not create a new international reality—they are more bent on maintaining a status quo, creating ad-hoc coalitions against external threats, or taking temporal advantage of others’ missteps. Without a clear normative component, Russia tends to increase its security and financial commitments to its southern neighbors without necessarily strengthening their loyalty in response. In Moscow-dependent Abkhazia the prospect of incorporation into Russia is a matter of deep political controversy; in Armenia the accession to the Eurasian Economic Union is widely perceived simply as “a choice of a lesser evil.”³⁵ Moreover the example of Ukraine sent controversial messages to Yerevan: “the case of Crimea can be perceived as proving the veracity of Armenian policy in Karabakh, yet Donbass is a story of the price to be paid for this.”³⁶

Besides, the Russian realist posture is vulnerable in one more respect—it never strongly conceptualized the idea of national interest, preferring to leave it fuzzy. This leads to multiple inconsistencies in Russia’s policies in the South Caucasus. Moscow lambasts the West for legitimizing Kosovo’s ambitions for independence,

27 Alexandr Khranchikhin. The Caucasus Mine Field, Valdai International Discussion Club, 3 February 2014, available at <http://valdaiclub.com/near_abroad/66565.html>

28 Maksim Shevchenko. Azerbaidzhantsy dolzhny vernutsa v Karabakh. Kavpolit Information Agency, 25 March 2014. available at <http://kavpolit.com/articles/maksim_shevchenko_azerbaidzhantsy_dolzhny_vernutsj-2195/>

29 Sergey Glaziev. Azerbaidzhan—vazhneishiy partnior Rossii na Kavkaze. Kavpolit Information Agency, 11 June 2014, available at <http://kavpolit.com/articles/glazev_azerbaidzhan_vazhnejshij_partner_rossii_na-5817/>

30 Dmitry Rogozin. Zapad sblizil Moskvu i Baku, Vestnik Kavkaza web portal, 15 September 2014, available at <<http://www.vestnikavkaza.ru/news/Dmitriy-Rogozin-Zapad-sblizil-Moskvu-i-Baku.html>>

31 Irina Dzhorbenadze. Evrazijskiy manok dlia Azerbaidzhana, Rosbalt, 17 October 2014, available at <<http://www.rosbalt.ru/exussr/2014/10/17/1328248.html>>

32 Mikhail Agadzhanian. Islamskoe gosudarstvo u vorot Kavkaza: chto zhdiot strany regiona. CSRASPI web site, 28 October 2014,

available at <<http://russia-armenia.info/node/11386>>

33 Vladimir Lepikhin. Pochemu Sargsian ne Yanukovich. CSRASPI web site, 14 October 2014, available at <<http://russia-armenia.info/node/10983>>

34 Vladimir Kravtsov. Glavnaya idea sozdaniya Evrazijskogo ekonomicheskogo soyuza—voennaya. CSRASPI web site, 20 October 2014, available at <<http://russia-armenia.info/node/11137>>

35 Dva golosa iz chetyriokh - Armenia v EAES kak faktor davlenia na Kazakhstan i Belarus. CSRASPI web site, 13 October 2014, available at <<http://russia-armenia.info/node/10931>>

36 Vadim Dubnov. S dumoi o Novorossii. Po-karabakhski, CSRASPI web site, 20 October 2014, available at <<http://russia-armenia.info/node/11152>>

yet does exactly the same in all separatist territories in the South Caucasus and beyond. The Kremlin villifies the EU, but considers borrowing many of its policy tools in launching its own integration project. The Russian diplomacy heavily invests in developing soft power resources in Georgia, which are then undermined by a

policy of de-facto annexation of Abkhazia, etc. A more or less clear vision of Russia's long-term strategy in the region is hardly imaginable without a solid normative foundation; a lack thereof turns Russian realism into a justification for mostly temporal and situational adjustment to the policies of others.

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The Ukraine Crisis: Repercussions on Georgia

By Kornely Kakachia, Tbilisi

Abstract

Russia's annexation of Crimea is reshaping the geopolitical map of Europe and sending ripples of apprehension across the South Caucasus and wider Black Sea region. Amid Moscow's direct involvement in eastern Ukraine, many Georgians are closely monitoring all regional foreign policy developments. With a tradition of friendly and strategic relations between Tbilisi and Kyiv, Georgians see the struggle for Ukrainian sovereignty as an analogue of their own fate. This article provides some insights and policy perspective from Georgia on the ongoing Ukrainian crisis and its impact on Georgian foreign policy and internal stability.

Explaining Georgian–Ukrainian Strategic Bonds

Events in Ukraine have made national security a top priority for governments throughout the post-Soviet region.¹ In Georgia, fears that a similar crisis can spread to Georgia have increased. In an April 2014 survey of nearly 4,000 Georgians commissioned by the National Democratic Institute,² half of the respondents viewed Russia as “a real and existing threat,” a proportion considerably higher than before the start of the Ukraine crisis in November 2013. The reaction in Georgia has been strongly in support of Ukraine. Tbilisi dispatched political and humanitarian support to Kyiv, including a humanitarian medical mission (vital medicine, equipment, doctors), while hundreds of demonstrators gathered on the streets nightly, waving Ukrainian flags, light-

ing candles, and singing Ukraine's national anthem. Some Georgians have even gone to fight in Ukraine to support its territorial integrity

Although distinct in their origins, Georgia and Ukraine were part of the same states for nearly 200 years. After the Soviet Union collapsed, Georgia was disillusioned by Russia's tacit support for Georgia's separatist regions, and Tbilisi had no choice but to be engaged in an unfolding pattern of alliances involving both smaller regional powers and great powers outside of the region. Georgia's political calculus also included the quest to find fellow states in the immediate neighborhood to rely on as strategic partners. Ultimately, Georgia's search for “*Suliko*” (soulmates) in the post-Soviet region resulted in the establishment of strategic relations with the new Ukrainian state. Due to their shared history and similar political and economic conditions, the two states have since reached a high level of political, security, and economic cooperation. The fact that both nations are Orthodox Christian with churches that have been revamping relations with the Moscow Patriarchate has also played a role in cementing their regional bonds.

Despite leadership changes in Georgia and Ukraine, both states have more or less seen themselves as fight-

1 An earlier version of this article was published as a PONARS Eurasia Policy Memo in September 2014.

2 Luis Navarro. Public attitudes in Georgia: Results of an April 2014 survey carried out for NDI by CRRG-Georgia and funded by the Swedish International Development Cooperation Agency (Sida), available at <https://www.ndi.org/files/Georgia_April_2014_Survey_English.pdf>; see also poll on pp. 17–20 of this issue, especially Figure 1 on p. 17.

ing a common battle against Russian domination in the post-Soviet space. Although there are significant internal and external political differences between Georgia and Ukraine, joint efforts resulted in the creation of the GUAM group (Georgia, Ukraine, Azerbaijan, and Moldova), which was established partially as an attempt to counterbalance Russia's influence in the region. Now that Georgia and Ukraine, two Black Sea states, have had democratic revolutions, both have gradually begun to closely identify with the European Union, NATO, and the United States as security partners. As a result, both countries were considered, albeit unsuccessfully, as potential candidates for a Membership Action Plan at NATO's Bucharest Summit in 2008, strengthening their "solidarity" in a shared Euro-Atlantic destiny. The recent signing of far-reaching Association Agreements with the EU has further reinforced bilateral relations between Georgia and Ukraine, as both countries have now committed themselves to EU standards and, together with Moldova, have bound themselves closer to the West. Ukraine, Moldova, and Georgia remain strongly committed to European integration and supporting Western policies. While other Eastern Partnership (EaP) states failed to sign Association Agreements for various reasons, there is hope that eventually the West may see its links with Kyiv, Tbilisi, and Chisinau as strategic allies for the coming decades, in much the same way that the Baltic states were decoupled from the "post-Soviet" framework and completed the process of European and transatlantic integration.

Why the Ukraine Crisis Matters for Georgia

Many in Georgia believe that the actions of Russia in Ukraine are a repeat of what happened in Georgia in August 2008. Distribution of Russian passports, reinforcement of military infrastructure and units, and the decision to protect the "interests of compatriots" with military force are all viewed as a violation of the internal affairs of a sovereign state. There is also a strong conviction that Russia's moves against Ukraine might have been unsuccessful, or never even begun, had the international community paid more attention to the 2008 Russia–Georgia war. The weak Western reaction to Russia's invasion of Georgia allowed Moscow to think it could get away with seizing Crimea as well.

While some voices in the West blamed Georgia for provoking its war with Russia and called for more restraint vis-a-vis Moscow, the Ukraine crisis has exposed that whatever tactic the West may prescribe for self-defense, it cannot do much to stop the Kremlin's imperialist appetite. While the immediate reaction to Russia's invasion was dealt with differently by Tbilisi and Kyiv, in both cases the end result was

practically the same. Military aggression had disastrous consequences for both countries, ending in the occupation of their territories. Meanwhile, the international community still remains unable to get Russia to comply with its obligations to withdraw troops from Georgia's occupied regions and now Crimea. Subsequently, the Kremlin's intervention is seen as a serious precedent that raises concerns about the territorial integrity of Georgia.

There is an expectation, however, that the Ukraine crisis may push Western leaders to take decisive steps to find concrete formulas to beef up the Western integration of the region. This would be much in the same way that the Russia–Georgian war prompted the EU to initiate the EaP, which included Ukraine, Belarus, Georgia, Moldova, Azerbaijan, and Armenia. Though membership in the EaP did not contain any promise of eventual EU membership, it played an important role in consolidating the European foreign perspectives of at least Moldova, Georgia, and Ukraine.

