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THE CENTRAL ASIA-CAUCASS ANALYST

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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.

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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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WHAT DOES RUSSIA'S ANNEXATION OF CRIMEA MEAN FOR GEORGIA'S EFFORTS TO JOIN NATO?

John C.K. Daly

On March 19, Georgia's President Giorgi Margvelashvili said that Russia's annexation of Crimea represents "a problem for global security," adding that the international community, including Georgia, should have done more to prevent the recurrence of such developments six years after the August 2008 Russo-Georgian conflict. Despite's Georgia's persistent efforts to join NATO, its sought after NATO Membership Action Plan has effectively become a casualty of worsening U.S.-Russian relations over Ukraine and Crimea.

BACKGROUND: Georgia's relationship with NATO dates back to 1994 and its membership in the Partnership for Peace (PfP) program. Georgian troops served alongside NATO troops in the peacekeeping operation in Kosovo (KFOR) from 1999 to 2008 and has participated in NATO's Planning and Review Process since 1999, allowing the country to establish deployable units according to NATO standards and interoperable with Allied forces. In 2004, Georgia was the first aspiring NATO member to sign an Individual Partnership Action Plan with the alliance. The following year NATO and Georgia signed a transit agreement allowing the alliance and other International Security Assistance Force nations to send supplies for their troops in Afghanistan via Georgia.

In April 2008, NATO members rejected Georgia's request for a Membership Action Plan (MAP) during the alliance's annual summit in Bucharest despite strong U.S. support for granting MAPs to both Georgia and Ukraine. Sensing the alliance's

hesitation, on April 16 Russia's then-President Dmitry Medvedev authorized direct official relations between Moscow and secessionists in Abkhazia and South Ossetia.

On September 17, 2008 the Crimean Parliament in Simferopol defied Ukraine's pro-Western leaders and called on the Rada to follow Russia's example and recognize the independence of Abkhazia and South Ossetia. The same month, NATO and Georgia established the NATO-Georgia Commission to oversee NATO's assistance to Georgia following the conflict with Russia and to play a central role in supervising the process established at the Bucharest Summit. Three months later NATO Foreign Ministers agreed that Georgia should develop an Annual National Program under the auspices of the NATO-Georgia Commission to allow NATO to provide assistance for Georgia's democratic, institutional and defense reform efforts.

Georgia has been the largest non-NATO troop contributor to Afghanistan's NATO-led ISAF since it



almost doubled its presence there to more than 1,560 soldiers in autumn 2012. Twenty-seven Georgian soldiers have died in Afghanistan since Tbilisi first sent troops there in 2004. Georgia continues to serve as a transit country for ISAF supplies and has also indicated its willingness to participate in the post-2014 follow-on mission to train and assist Afghan security forces after the NATO drawdown is complete in late 2014. Georgia also supports Operation Active Endeavor, NATO's counter-terrorist maritime surveillance operation in the Mediterranean. In an additional gesture of support for NATO operations, Georgia has offered to participate in the NATO Response Force and is expected to contribute to the NRF in 2015.

NATO membership remains a high priority for both the Georgian government and population. In March 2013, the Georgian parliament passed a unanimous resolution reconfirming Georgia's NATO and EU aspirations. According to a June 2013 survey commissioned by the U.S. National Democratic Institute, 73 percent of those polled supported Georgian NATO membership.

IMPLICATIONS: Russia has been consistently clear about its views on Georgia joining NATO. On December

4, 2013, while attending a session of the Russia-NATO Council, Russian Foreign Minister Sergei Lavrov reiterated his government's explicit opposition to the further eastward expansion of NATO, remarking, "as to NATO's enlargement, regardless of Georgia, (Russia) is convinced that it constitutes an extension of the old and inertial logic of the Cold War era. Not only does it preserve the division lines that all of us have committed to dismantle, but it amounts to transposition of those lines further into the East."

On March 6, the Georgian parliament adopted a resolution condemning Russia's interference in Crimea. The following day Russian military helicopters and drones flew into Georgian airspace in Zugdidi district, adjacent to Abkhazia, and above the suburbs of Gori, which is close to South Ossetia.

Georgia's NATO membership now threatens to become a U.S. domestic political issue. With upcoming Congressional midterm elections, many conservative incumbents and candidates may well embrace the issue as proving that they are strong on American defense and resisting Russia. As the street clashes escalated in Kiev, U.S. House of Representatives member Eliot L. Engel (D-NY) and Michael Turner (R-OH) wrote a bipartisan letter to U.S. Secretary of State John Kerry on February 10, signed by an additional 40 U.S. Congressmen noting, "We believe the United States should continue its close partnerships with the aspirant countries of Georgia,

Macedonia, Montenegro and Bosnia-Herzegovina ... and to advocate granting a (NATO) Membership Action Plan to Georgia.” The Georgian Ministry of Foreign Affairs subsequently posted it on its website. On March 12, Republican U.S. Senator John McCain called for the faster integration of both Georgia and Moldova into NATO amid the ongoing crisis in Ukraine's Crimean region.

While Georgia is hoping to receiving a Membership Action Plan (MAP) to join NATO during the alliance's September summit in Wales, NATO Secretary General Anders Fogh Rasmussen, speaking in Brussels on February 5 with visiting Georgian Prime Minister Irakli Garibashvili, said only that the alliance would continue to assess nations aspiring to become NATO members and that final decisions would be made prior to the alliance's summit. In a slight concession to Garibashvili's aspirations, Rasmussen added that Georgia made substantial progress, which would be “acknowledged and reflected appropriately at the summit.”

Russia's annexation of Crimea has only hardened Russia's position on Georgia joining NATO. On March 21 at the German Marshall Fund's annual Brussels Forum, Rasmussen asked Russia's Ambassador to NATO Aleksandr Grushko, “Will you accept Georgia's right to choose NATO membership if this is the Georgian decision and if NATO accepts? Would you accept that?” Grushko replied, “No. I was absolutely very clear; we are against. We believe that this is a huge

mistake. This is my country's position.”

Russia's consistency stands in sharp contrast to the mixed signals coming from the Obama administration. On March 26 at a press conference at the EU-U.S. Summit in Brussels, President Obama threw cold water on Tbilisi's hopes to join NATO in the immediate future. In response to a question about Georgia and Ukraine joining NATO Obama replied, “Well, I think that neither Ukraine or Georgia are currently on a path to NATO membership and there has not been any immediate plans for expansion of NATO's membership. I know that Russia, at least on background, has suggested that one of the reasons they've been concerned about Ukraine was potential NATO membership. On the other hand, part of the reason that the Ukraine has not formally applied for NATO membership is because of its complex relationship with Russia. I don't think that's going to change anytime soon, obviously.”

The next day Garibashvili commented, “We should not have illusions, we should always assess the existing situation realistically. What President Obama said is quite sufficient and that's reality; NATO expansion is not planned at this stage.” Commenting upon Obama's remarks Margvelashvili diplomatically said, “I would not say it was the statement I was looking forward to and I wanted to hear.”

CONCLUSIONS: The swiftly moving events in Ukraine and Crimea are having a seismic impact on Western policies towards both Russia

and the issue of NATO expansion, producing contradictory signals from Washington. On March 12, the Russian journal *Kommersant* quoted an undisclosed source in the State Department saying, "If Russia announces the annexation of Crimea the issue of granting Georgia a MAP can be considered virtually a foregone conclusion." Fourteen days later Obama told a press conference that Georgia was not "currently on a path to NATO membership." On February 26, Kerry met with Gharibashvili, after which he announced the possibility of visiting Georgia before May.