So far, EU leaders have been unable to bridge their differences in order to deliver tangible plans that could change the geopolitics of the region. For its part, Washington is acknowledging the emerging new realities in the wider Black Sea region. One important signal was the recent introduction in the U.S. Senate of the Russian Aggression Prevention Act of 2014. If passed, the bill proposes to treat Georgia, Ukraine, and Moldova, along with Azerbaijan, as major non-NATO allies and pledges their closer interaction with the U.S. military. Though this status does not entail the same mutual defense and security guarantees afforded to NATO members, if passed the bill would affirm the strategic importance of the greater Black Sea region to the United States. Even though the United States is ill-prepared to defend Georgia, Ukraine, and Moldova against Russia today, it is also important to counter any perception that the United States (and the West) have acquiesced to increased Russian dominance in the region.

Georgia's Ukraine Policy: Implications for Party Politics

The issue of Ukraine has been an important factor in the internal politics of Georgia as well. After the Rose (2003) and Orange Revolutions (2004), the political elites of both states enjoyed strong ties. Based on personal contacts (former Georgian president Mikheil Saakashvili went to university in Kyiv) and revolutionary solidarity, the government under Saakashvili had unprecedented access to Ukrainian politics. During his tenure, Saakashvili managed to establish strong cooperative relationships with a wide array of Ukrainian politicians, including Viktor Yushchenko and Yulia Tymoshenko.

Importantly, the links he established were institutionalized by interparty cooperation by affiliation with international platforms like the European People's Party (EPP) and other European structures. Saakashvili's United National Movement (UNM) and Ukraine's *Rukh* and *Batkivshchyna* parties garnered the support of like-minded European politicians. Saakashvili and the UNM even tried to influence the 2010 presidential election in Ukraine when they openly supported Tymoshenko over Viktor Yanukovich and sent election observers to Donetsk, Yanukovich's political stronghold. Even today, the new authorities in Kyiv seem to be partial to Saakashvili. Some of his team members, including Giorgi Vashadze (former head of the Civil Registry Agency), and others currently work as advisors for different branches of the Ukrainian government. Kakha Bendukidze (former Minister of Economic Development) joined this group until his recent death.

The policy on Ukraine that the Georgian Dream (GD) government has pursued is a significant departure from the approach its predecessors adopted. Tbilisi has underlined its full support for Ukraine's territorial integrity and referred to Russia's occupation of Crimea as a land grab. However, Tbilisi has abandoned its openly anti-Russian rhetoric and has not embraced the Georgian opposition's request that the government "condemn Russia's brazen military aggression." Instead, the Georgian authorities issue carefully worded statements that seek to avoid irritating Moscow. Unlike previous administrations, the GD government seems less keen to use emotional and critical language against Moscow, preferring instead diplomatic idioms. Tbilisi is well aware that the geopolitical stand-off between Russia and the West over Ukraine leaves little space for any meaningful incentives for Georgian diplomacy.

Russian Soft Power in Action and the Risk of Economic Dependency

Meanwhile, even as Russia is using "hard power" in Ukraine, it is still searching for diversified foreign policy instruments towards Georgia. Understanding that it failed to change Georgia's Euro-Atlantic discourse by military means, the Kremlin exploits culture, language, media, education, and public diplomacy to promote an attractive image in Georgia. The recent move to launch the Radio-Sputnik station, which has close links to the Kremlin, raised suspicions in Tbilisi that Moscow intends to split public opinion on foreign policy. Russia is seeking to increase its leverage over Georgian society, which it effectively lost after the 2008 conflict with Georgia. As in most Eastern European countries and most recently in Ukraine, Russia also retains a "compatriots policy" towards its citizens living in Georgia,

and supports a number of pro-Russian NGOs (Coalition-Eurasian Choice) that strongly question Georgia's pro-Western course.

In addition to enjoying the advantage of proximity and historical ties, as well as linguistic bonds, lately Russia has been trying to use economic levers—above all, its huge market opportunities—to bind Georgia and its other neighbors into tighter dependency. At first glance it seems that Moscow is on track to succeed. As a result of the "normalization" process initiated by the Georgian Dream government, trade relations between the two countries have significantly increased. According to January–August 2014 data, Russia is the third largest export destination for Georgian goods after Azerbaijan and Armenia.³ The Russian market accounts for a 10 percent share in Georgia's total exports (National Statistics Office of Georgia). Whereas Russia was the fourth largest export destination in 2013, in 2012 it did not even make it into the top ten (Ministry of Economy of Georgia, 2012, 2013). Georgia's 2013 exports to Russia increased more than four times in comparison to 2012 (National Statistic Office of Georgia)⁴ (see Figure 1 on p. 10).

By August 2014, export of mineral water increased by 64 percent year-on-year (BusinessPressNews, 2014b).⁵ Russia has also become the number one country for Georgian wine exports, with a 65 percent share (BusinessNewsPress, 2014a). By the first six months of 2014, Georgia had the highest increase in exports to Russia (3 times) of any country (Radio Liberty, 2014). Overall, for the first 6 months of 2014 data, Russia was Georgia's fourth largest trade partner after Turkey, Azerbaijan and China.

Notwithstanding some potential risks, the current Georgian government views the restoration of economic and trade relations with Russia almost exclusively in positive terms. Downplaying Russia's action against Ukraine and Moldova, it seems that the GD government is also convinced that it is possible to combine Georgia's trade relations with Russia, on the one hand, and with the EU on other hand, without alienating Russia's strategic interest in the region. While gradual restoration of economic interactions between the two neigh-

3 Ministry of Economy of Georgia 2012. Georgia's External Trade in 2012 (in Georgian), available at <http://www.economy.ge/uploads/files/sagareo_vachroba/trade_turnover_2012.pdf>

4 National Statistics Office of Georgia 2014c. External Trade, Geostat.ge, available at <http://www.geostat.ge/index.php?action=page&cp_id=137&lang=eng>

5 BusinessPressNews, 2014b. On the Expense of What did the Export of Mineral Waters Increase? (in Georgian), Bpn.ge, 11 August 2014, available at <<http://www.bpn.ge/ekonomika/5681-ris-kharjze-gaizarda-mineraluri-tsylebis-eqsporti.html?lang=ka-GE>>

boring countries should be encouraged and welcomed, it seems that the possible risks which accompany the increasing dependence on the politically manipulated Russian market are underestimated. As of now it is difficult to measure how economic influence may translate into political leverage in bilateral relations, but acquisition of monopolistic stakes in the Georgian economy certainly gives some trump cards to Moscow that it can skillfully manipulate like it already did in Moldova and Ukraine. Whatever are the risks for Tbilisi, as the dividing line between Russia's use of soft and hard power in the post-Soviet space has become fuzzy, the potential threats coming from Russia's economic domination over the Georgia are real and should be countered adequately.

Conclusion

The Ukraine crisis and over-dependency on the Russian market are seen as potentially significant for the Georgian economy. Although the figures are not huge, there are important economic links between Ukraine and Georgia. Ukraine was Georgia's third largest trading partner in 2013 with \$795.1 million in trade turnover,⁶ and any kind of political crisis or unrest immediately influences business and economic relations between the two states. Because Georgia cannot rely on the politically managed Russian market, the Ukrainian market is of significant importance as a regional alternative to Russia. It is still not clear how trade between Ukraine and Georgia is being affected due to the current crisis, though Georgian experts fear the impact is negative. One positive element for Georgia, however, are inflows of Ukrainian tourists who would otherwise have vacationed in Crimea.

Even though Georgia and Ukraine can celebrate their closer ties with the EU, it is clear that neither will persuade the EU or the United States to oppose Russia militarily. On the other hand, given the current circum-

stances, some experts see the possibility of accelerated NATO support for Georgia, Ukraine, and Moldova. At the moment, however, this is unlikely. In the aftermath of the September NATO summit in Wales, it is clear that neither Ukraine nor Georgia are on a direct path to NATO membership. While Tbilisi's Western trajectory so far remains unchallenged, concerns persist that Russia's proxy war in Ukraine, if continued, could have long-term effects on security dynamics in the South Caucasus and its longstanding conflict zones, as well as on the political landscape in Georgia, where old and newly emerging pro-Russian political forces still wait for their call. With tensions high after summer clashes between Azerbaijani and Armenian troops over Nagorno-Karabakh, the situation concerning regional peace and security is all the more grim.

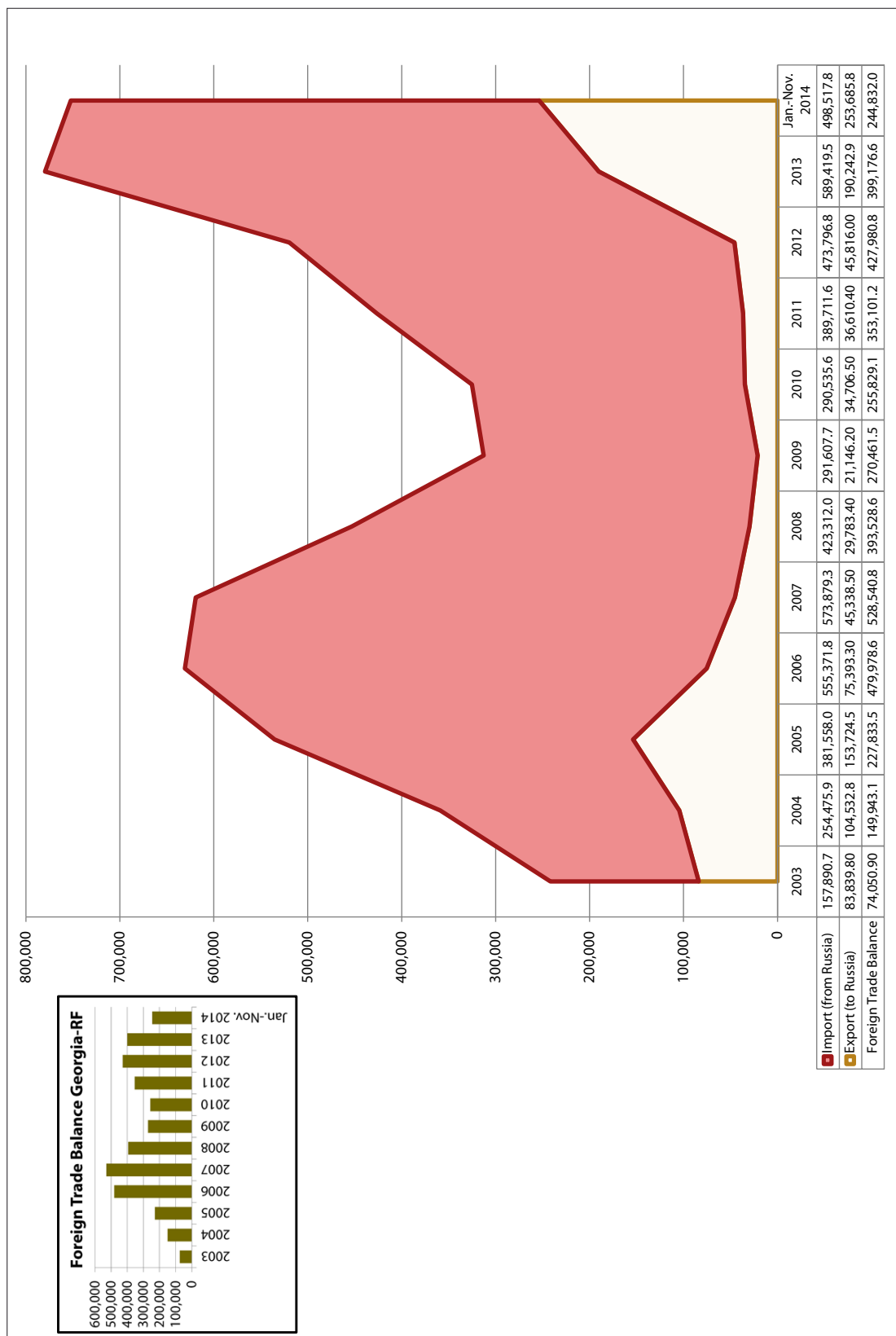
Recent attempts by Moscow to compel breakaway Abkhazia to accept the so-called "Agreement on Alliance and Integration" also aroused suspicions that Russia may want to annex this region together with South Ossetia in the medium term perspective. But unlike Crimea, it seems that such an annexation would be a gradual process as Moscow does not have enough enthusiasm to invite further international criticism over Georgia's separatist regions at the moment. Georgian concern regarding Moscow's future plans in regard to the occupied territories gives additional trump cards to Russian diplomacy. Georgia's present flirting with the Kremlin has revealed that the constant intention of the Russian Federation is unchanged: to keep Georgia, Ukraine and other post-Soviet states within its area of influence, and even more, deflect them from their European path and lure them into Eurasian projects. As Russian activities in Ukraine stoked renewed debates over a more decisive policy in Eastern Europe, it is up to Western leaders to respond to this challenge and responsibly address security concerns in the wider Black Sea region.

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6 <<http://www.civil.ge/eng/article.php?id=26885>>

Figure 1: Trade Balance between Georgia and Russia (thousand US dollars)



Source: National Statistics Office of Georgia. <http://www.geostat.ge/index.php?action=page&p_id=137&lang=eng>

The Ukrainian Crisis and Implications for Azerbaijan

By Anar Valiyev, Baku

Abstract

This article analyzes how Azerbaijan tries to maintain a variety of balances in its foreign policy. While both the elite and population of Azerbaijan support the Kiev government in its effort to maintain Ukraine's territorial integrity, the country also tries not to antagonize Moscow. Similarly, Azerbaijan seeks to maintain good relations with both the West and Russia, while constantly seeking to resolve the Karabakh conflict in its favor.

Introduction

The crisis in Ukraine that began with the Euromaidan movement and flight of President Viktor Yanukovich put the Azerbaijani government in an uncomfortable position. For the last few years, Baku has been building good relations with Russia, hoping to persuade Moscow to stand on Azerbaijan's side in resolving the Karabakh conflict. Massive arms purchases from Russia, a benevolent foreign policy toward Moscow, and Baku's unwillingness to deepen relations with the European Union and NATO have all created a reasonably positive image of the country in the eyes of the Russian authorities.

The Russian occupation of Crimea and support for separatists in the Donbass have complicated Azerbaijan's position, however. While the Azerbaijani government fully supports Ukraine, Baku cannot afford to spoil relations with Moscow due to the latter's significant leverage in the Caucasus. Azerbaijan is left with the option of trying not to irritate Russia while staying on the side of those who object to Russia's intervention. At the same time, the Ukraine crisis and a fear of interrupted gas supplies has led to renewed attention by the European Union to the need for an alternative transport system for delivery of gas from the Caspian region to European states. European consumers have even begun to express interest in revitalizing the idea of a Transcaspian gas pipeline that would deliver Turkmen gas to Europe via Azerbaijan. Overall, the Ukraine crisis has made Baku's geopolitical stance a high prize.

Familiar Parallels: Crimea, Donbass, and Karabakh

During the early stages of the Euromaidan movement, Azerbaijan did not take sides. The authorities tried to wait and see in the hopes that the crisis would reach a swift resolution. However, Russia's occupation of Crimea and the start of military conflict in eastern Ukraine turned public and elite opinion entirely over to the side of Ukraine's new government. For the Azerbaijani public, the situation was highly reminiscent of the Karabakh conflict. The Russian occupation of Crimea and the outbreak of separatist-led fighting in the Donbass appeared to closely parallel Russia's actions in sup-

port of Armenia's occupation of Karabakh during the 1990s. Even the shooting down of Malaysian Airlines Flight 17 over a separatist-controlled area of eastern Ukraine was reminiscent of the shooting down by Karabakh separatists of an Iranian airliner in 1993. While Russia appealed to the principle of self-determination in Crimea, Azerbaijan has long held fast to the principle of territorial integrity. Azerbaijan made clear its support for Ukraine's territorial integrity in the March 2014 UN General Assembly vote on Ukraine; Azerbaijan was among more than one hundred countries that voted in favor of the resolution in support of its territorial integrity. Among the members of the Commonwealth of Independent States (CIS), Moldova was the only other to vote in favor. Russia, Belarus, and Armenia voted against it while the others abstained (Kazakhstan and Uzbekistan) or were conveniently absent (Kyrgyzstan and Tajikistan). Baku has also supported the territorial integrity of Ukraine in the Council of Europe Parliamentary Assembly (PACE) and elsewhere. Later in November, Azerbaijan was one of the first countries in the former Soviet space that immediately reacted to the "elections" in Donetsk and Lugansk, calling them illegitimate. The Azerbaijani foreign ministry stated that Azerbaijan supported the territorial integrity and sovereignty of Ukraine, and does not recognize so-called elections held without the consent of the Ukrainian central authorities. Earlier, Ukraine's Ambassador to Azerbaijan Oleksandr Mishchenko called on Baku to express its attitude to the actions of the separatists in the east of Ukraine.

On the perception level, it was interesting to observe that even though the majority of the Azerbaijani public receives its information from local sources (that are not anti-Russian) or from purely Russian sources (Russian TV, newspapers, radio), nevertheless, the Azerbaijani population predominantly supports the Ukrainian cause. Like official Baku, the Azerbaijani public was able to neutralize the Russian propaganda. And the Russian establishment could not have made a worse mistake than sending Dmitriy Kisilev, the notorious Russian TV "star," and Vladimir Zhirinovskiy, deputy chairman of the State Duma to Baku a few months ago. The

Azerbaijani public was dissatisfied with their visit since Zhirinovskiy was famous for his anti-Azerbaijani statements and insults.

Meanwhile, Baku has tried to use the situation in Ukraine to its own advantage by calling attention to the parallel with Azerbaijan's own separatist conflict. President Ilham Aliyev has repeatedly pointed out that the West is applying double standards: it imposes sanctions against Russia for its occupation of Crimea and support of separatism in the Donbass while it has never considered sanctions against Armenia for the occupation of Karabakh. Russia's bold actions and disregard of international law has sparked fear that Armenia may follow Russia's path and formally annex Nagorno-Karabakh and the surrounding occupied territories. Although the Azerbaijani government understands that such a move would make Armenia a global pariah, Baku has some fear that Russia, which wields considerable influence over Armenia, might threaten Azerbaijan with such an outcome. The clashes between Azerbaijani and Armenian armies in Karabakh in July and August demonstrated the fragility of the current truce. Azerbaijan considered the tensions, which left dozens dead from both sides, to be a result of Russian pressure on the eve of a meeting between the presidents of Armenia, Azerbaijan, and Russia. Authorities feared that through these tensions Russia was sending a signal to Azerbaijan not to align closer with the West and even to consider the possibility of joining the Eurasian Union.