Georgia has yet again been left exposed to Russian wrath for declaring its NATO ambitions, only to have them abruptly rejected by Washington. For more than a decade, successive U.S. administrations sent positive signals to Tbilisi when Georgian support for NATO was to the U.S.'s advantage, swiftly revoking the invitation when it was no longer geopolitically convenient. It remains to be seen if this pattern will change when Kerry visits Georgia. The question in Tbilisi's mind is whether Kerry will come with a message yet again sacrificing Georgia's NATO aspirations to appease Putin. Russia policy has been consistent; Georgia's NATO aspirations have been consistent: the wavering is coming from the U.S. and NATO.

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UKRAINE AND THE CIS PERSPECTIVE: IMPLICATIONS FOR CENTRAL ASIA

Farkhod Tolipov

The outbreak of Ukraine's "second color revolution" in February has shaken not only Ukraine itself but also the foundations of the Commonwealth of Independent States (CIS). The drastic split of Ukraine as a state and a nation amounted to a moment of truth for the entire post-Soviet structure. The rise of anti-Russian nationalism in Ukraine and Russia's response to annex Crimea revealed not only a persistent Russian neo-imperial stance in the post-Soviet space but also triggered geopolitical concerns among former Soviet countries, including in Central Asia.

BACKGROUND: Ukraine has been a hesitant member of the CIS and even of the late USSR. When the so-called Novo-Ogarevo process was launched on drafting the new Union treaty in September 1991 by eight former Soviet republics, Ukraine refrained from taking part in that process. And when the then Presidents of Russia (Boris Yeltsin), Belarus (Stanislav Shushkevich), and Ukraine (Leonid Kravchuk) met in Belovejskaya Pusha near Minsk on 7-8 December 1991 to announce the break-up of the USSR and the establishment of the CIS, Yeltsin justified the decision by stating that the new Union could not be created without Ukraine. Hence, Ukraine opted not to enter a reformed USSR, but instead became one of the founders of the CIS.

For Ukraine, the CIS has since its inception remained a convenient framework for multilateral engagement with Russia and other member states because it is a very loose and weak organization. But when six CIS countries established the Collective Security Treaty Organization (CSTO)

in 2002, Ukraine again stood aloof because it was a stronger integration framework than the CIS. Ukraine has also resisted membership in the Russia-initiated Custom Union and Eurasian Union. Despite its role as a co-founder of the CIS, Kiev has since 1991 remained reluctant towards deeper integration with Russia. Ironically, Ukraine took on the CIS chairmanship this year and the overthrown President Yanukovych had been the CIS chairman since January 2014.

The 2014 "Ukrainian spring" highlighted, among other things, the cautious but persistent pro-European inclination of all Ukrainian governments since independence. Meanwhile, the mass uprising and overthrow of President Yanukovych in February, and the concomitant rise of dormant anti-Russian forces also revealed the fragility of Ukraine's statehood and national project on the one hand, and the fragile CIS and failed post-Soviet re-integration on the other.

For Central Asia, the events in Ukraine can be interpreted as a "moment of truth." Astana, Bishkek and Tashkent



initially issued official statements on the events in Ukraine in March and spoke out for the country's territorial integrity and sovereignty. They expressed concern about the course of events. Bishkek's statement was more cautious and Dushanbe's position was rather pro-Russian. These statements could be considered as a warning message addressed not only towards Ukraine by stressing the importance of a peaceful resolution to the crisis, but also towards Russia. However, after Crimea's de facto secession and annexation to Russia, Astana and Bishkek slightly changed their positions, issuing statements cautiously expressing "understanding" and "recognition" of the *fait accompli*.

IMPLICATIONS: The Ukrainian crisis revealed a strong divergence in the interpretation and application of international law on the part of great powers, regarding their own behavior as well as their attitude towards smaller states. Russian representatives repeatedly mentioned the Kosovo precedent to justify the annexation of Crimea. Hence in the course of events, Moscow not only retaliated against Kiev but also made a point of legitimizing that retaliation in exchanges with Washington. This is a problematic precedent for smaller countries in the post-Soviet space, because it demonstrates the vague and

ad-hoc nature of the international order in this part of the world.