Azerbaijan's Non-Irritation policy

As a result, as Baku cultivates positive relations with the new Ukrainian government, it also seeks to avoid spoiling relations with Moscow. While standing firm on the principle of territorial integrity and support for Ukraine on Crimea and southeast Ukraine, Azerbaijan has nonetheless tried not to irritate Russia by supporting non-binding resolutions against it. For example, the Azerbaijani delegation declined to vote against Russia in a January 2014 PACE vote on a resolution condemning the 2009 death of lawyer Sergei Magnitsky. During an OSCE Parliament Assembly meeting held in Baku in July 2014, the Azerbaijani delegation voted against a U.S.-initiated resolution condemning the "clear, gross, and uncorrected violation of the Helsinki principles by the Russian Federation." The head of the Azerbaijani delegation, Bakhar Muradova, said that the "situation in Ukraine concerns Azerbaijan, which recognizes its territorial integrity; however, the Azerbaijani delegation stands against the selective approach by the OSCE toward conflicts in the region."

Baku's "non-irritating policy" also affects non-political aspects. Thus, for example it is very hard to find anti-

Russian or pro-Ukrainian propaganda on Azerbaijani TV and state-owned media. The reader or observant viewer can easily find parallels between Donbass and Karabakh and harsh criticism of separatists, but these events can hardly be linked to Russia or Putin personally. The mass media (state-owned) tried to stay away from harsh criticism of the Russian actions, although showing sympathies to Ukrainian cause.

The Azerbaijani political establishment also demonstrated ambivalence and disorientation in supporting Ukraine. Thus, the political establishment praised good relations with Russia and called for closer cooperation. Meanwhile, the State Oil Company of the Azerbaijan Republic (SOCAR), which operates dozens of fuel stations in Ukraine, began to offer free lunch-boxes to the soldiers of the Ukrainian army, showing its support to anti-terrorist operations in the Eastern Ukraine.

At the same time, Baku holds out some hope that sanctions will weaken Russia sufficiently that it will seek Azerbaijan as another reliable ally in the Caucasus, leading Moscow to pressure Armenia to withdraw at least from the occupied territories around Nagorno-Karabakh. For its part, Moscow has already intensified contacts with Baku. In April, Russian Prime Minister Dmitry Medvedev appointed Deputy Prime Minister Dmitry Rogozin as chairman of the Russian delegation to the intergovernmental commission on economic cooperation with Azerbaijan. The appointment of Rogozin, who has responsibility for Russia's defense industry, reinforces the fact that military cooperation is a key element of Russian–Azerbaijani relations. Over the last four years, Azerbaijan has imported about \$3.35 billion in arms, of which 80 percent has come from Russia, including two S-300 missile systems, 94 T-90S tanks, 20 Mi-35M helicopters, and 100 BMP-3 armored vehicles. Azerbaijan has also purchased 25 Su-25 planes and 93 T-72M1 tanks from Belarus, Russia's ally. Overall, trade turnover with Russia in 2013 amounted to \$3.5 billion, of which 83 percent were exports to Azerbaijan.

In mid-June, Rogozin visited Baku, together with Foreign Minister Sergey Lavrov and parliamentary chairman Sergey Naryshkin. Their purpose was clear: to persuade Azerbaijan to move toward the newly formed Eurasian Economic Union (EEU). During a Russian–Azerbaijani forum later that month, eleven documents dealing with economic relations were signed. During his visit to Baku, Russia's minister of economic development, Alexei Ulyukayev, hinted at the possibility that Azerbaijan could join the EEU, but Baku clearly responded that it was not planning to join any type of economic union. Finally, in August of this year, the presidents of Armenia, Azerbaijan, and Russia met in Sochi. Although the public was not informed of the results of this meeting,

Azerbaijani observers surmised that Baku was the main target of the meeting, as well as of the recent escalation. Russia may yet try to forestall the development of an alternative route for Caspian gas to Europe and use its own gas as a weapon in a bid to get Western sanctions lifted. In this case, Azerbaijan will have become a victim of others' geopolitical contests.

Oil and Gas for Europe: Pursuing the National Interest

Meanwhile, the Ukraine crisis has to some degree played a positive role for Azerbaijan in its relations with the West. The crisis has once again revealed the fragility of the energy security environment in central and eastern Europe. New Russian threats to cut natural gas supplies to Ukraine in the absence of agreement on debts and a new pricing structure recalled the 2006 and 2009 winter "gas wars" between Ukraine and Russia that resulted in shortages for customers across the region.

The Ukraine crisis has energy security implications beyond the territory of the EU. Indeed, it directly impacts Azerbaijan. It is expected that the bulk of initial gas deliveries for the Southern Gas Corridor that is to deliver natural gas from the Caspian to Europe across the South Caucasus and Turkey will come from Azerbaijan's Shah Deniz field (around 10 billion cubic meters annually, which could be expanded in the future). This corridor will significantly decrease the dependence of many eastern and central European states on Russian gas. Azerbaijan has even been interested in supplying gas to Ukraine. Until the Ukraine crisis this year, such discussions remained purely theoretical. In February, however, Ukraine's government at last began to move forward to support the construction of an import terminal for liquefied natural gas (LNG) with an expected annual turnover of 10 bcm. The bulk of this LNG is expected to come from Azerbaijan, which is conduct-

ing negotiations with Georgia to construct an LNG terminal on Georgia's Black Sea coast. In the meantime, Azerbaijan has been actively penetrating the Ukrainian energy market. Over the last four years, SOCAR has invested around \$160 million in Ukraine, including 39 gas stations that operate under the SOCAR brand. The Ukraine crisis has also forced policymakers in the United States to focus more closely on Azerbaijan as a potentially reliable source of natural gas for Washington's closest allies in Europe. In an April speech, U.S. Department of State Special Envoy and Coordinator for International Energy Affairs Carlos Pascual underlined the role of the Southern Gas Corridor in helping achieve energy security for southern Europe.

Conclusion

So long as the Ukraine crisis continues, Baku will pursue its only sensible policy option: maintaining a balance between the West and Russia. Azerbaijan will continue to pour money into Russian weapons and equipment, less as instruments of war than as tribute to the Russian military-industrial complex. In addition, the sanctions against Russia and Moscow's counter-sanctions have made Baku an invaluable partner for Russia. Whether via political support or the supply of necessary agricultural products, Moscow may come to rely more on Azerbaijan than on Armenia in the Caucasus. This, however, will not help resolve the Karabakh conflict. The unresolved fate of these territories will continue to be Moscow's card in negotiations with Armenia and Azerbaijan. All the efforts of the EU and the United States to solve the conflict will be torpedoed by Moscow. Meanwhile, Azerbaijan will strive to maintain good relations with the EU and the United States in the energy sphere, albeit keeping its distance more generally in order to satisfy other domestic and foreign priorities.

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Armenia and the Ukrainian Crisis: Finding the Middle Ground

By Vahram Ter-Matevosyan, Yerevan

Abstract:

This article examines the political implications of the Ukrainian crisis for Armenia and Armenians. Specifically, it discusses the peculiarities of the political upheavals in Ukraine and their relevance to Armenia and Nagorno Karabakh related issues. The questions of bilateral political and economic relations, as well as the state of the Armenian community in Ukraine are also addressed.

(De)Coupling Crimea and Nagorno Karabakh

After the Crimean referendum in March 2014 and Russia's seizure of the peninsula, there were mixed reactions in Armenia concerning its implications for the conflict in Nagorno Karabakh. The National Assembly and the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the de-facto Nagorno Karabakh Republic (NKR) issued two separate statements welcoming the results of the Crimean referendum and interpreting it as yet another manifestation that the principle of territorial integrity does not prevail over the principle of self-determination.¹ After the results of the Crimean referendum were announced, mass celebrations were held in Stepanakert, the capital of NKR. People gathered in the central square of the capital to demonstrate their support for the people of Crimea in their struggle for self-determination. Interestingly enough, when Kosovo declared its independence in February 2008, referring to the same principle of self-determination, the people of Nagorno Karabakh were not allowed to gather in the central square of Stepanakert for celebrations, although such festivities had been initially planned.

The reactions from Armenian officials to the Crimean question were clearly different from the Karabakh ones and were more neutral. Armenia's Foreign Ministry issued a general statement endorsing the peaceful resolution of the Ukrainian crisis and uncoupling the Crimean case from Nagorno Karabakh conflict.² Furthermore, the head of the parliament's Standing Committee on Foreign Relations stated that it is inappropriate to draw parallels between Crimea and Nagorno Karabakh because each case should be treated differently³. By contrast, in 2008, the Armenia President Robert Kocharyan, stated that, "having the problem of Nago-

rno Karabakh, the precedence of Kosovo's independence is important for us."⁴

Although the Armenian government initially tried to follow a neutral approach towards the events unfolding in Ukraine and particularly in Crimea, that stance did not last long. During the UN voting on March 27, 2014, Armenia joined the 11 countries, which stood by Russia and voted against the UN General Assembly resolution supporting Ukraine's territorial integrity and sovereignty as well as naming the Crimea referendum on March 16 as invalid.⁵ Although Armenia initially announced its inclination towards abstention and reconfirmed it one day prior to the voting, at the last moment it changed its stance. Armenia's ambassador to the UN explained the vote by stating that Armenia has been a fervent proponent of "decolonization and self-determination" and therefore voted against the resolution.⁶ The Ukrainian envoy to Armenia was called back to Kiev for consultations. For his part, the Armenian envoy to Ukraine tried to further explain Armenia's position by stating that "Armenia did not betray Ukraine. Concerning Nagorno Karabakh, several times, Ukraine voted in favour of Azerbaijan's position. In 2008, when the UN General Assembly was discussing Azerbaijan's proposed resolution on Nagorno Karabakh, Ukraine supported Azerbaijan. We did not even issue a protest note to the Ukrainian MFA."⁷

Some circles in Armenia brought more arguments to support Armenia's position in the UN. They argued that Ukraine's position in the Karabakh war has been pro-Azerbaijani from the very beginning, Ukraine sold weapons to Azerbaijan, always supported Azerbaijan's territorial integrity etc.⁸ The Ukrainian ambassador returned

1 Statement of the NA NKR, <<http://www.yerkirmedia.am/?act=news&lan=hy&id=19211>>; Statement of the MFA NKR, <<http://www.nkr.am/hy/news/2014-03-17/597/>>

2 Foreign Minister Nalbandyan's answer to the question of the "First News" program, <http://mfa.am/hy/interviews/item/2014/03/17/MFA_ukraine_crimea/>

3 Summary. How Armenian reacted to the "Crimea Question", <<http://ar.newsarmenia.ru/analytics/20140319/43031275.html>>

4 Robert Kocharyan, Having the Nagorno Karabakh issue, Kosovo's independence <<http://armenpress.am/arm/print/450717/>>

5 General Assembly Adopts Resolution Calling upon States Not to Recognize Changes in Status of Crimea Region, 27 March, 2014, <<http://www.un.org/press/en/2014/ga11493.doc.htm>>

6 Ibid

7 Andranik Manukyan, Armenia did not betray Ukraine, 5 April, 2014, <<http://www.segodnya.ua/world/posol-armeniya-ne-pre-davala-ukrainu-510265.html>>

8 Interview with political expert Karen Bekaryan, April 05, 2014, Yerevan

to Yerevan at the end of May only after the Armenian president congratulated the newly elected president of Ukraine exactly two months after the UN vote.⁹

It is difficult to deny the existence of a number of similarities between the historical backgrounds of the Crimean and Nagorno Karabakh cases—both of them were transferred to Ukraine and Azerbaijan respectively based on the Communist party leadership decisions and according to their perceptions of peaceful coexistence and brotherhood, both had dominant ethnic Russian and Armenian populations and their consent was not sought. Areas where significant differences are found include the quality of federal structures that both of them enjoyed within the USSR, the extent of resource deposits, the strategic goals they pursued and ultimate the results they achieved (as Karabakh chose the road of independence and international recognition, while Crimea was annexed by Russia).

Armenians in Ukraine

Besides the frequently cited parallels between Crimea and Karabakh, there are other major implications of the Ukrainian crisis for Armenia. One of the first concerns that came to occupy Armenian society was the fate of ethnic Armenians in Crimea, Odessa, Donetsk and Lugansk. Armenians were also active participants in the Maidan protests. One of the first victims of the Maidan clashes in January was a 20-year old ethnic Armenian named Sergey Nigoyan.¹⁰ Moreover, an ethnic Armenian, Arsen Avakov, who was one of the leaders of the Maidan demonstrations, became the interior minister.

The number of Armenians living in Ukraine has been, and remains, quite substantial. According to the 2001 population census, they numbered around 100,000.¹¹ Since then, the number has increased significantly. According to the Ukrainian ambassador to Armenia, there are as many as 350,000 Armenians in Ukraine¹², whereas the Armenian ambassador to Ukraine claims that there are around 600,000 Arme-

nians live in Ukraine.¹³ To better serve the increasing number of Armenians, the Ministry for Foreign Affairs has opened five consulates in different parts of Ukraine. That number is as many as in the Russian Federation.

Irrespective of exact number of Armenians, they constitute a strong, well-organized and vibrant community, active in the political, social, cultural and business spheres of Ukraine. The “Union of Ukrainian Armenians” was founded in 2001 to coordinate the activities of the Armenians in Ukraine. Since then it has established 24 branches, set up its own publication, and established a research center.¹⁴ The Ukrainian eparchy of the Armenian Apostolic Church, established in 1991, has 11 church communities and 8 active churches in Ukraine.¹⁵ The Armenian Cathedral in Lvov, which was built 650 years ago, serves as a residence for the head of the Ukrainian eparchy of the Armenian Church. The first Armenian settlements in the territory of Ukraine were established in the 11th century¹⁶.

Many Armenians live in areas directly affected by the conflict. In the war-torn Donetsk and Lugansk regions, Armenians were successfully integrated into local social and business activities. Before the recent crisis, there were three ethnic Armenians in the Ukrainian Parliament. They also played an important role in serving as a bridge between the governments of Armenia and Ukraine. However, because of the crisis, dozens of influential Armenian entrepreneurs left the conflict zone thereby losing multi-million investments and lucrative contracts. Armenian families also fled Eastern Ukraine because of security concerns. These fears were exacerbated with the increasing tide of far-right nationalistic rhetoric by some political groupings in Ukraine, which contained anti-Armenian formulations.¹⁷ This trend has revived concerns among many in Armenia and in the Diaspora as they became yet another manifestation of

9 President Serzh Sargsyan Congratulated Ukraine’s Elected President Petro Poroshenko, May 27, 2014, <<http://www.President.Am/En/Congratulatory/Item/2014/05/27/President-Serzh-Sargsyan-Congratulation-To-The-President-Of-Ukraine/>>

10 The name of the person who was shot dead was released (in Russian): <http://society.lb.ua/accidents/2014/01/22/252572_stalo_izvestno_imya.html>

11 About number and composition population of Ukraine by data of All-Ukrainian population census, 2001 data, <<http://2001.ukrcensus.gov.ua/rus/results/general/nationality/>>

12 Ukrainian ambassador. Ukraine has announced its position about Artsakh, <<http://www.aysor.am/am/news/2014/03/20/ukraine/?sw>>

13 Andranik Manukyan, They are Ukrainians, we are Armenians, <<http://www.armtimes.com/hy/read/48460>>

14 Armenian Community of Ukraine, Ministry of Diaspora, <<http://www.mindiaspora.am>>

15 The Structure of the Armenian Apostolic Church, <<http://www.armenianchurch.org/index.jsp?sid=1&cid=92&pid=19>>

16 For the history of Armenian–Ukrainian relations see Ya. Dashkevich, Armenian settlements in Ukraine in the primary sources and literatures in the 15–19th centuries (Historiographical account), Yerevan, Academy of Sciences Press, 1962 (in Russian); Harutyunyan Shmavon, The Friendship of Armenian and Ukrainian nations, Yerevan, 1954 (in Armenian); Ya. Isayevich, The question of Armenian–Ukrainian relations established in Lvov in the 15–18th centuries, Historical-philological journal, 1963, nos. 101–114 (in Armenian).

17 The Armenian Face of the Ukrainian Drama. Armenian killed in Donetsk region hailed as hero by pro-Russia protesters, <http://www.armenianow.com/commentary/analysis/53654/armenia_ukraine_situation_analysis>

the claim that ethnic Armenians living outside of Armenia are under the constant threat of extinction.¹⁸ Brutal actions and atrocities against ethnic Armenians in Syria, Iraq, Egypt, and the North Caucasus in recent years have come to solidify that generalization. Overall, the events in Ukraine once again underscored the claim that Armenia has to develop a long-term, viable and better strategy to support those ethnic Armenians who live outside of Armenia, especially in conflict zones.¹⁹

Moreover, as a result of recent snap parliamentary elections held in October 2014, none of the Armenian MPs of the previous parliament was re-elected to the legislative branch. This can be explained by the fact that 15 constituencies of the Donetsk and Lugansk regions, and 12 constituencies of the Crimea did not vote during the elections. Currently there is only one ethnic Armenian representative in the Ukrainian parliament.

Economic Implications and Western Sanctions against Russia

The Armenian economy has been noticeably affected by the Ukrainian crisis. According to various estimates, import volumes from Ukraine have dropped significantly. For years, Ukraine ranked second among CIS countries, after Russia, for sending remittances to Armenia. Since the crisis erupted, that volume of individual bank transfers has declined significantly. For years, Ukraine had been one of the top destinations for seasonal migrants from Armenia. However, the ongoing economic crisis in Ukraine is forcing Armenians to seek jobs in other countries, typically Russia, although the latter may also become a less attractive destination for labor migrants if Western sanctions persist.

The Western sanctions against Russia and Armenia's trade and financial exposure to Russia have also caused a slowdown in the Armenian economy. On the other hand, the Russian ruble has decreased in value, which for Armenia meant that the remittances sent from Russia have decreased in value as compared to the same period from last year. Moreover, because of the ruble's devaluation, the price of Armenia's exported products to Russia will increase, which, in turn, will make it difficult for them to compete on the Russian market and will have a negative impact on the trade volumes and net exports.²⁰ According to a report prepared by the European Bank

for Reconstruction and Development, because of the Ukrainian crisis and the economic slowdown in Russia, the growth of Armenia's GDP will slow down in 2014 and will be around 3 percent, as opposed to 3.5 percent in 2013.²¹ Citing the same reasons, the Moody's Investors Service's forecast was more sceptical; in September 2014 it projected only 2.1 percent GDP growth in 2014, instead of the previously announced 3.2 percent.²²

Finding Both Inspiration and Distraction

Ukraine and Armenia are also on different pages when it comes to integration projects. Armenia started off with Ukraine on its way to an EU Association Agreement, as both were hopeful to further their relations at the Vilnius summit in November 2013. However, just two months before the summit, the Armenian president declared his intention to lead Armenia towards the Russia-led Customs Union. For a period, Ukraine also backpedalled from the European path, a move which led to political instability, the overthrow of the government and political unrest. However, Ukraine eventually returned to the European path by signing the political (March 21) and economic (June 27, 2014) components of the Association Agreement with the EU. The Association Agreement was simultaneously ratified in the Ukrainian and European Parliaments.²³ This success eventually led some members of Armenian civil society to praise the determination of the Ukrainian people who fought for a European future.