Russia has been unable to enlist definite and resolute support for its actions in Ukraine from the CIS states for at least three reasons: First, Moscow could not properly justify the annexation of Crimea and provide persuasive claims on the basis of international law; second, Russia preferred to use hard power in dealing with the Ukrainian challenge instead of the widely popularized soft-power policy directed to its so-called "near abroad" that Russia itself has recently announced; and third, Russia demonstrated a cold-war, anti-Western pattern of international behavior and thereby increased the pressure on other former Soviet republics cooperating with the West.

It should be noticed that in such a context, separatism can become an increasing tendency in some areas of the post-Soviet independent states inhabited by sizable Russian-speaking communities and that fanning these processes has become a brand of Russia's foreign policy. The secession of South Ossetia and Abkhazia from Georgia in 2008 has not so far led to these two splinter provinces of Georgia joining the Russian Federation, but secession of Crimea has. Russia has now acquired an additional unfriendly, not to say hostile, neighbor (after Georgia and Moldova). After Crimea's separation, Ukraine's European drift will likely take a new and bolder impetus.

In this perspective, one of the side-effects of the Ukrainian drama is that

with all his recent statements related to the situation in Ukraine and the secession of Crimea, President Putin has in fact delegitimized the CIS. He stated that Ukraine's secession from the Soviet Union was illegal. However, this would be valid for all former USSR republics, including Russia – the USSR was ultimately cancelled due to a coup d'état led by former Russian President Yeltsin. By extension, Putin's statement would imply that the CIS is illegitimate as well.

CIS institutions including the CSTO have been considerably marginalized due to their diplomatic paralysis during the ongoing Ukrainian crisis. This put Central Asian countries directly at odds with Russia and undermined multilateral structures which could potentially interfere in such crises. It is notable in this regard that Uzbekistan's decision to exit the CSTO and distance itself from other Russia-led multilateral structures, which has been criticized by some experts, suddenly proved to be a prudent strategy. Uzbekistan's foreign ministry issued a second statement on Crimea's secession in late March in which Tashkent confirmed its previous position which, in contrast to other Central Asian counterparts, proved to be relatively more principled and consistent.

In the context of the Ukrainian drama, Central Asia is today facing a twofold challenge. Firstly, the challenge of continued partnership with NATO, resistance to which has become a key feature of Russia's global posture in general and its policies during the Ukrainian crisis in particular. Secondly,

the challenge of rebooting a regional cooperation format, given the fundamental crisis of the CIS. In the new circumstances, Tashkent could take the lead in reinvigorating the 23-year-old idea of regional integration.

CONCLUSIONS: Ukraine and Russia – two of the CIS' co-founders – are turning into two destroyers of the organization. The institutions of the CIS have been unable so far to intervene in the Russia-Ukraine conflict and contribute somehow to peace-building. Moreover, the separation of Crimea created a troublesome precedent that could potentially unleash a restructuring of the entire post-Soviet space. The Russian President, the State Duma and the Russian elite manifested themselves not so much as defenders of Russians against Ukrainian nationalists as they demonstrated their support for their own nationalists. In fact, Russian nationalism that has been on the rise recently, particularly regarding Central Asian labor migrants, was clearly demonstrated through the decisive actions against Ukraine and thereby, indirectly, against other post-Soviet states. In other words, Russia provided a clearly nationalistic response to the rise of Ukrainian nationalism.

The Crimea crisis will have profound geopolitical implications for Central Asia, where the events are understood as the expression of a new rise in Russia's neo-imperialism. Over time, Moscow can repair this image in the eyes of countries and peoples on Russia's perimeter, but one thing has once again become obvious: Central

Asians, while attempting to resolve regional issues and construct their common regional home should concentrate on finding regional solutions rather than seeking great power mediation.

The CIS may be able to survive with only nine members but at least five of them – the states of Central Asia – now confront the existential question pertaining to the durability of their de jure sovereignty. The likelihood of future unilateral decisive actions by Moscow in the post-Soviet space, ignoring the interests of independent states on its perimeter, have strained Astana, Bishkek, Dushanbe, Tashkent and Ashgabat who have so far only expressed cautious positions. Recent developments should prompt them to restore their frozen regional integration structure and revitalize a region-building process.

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UKRAINE CRISIS AND PUTIN'S POST-CIS INTEGRATION PLANS

Richard Weitz

Although Russia continues to participate in the Commonwealth of Independent States (CIS), the reluctance of Ukraine and other members to support deep integration within that framework has led the Russian government under Vladimir Putin to focus Moscow's integration efforts on other institutions. Now Russia's military moves against Crimea have presented both opportunities and challenges for Putin's post-CIS integration agenda.

BACKGROUND: In his first decade in power, Putin has focused on achieving deeper cooperation among a small number of the most pro-Moscow CIS members. For instance, in 2002, Russia joined with Armenia, Belarus, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, and Tajikistan to create a military alliance, the Collective Security Treaty Organization (CSTO), to supplement the modest security cooperation within the CIS. Since then, the CSTO members have been developing their laws, institutions, and capabilities. The organization has adopted a peacekeeping doctrine, created a rapid reaction force, and the means to mobilize larger multinational armies under the CSTO's command in wartime. The organization's missions have included fighting terrorists, guerrillas and drug traffickers as well as deterring large-scale attacks against its members. Cooperation has also included Russia's selling arms to its allies at discounted prices and an agreement that all countries must consent to any one member's hosting foreign military bases on its territory. Russian diplomatic efforts related to

the CSTO have focused on overcoming NATO's opposition to mutual cooperation, which is preventing the CIS from achieving its goal of enjoying equal status with NATO.

A similar pattern of narrower-but-deeper integration has been taking place in the economic realm. In 2000, after the CIS proved unable to achieve deep economic integration or an effective customs union, Russia joined with Belarus, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, and Tajikistan to create a Eurasian Economic Community (EurAsEC), with a more ambitious integration agenda than the CIS. The EurAsEC has sought to align the economic and trade policies of its members by reducing their tariffs, taxes, duties and other barriers to economic exchanges. It aims to eventually create a free trade zone, a common system of external tariffs, a common energy market, and a customs union. Like the CSTO, the EurAsEC was controlled by Moscow, with Russia enjoying more votes than any other member.

But it was only in 2007 that some of EurAsEC's members - Russia, Belarus,



and Kazakhstan – overcame their diverging economic policies and alignments, committing to realize a Customs Union (CU). In 2010, they established a uniform external tariff and abolished most internal duties and customs controls between their countries, creating the free movement of goods. Citizens of one member can also enter another with only their internal passports. In May 2011, the CU members integrated the rules of the World Trade Organization with those of the Customs Union. On January 1, 2012, they created a Single Economic Space within the CU framework. By 2015, CU members expect to see the free movement of goods, capital, services and people across the three countries.

Most recently, Putin has been leading efforts to create a “Eurasian Union” among the former Soviet republics. The essential idea is that the three members would coordinate their foreign, economic, and other policies much more extensively and deeply than in the CU or CIS. In addition to pursuing deeper economic and political integration within the Eurasian Union, Putin has sought wider membership for the organization than in the trilateral Customs Union; to include countries like Ukraine that had declined to enter the CU. Russia has employed both

positive and negative measures to induce other countries to join these projects. Positive incentives have included pledges of loans and energy, while negative pressures have included natural gas cutoffs and the exploitation of frozen conflicts.