The other negative implication of the Ukrainian crisis has to do with its consequence on the resolution of the Karabakh conflict. The Minsk group co-chairmanship, which deals with the resolution of the Karabakh conflict, is composed of Russia, France and the USA. In the face of the deterioration in relations between Russia and the West, some circles in Armenia and Karabakh voiced concerns about the future efficiency of the Minsk group, arguing that it will not meet regularly and live up to expectations.²⁴ However, in spite of the gen-

18 Vahram Hovyan, Security challenges of Armenian Diaspora, *Globe Research Journal*, no. 5, 2014

19 Vahram Ter-Matevosyan, Armenian Needs a New Security Strategy, *Regional Affairs*, 2013, vol. 1, no. 3, p. 12

20 Samvel Avagyan, Possible implications of the Ukrainian crisis on Armenia's economy, <<http://hetq.am/arm/news/32918/ukrainakan-tchgnazhami-hnaravor-azdecutyuny-hayastanintnesutyany-vra.html>>

21 Olga Rosca, Recovery in Eastern Europe and the Caucasus Affected By Russia-Ukraine Crisis, <<http://www.ebrd.com/pages/news/press/2014/140514c.shtml>>

22 Global Credit Research, Moody's: High reliance on Russia affects Armenia's economy, but fiscal prudence supports government's creditworthiness, 16 September, 2014, <https://www.moodys.com/research/Moodys-High-reliance-on-Russia-affects-Armenias-economy-but-fiscal-PR_308664>

23 European Parliament ratifies EU-Ukraine Association Agreement, <<http://www.europarl.europa.eu/news/en/news-room/content/20140915IPR62504/html/European-Parliament-ratifies-EU-Ukraine-Association-Agreement>>

24 How the Minsk Group will work in the conditions of the Ukrainian crisis. Opinions, 13 March, 2013, <<http://www.tert.am/am/news/2014/03/11/eahk/?sw>>

eral scepticism, the Minsk group co-chairs managed to keep the process going and carry out their job as usual.

As was the case during the previous revolutions in the post-Soviet space, the political opposition in Armenia and some circles found inspiration from the Maidan demonstrations. There were open calls to launch an “Armenian Maidan” in order to topple the government.²⁵ However, Armenia’s first president, Levon Ter-Petrosyan calmed down the overall excitement by elaborating on the reasons why a Maidan did not (and could not) take place in Armenia. These included the lack of anti-Russian tendencies and the nation’s disappointment with the West.²⁶ Initially the Armenian government did not reveal any particular concerns about the opposition’s activities,

however, in April 2014, a new government was formed and a new prime minister was appointed, which was largely interpreted as a calculated step to please society.

At any rate, the Ukrainian crisis is not over yet. The devastation that the civil war brought to Eastern Ukraine has profound implications going beyond the borders of Ukraine and Russia. Recent events in Ukraine have injured the national psyche and the scenario that seemed a distant, infeasible, unthinkable notion just a year ago, now appears to be a part of daily reality. Being constrained by countervailing interests, the conflicting parties are also united by myriad circumstances. Enduring peace remains a perplexing challenge for Ukraine and it is not within sight.

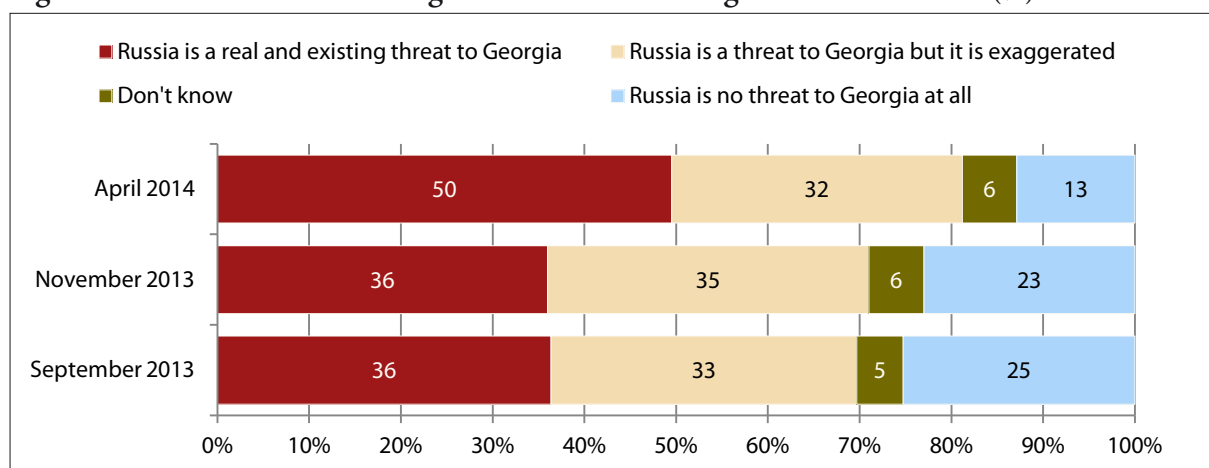
About the Author

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OPINION POLL

Georgian Attitudes Towards the Ukrainian Crisis (April 2014)

Figure 1: Which of the Following Statements Do You Agree With the Most? (%)

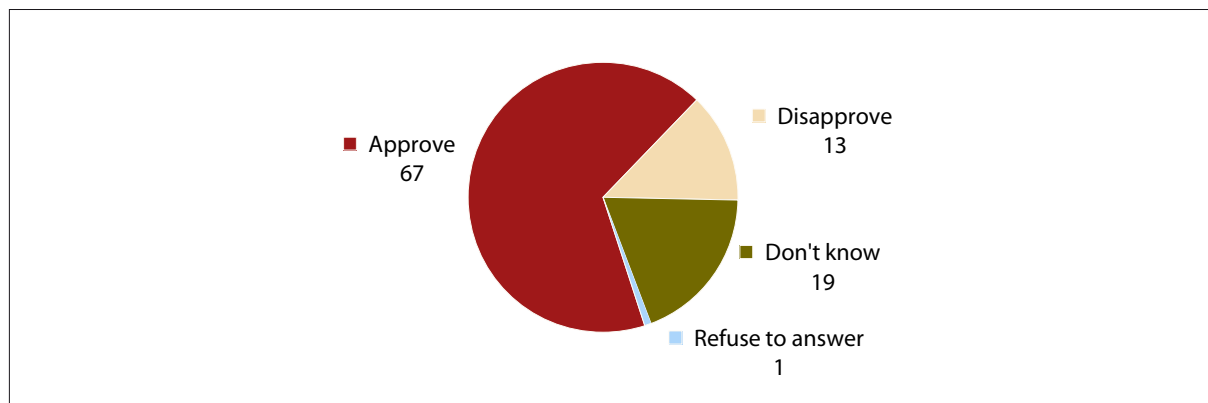


Source: representative opinion poll carried out by Caucasus Research Resource Centers (CRRC) for the National Democratic Institute (NDI), 26 March–18 April 2014, <<http://www.civil.ge/files/files/2014/NDI-PoliticalRatings-April2014.pdf>>

25 Vladimir Karapetyan, Ukraine, Abkhazia... next is Armenia, 03 June, 20014, <<http://www.ilur.am/news/view/30355.html>>; Ani Zakaryan, Armenian Maidan is unavoidable, 01 March, 2014, <<http://mediamall.am/?id=29511>>

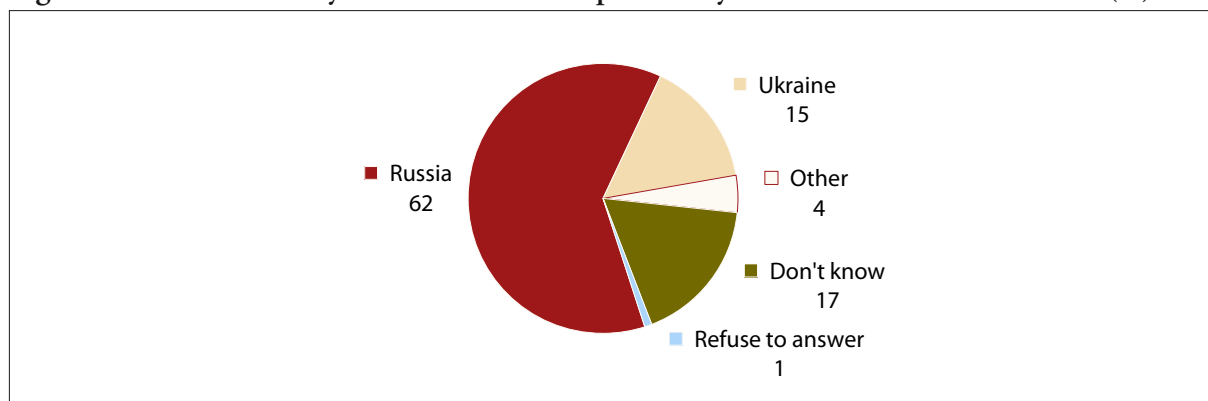
26 Ter-Petrosyan presented his explanation for the reasons that “Armenian maidan” did not take place, 21 December, 2013, <<http://www.azatutyun.am/content/article/25208377.html>>