IMPLICATIONS: Although not normally classified as a “frozen conflict,” Russia’s deft occupation and annexation of Crimea has achieved the same goal of warning other countries against defying Moscow. Russian policy makers had previously relied on targeted energy assistance and cultivating various elites to keep Ukraine from moving toward the West. The failure of Russia’s soft-power strategy in Ukraine became evident with the Maidan revolution against the country’s Moscow-leaning leadership. Even after annexing Crimea, Russia has sought to keep open the threat of further military action in eastern Ukraine to deter Ukraine’s new pro-Western leaders from seeking NATO membership or taking other actions that threaten Russia’s regional agenda. Sustaining the conflict also exploits Europeans’ reluctance to offer NATO or EU membership to a country with an active territorial dispute. Moscow has pursued similar policies, with much success, toward Georgia, Azerbaijan, and Moldova.

The Crimean conquest could intimidate other Soviet republics to avoid overtly challenging Russia’s integration plans. Although neither government welcomed Moscow’s move, the leaders of both Belarus and Kazakhstan have declined to condemn Russia’s actions.

In an emergency March 5 meeting, the three presidents agreed not to postpone their planned May 1 signing of a new treaty launching the Eurasian Union next year.

Meanwhile, Armenia and Kyrgyzstan persist in expressing interest in joining the Customs Union and eventually the Eurasian Union. In September 2013, under Russian pressure, Armenia turned down an association agreement with the European Union, opting instead for the Customs Union with Belarus, Russia and Kazakhstan because of Armenia's reliance on Russia in many sectors, including energy, security, and trade. The road map for Armenia's membership in the Customs Union and the Single Economic Space was signed on December 24. Armenia's deputy foreign minister has said that Yerevan will be ready to join the Customs Union by mid-April. At the March 5 meeting, Putin said that the three members were ready to start the preparations for Armenia's joining the Eurasian Union.

The impoverished and isolated Kyrgyz Republic, having accepted Russian demands to end the lease on Manas Air Base, needs whatever economic help Russia can provide. Kyrgyzstan joins with Kazakhstan in seeking to relax restrictions on labor migration to Russia (Tajikistan is also deeply dependent on migrant remittances) and in wanting to balance China's growing economic presence in Central Asia by strengthening their economic ties with Russia. Fears about how the Western military withdrawal from Afghanistan might adversely affect regional security

dynamics have even kept traditionally reluctant Uzbekistan and Turkmenistan attentive to Moscow's regional concerns.

But Kyrgyzstan's economic development may be too weak to allow it to join the Customs Union and the Single Economic Space anytime soon. The Kyrgyz consider their integration roadmap unrealistically rapid and demand large subsidies and other benefits from Russia before joining. Conversely, Kazakhstan's oil and gas wealth mean it already receives substantial foreign direct investment by Western countries. The Kazakhs share with Azerbaijan, Georgia, and Turkey an interest in ensuring that some Caspian Sea energy resources reach European markets via the South Caucasus. Kazakhstani leaders oppose giving the Eurasian Union many political powers. None of these countries wants to encourage further Russian irredentism. The former Soviet republics, even those whose leaders did not initially seek independence, jealously guard their sovereignty and autonomy and have repeatedly outmaneuvered empire builders in Moscow.

CONCLUSIONS: By choosing to occupy and annex Crimea, Russia has accepted the burden of promoting the region's economic recovery even as the crisis and resulting Western sanctions have devalued the ruble, crashed the stock market, and caused extensive capital flight. These economic blows against Russia invariably harm Belarus and Kazakhstan. Even before the Ukraine crisis, Kazakhstan's central

bank had to devalue the national currency, the tenge, by more than twenty percent to match the declining value of the ruble, which the Russian authorities had managed. This will likely decrease Kazakhstan's interest in establishing a currency union any time soon. Invading and occupying neighbors' lands does not enhance Russia's soft power, imposes enormous burdens on the economy of Russia and its partners, and distracts Russian elites from making the union a more attractive enterprise.