Figure 2: Do You Approve or Disapprove of the Georgian Government's Response to the Crimean Crisis? (%)



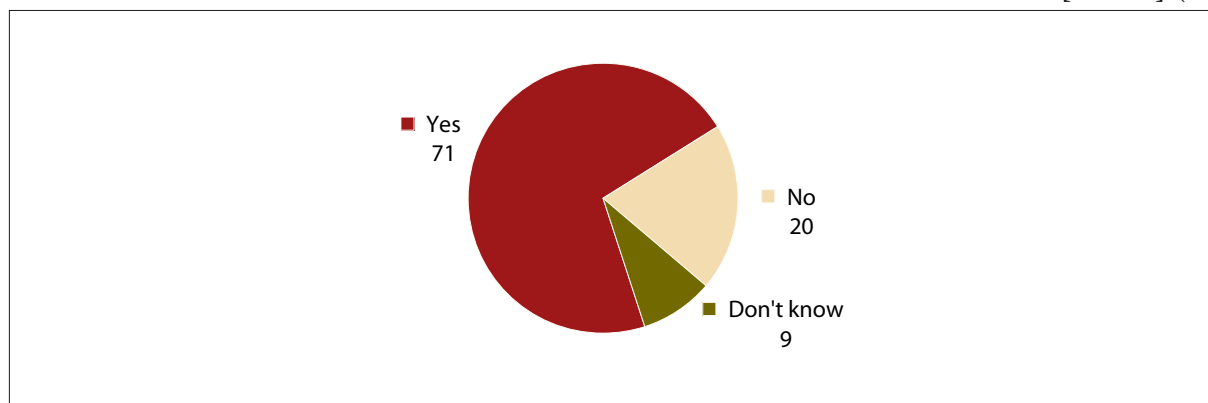
Source: representative opinion poll carried out by Caucasus Research Resource Centers (CRRC) for the National Democratic Institute (NDI), 26 March–18 April 2014, <<http://www.civil.ge/files/files/2014/NDI-PoliticalRatings-April2014.pdf>>

Figure 3: Which Country Bears the Most Responsibility for the Crisis in the Crimea? (%)

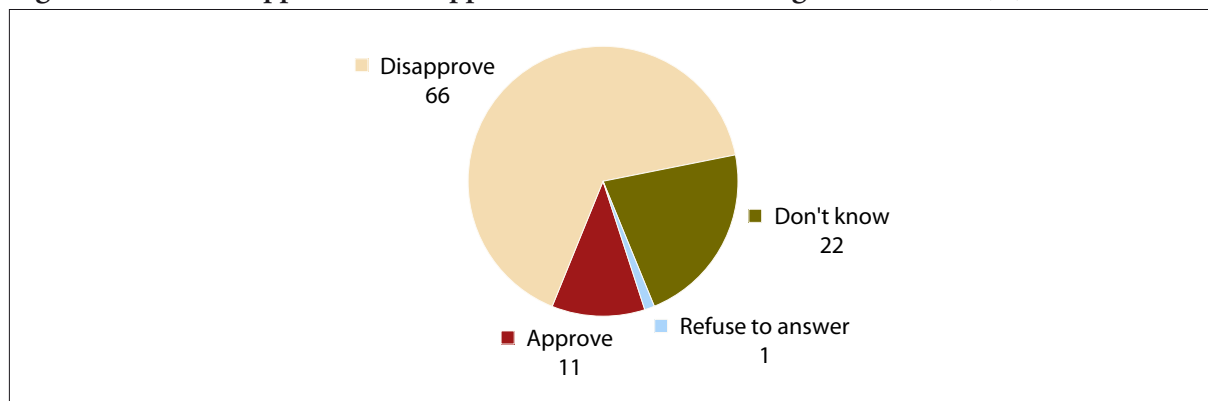


Source: representative opinion poll carried out by Caucasus Research Resource Centers (CRRC) for the National Democratic Institute (NDI), 26 March–18 April 2014, <<http://www.civil.ge/files/files/2014/NDI-PoliticalRatings-April2014.pdf>>

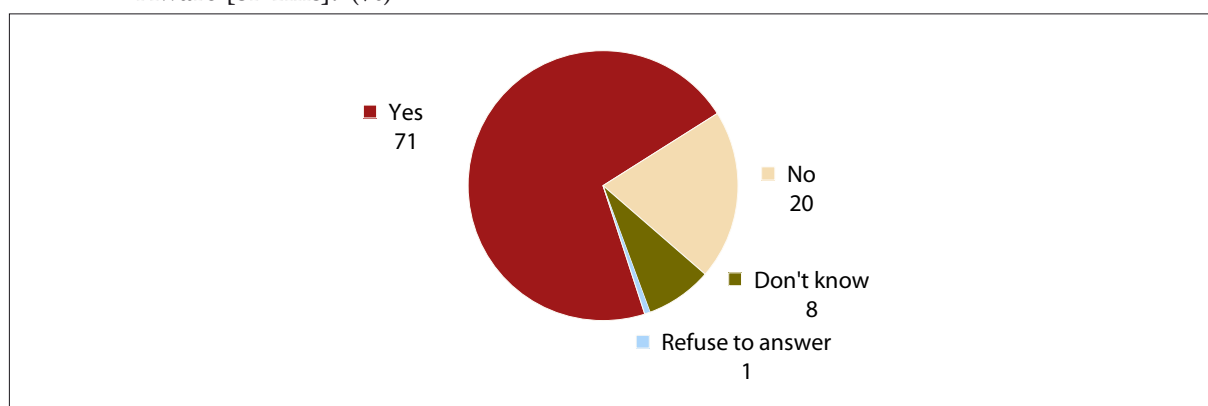
Figure 4: On March 16 [2014], a Referendum Passed which Declared That the Crimea Should Be Reunited with Russia as Part of the Russian Federation. Were You Aware [of This]? (%)



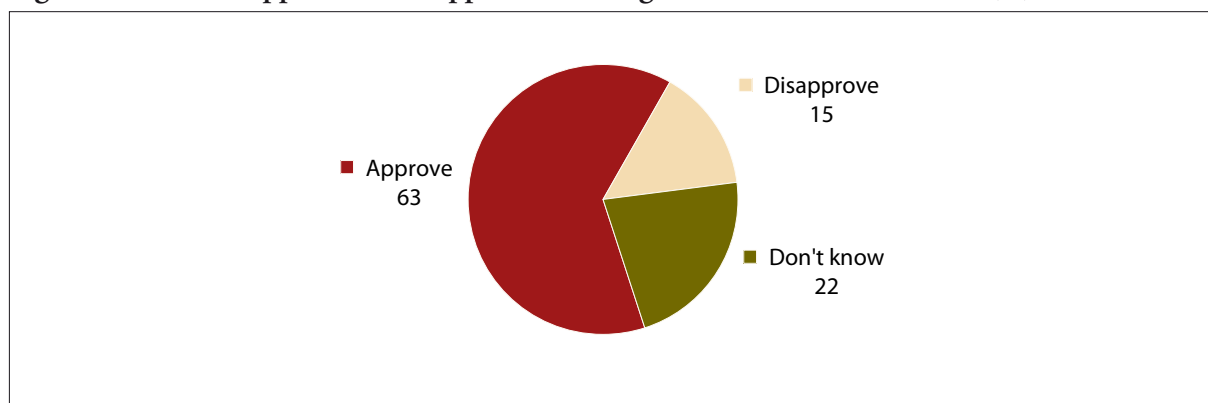
Source: representative opinion poll carried out by Caucasus Research Resource Centers (CRRC) for the National Democratic Institute (NDI), 26 March–18 April 2014, <<http://www.civil.ge/files/files/2014/NDI-PoliticalRatings-April2014.pdf>>

Figure 5: Do You Approve or Disapprove of Crimea Reuniting with Russia? (%)

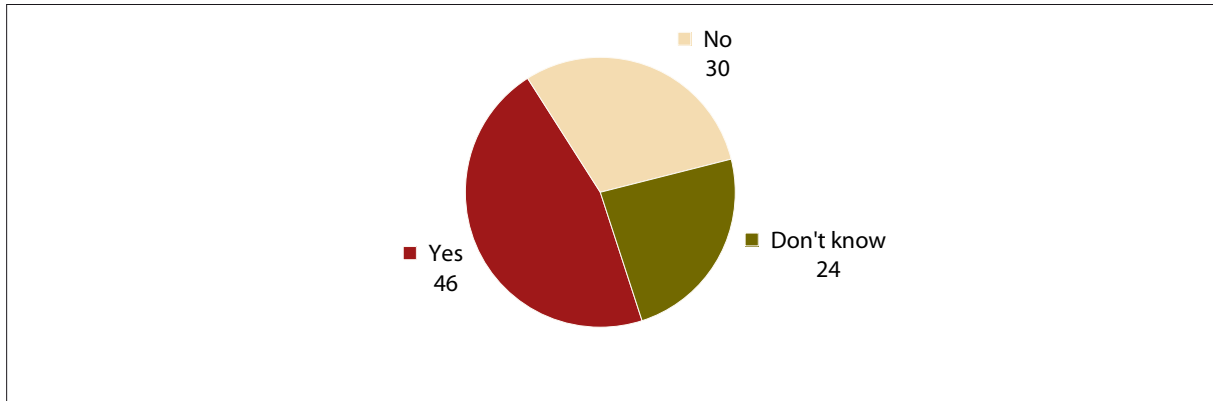
Source: representative opinion poll carried out by Caucasus Research Resource Centers (CRRC) for the National Democratic Institute (NDI), 26 March–18 April 2014, <<http://www.civil.ge/files/files/2014/NDI-PoliticalRatings-April2014.pdf>>

Figure 6: The Government of Georgia Has Condemned Russia's Actions in Crimea. Were You Aware [of This]? (%)

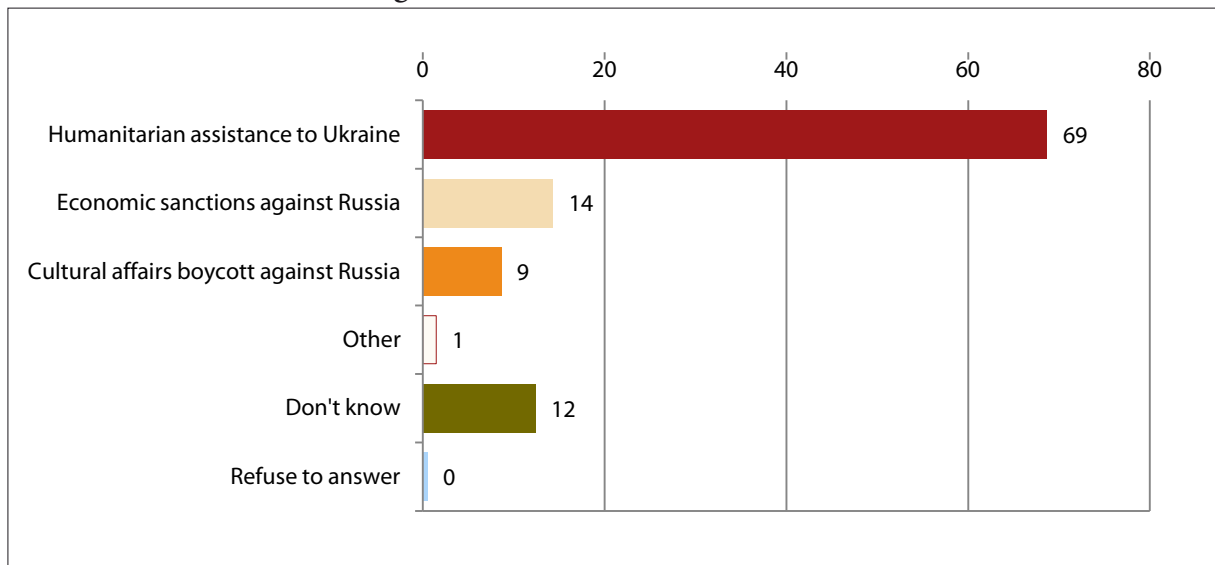
Source: representative opinion poll carried out by Caucasus Research Resource Centers (CRRC) for the National Democratic Institute (NDI), 26 March–18 April 2014, <<http://www.civil.ge/files/files/2014/NDI-PoliticalRatings-April2014.pdf>>

Figure 7: Do You Approve or Disapprove of Georgian Government's Action? (%)

Source: representative opinion poll carried out by Caucasus Research Resource Centers (CRRC) for the National Democratic Institute (NDI), 26 March–18 April 2014, <<http://www.civil.ge/files/files/2014/NDI-PoliticalRatings-April2014.pdf>>

Figure 8: Should Georgia Take Any Additional Action in Support of Ukraine? (%)

Source: representative opinion poll carried out by Caucasus Research Resource Centers (CRRC) for the National Democratic Institute (NDI), 26 March–18 April 2014, <<http://www.civil.ge/files/files/2014/NDI-PoliticalRatings-April2014.pdf>>

Figure 9: If Yes, What? (of the 46% of Respondents Who Think Georgia Should Take Additional Action, See Figure 8) (%)

Source: representative opinion poll carried out by Caucasus Research Resource Centers (CRRC) for the National Democratic Institute (NDI), 26 March–18 April 2014, <<http://www.civil.ge/files/files/2014/NDI-PoliticalRatings-April2014.pdf>>

CHRONICLE

30 October – 11 December 2014

30 October 2014	Georgian Prime Minister Irakli Garibashvili speaks against depriving the Interior Ministry of access to telecommunication operators' network systems amid the passing of a bill to put in place tighter rules for law enforcement agencies to carry out surveillance
30 October 2014	Georgian Defense Minister Irakli Alasania meets with his counterpart Ursula von der Leyen in Berlin to discuss bilateral cooperation as well as the situation in the Caucasus region and relations with Russia
30 October 2014	The European Commission says that Georgia has met the requirements in the first phase of its visa liberalization dialogue with the EU and is now entering a second phase
3 November 2014	The European Union pledges to provide aid to Armenia over the next three years for a range of reforms in the private and public sectors
4 November 2014	Georgian Prime Minister Irakli Garibashvili says he has dismissed Georgian Defense Minister Irakli Alasania
4 November 2014	The International Monetary Fund predicts economic growth in the Caucasus and Central Asia will slow due to the economic slowdown in Russia
5 November 2014	Georgian Prime Minister Irakli Garibashvili says that allegations voiced by former Georgian Defense Minister Irakli Alasania and Maia Panjikidze, who stepped down as Foreign Minister, about changes in the country's pro-Western foreign policy course are "naïve" and "ridiculous"
7 November 2014	Armenian Prime Minister Hovik Abrahamia says that several state agencies will be merged to form a new Interior Ministry
8 November 2014	Former Georgian Defense Minister Irakli Alasania is elected chairman of the Free Democrats (FD)
11 November 2014	Danish Foreign Minister Martin Lidegaard says after meeting with his Georgian counterpart Tamar Beruchashvili in Tbilisi that Denmark wants to support Georgia in making full use of its Association Agreement with the EU
12 November 2014	Azerbaijan declares the airspace above the disputed region of Nagorno Karabakh as closed after the Azerbaijani military shoots down a helicopter belonging to the region's forces
12 November 2014	Georgian Prime Minister Irakli Garibashvili meets with Kazakh President Nursultan Nazarbayev in Astana and stresses the strategic partnership between the two countries
13 November 2014	Oligarch Kakha Bendukidze, a key figure behind the economic liberalization drive in Georgia after the Rose Revolution, dies in London
18 November 2014	Leader of non-parliamentary opposition Democratic Movement-United Georgia party Nino Burjanadze says that Georgia needs to make a clear distinction between EU and NATO membership and should decide between "illusionary NATO membership" and restoration of territorial integrity
21 November 2014	The United States transfer three Yemeni detainees from the Guantanamo Bay prison to Georgia
24 November 2014	Russian President Vladimir Putin and Abkhazia's de facto president Raul Khajimba sign the "Allied Relations and Strategic Partnership" treaty in Sochi that states that an armed attack on Abkhazia will be considered an armed attack on Russia, and vice-versa
24 November 2014	Russia pledges to allocate at least 9.2 billion rubles to the breakaway region of Abkhazia after signing a treaty on strategic partnership
25 November 2014	Georgia's state minister for European and Euro-Atlantic integration says that Tbilisi has called on the UN Security Council to discuss the legality of the treaty signed between Russia and the breakaway region of Abkhazia
25 November 2014	Latvia President Andris Bērziņš, whose country will hold the first half of the EU's rotating presidency in 2015, visits Georgia
27 November 2014	Georgian prosecutors charge former Georgian President Mikheil Saakashvili with complicity in the murder of banker Sandro Girgvliani in January 2006
1 December 2014	Former Georgian President Mikheil Saakashvili says he has rejected an offer for a high-level government post in Ukraine as it would require him to renounce Georgian citizenship
2 December 2014	Protesters gather in front of the Armenian Parliament against a treaty to join the Eurasian Economic Union (EEU)

4 December 2014	The Armenian Parliament overwhelmingly approves a treaty to join the Eurasian Economic Union (EEU)
4 December 2014	Georgian President Giorgi Margvelashvili visits Poland and meets with his Polish counterpart Bronislaw Komorowski to discuss cooperation on defense and security as well as Georgia's EU and NATO integration
4 December 2014	NATO Secretary General's Special Representative for the Caucasus and Central Asia James Appathurai says during a visit to Tbilisi that the implementation of a "substantial package" of enhanced cooperation to help Georgia prepare for NATO partnership is "going well"
5 December 2014	Head of the Georgian Central Bank Giorgi Kadagidze says that the country faces no economic and financial threats whatsoever as the national currency falls to its lowest levels since May 2004
8 December 2014	German Foreign Minister Frank-Walter Steinmeier meets with Georgian high-level officials during a two-days visit to Tbilisi
8 December 2014	German Foreign Minister Frank-Walter Steinmeier speaking in Tbilisi says that Germany does not recognize the agreement signed between Moscow and the breakaway region of Abkhazia
10 December 2014	The foreign ministers of Azerbaijan, Georgia and Turkey meet in the Turkish city of Kars to continue the format of trilateral meetings launched in 2012 to contribute to the consolidation of regional stability and security
11 December 2014	Armenian Prime Minister Hovik Abrahamyan meets with his counterpart Irakli Garibashvili in Tbilisi and says that modernization of border crossing points between the two countries was discussed

Compiled by Lili Di Puppo

For the full chronicle since 2009 see <www.laender-analysen.de/cad>

ABOUT THE CAUCASUS ANALYTICAL DIGEST

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