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TAJIKISTAN'S GOVERNMENT ANXIOUS OVER CRIMEA

Oleg Salimov

The events in Ukraine and Crimea are a wake-up call for most of Central Asia's leaders. Although far away from Ukraine, Tajikistan is in the same zone of political and economic influence imposed by Russia. This implies that Tajikistan must consider the possibility of being subjected to a sequence of events similar to those in Crimea. The lack of a comprehensive reaction from Tajikistan's president, usually supportive of President Putin, to the situation in Crimea can be interpreted as fear that Tajikistan could potentially be absorbed by Russia in part or as a whole. An evaluation of Tajikistan's political and socioeconomic situation can provide clues to whether Tajikistan is susceptible to a Crimea scenario.

BACKGROUND: The disintegration of the Soviet Union culminated in the formal proclamation of independence of all Soviet republics. However, for Tajikistan, independence brought about insignificant changes regarding its political and economic dependency upon Russia. Economically, Tajikistan's population survives largely through remittances sent by labor migrants in Russia. According to Tajikistan's Ministry of Labor, Russia is the final destination for about 90 percent of Tajik labor migrants. According to Russia's trade mission in Tajikistan, Russia remains the main exporter of oil, gas, and heavy machinery to Tajikistan, while Russia is a major consumer of Tajik cotton and aluminum. The overall trade turnover between the two countries reached US\$ 1.2 billion in 2013. Russia's economic interests are heavily represented in Tajikistan's energy sector through the ownership of 75 percent of the Sangtuda-1 hydropower plant, one of the largest in Tajikistan.

Political dependency is manifested in Tajikistan's participation in Russia-led

agreements, acts, and unions. The largest are the Shanghai Cooperation Organization, the Eurasian Economic Community, and the Collective Security Treaty Organization. Russia deploys a military base in Tajikistan since 1993 as part of the agreement on Collective Peacekeeping Forces. After a series of bargaining debates, the Tajik government signed a deal in 2012 that extended the presence of the base until 2042. Among the Russian military installations in Tajikistan is the space monitoring station Window, which protects the central part of Russia and Siberia and is critical for Russia's defense system. Notably, one of the reasons for Russia's invasion of Crimea was the protection of Russia's naval base in Sevastopol.

Additional conditions that connect Tajikistan with Russia include, firstly, that Tajikistan is a subject of the Russian-Tajik dual citizenship agreement signed in 1995. As known, the populations of South Ossetia and Abkhazia were issued Russian passports in large numbers prior to,



during, and after the Russia-Georgia military conflict of 2008, providing Russia with a reason to protect its citizens abroad.

Secondly, the strong push by President Rakhmon, starting in 2007, to change names in favor of Tajik stylistics over Russian is not unequivocally supported by the general Tajik population, mainly due to the high labor migration to Russia. Russian-sounding names make for easier accommodation in Russia as explained by Tajikistan's Ministry of Justice. Thirdly, the status of Russian as the language of international communication is officially secured in Tajikistan's Constitution. During a meeting with Rakhmon last week, the Chairman of Russia's Federation Council, Valentina Matvienko, agreed to meet his request for 400 Russian language teachers as the demand for Russian in Tajikistan is increasing. Overall, regardless of occasional drawbacks in political relations between Russia and Tajikistan, Tajiks have developed positive perceptions of Russia founded primarily on their multi-level dependency upon it.

IMPLICATIONS: Coverage of the Crimea events in Tajikistan has a very limited character due to the strict control of the media and a scrupulous filtering of information. Until now, no Tajik officials, including the president,

have made any statements regarding Ukraine and the Crimea crisis. The silence on these important geopolitical developments can mainly be interpreted as an expression of uncertainty over Tajikistan's own future. For the authoritarian Tajik government, taking a clear stance on the situation in Crimea would not produce a favorable outcome.

Tajikistan's government is restrained from protesting Russia's actions in Crimea out of fear of losing an important partner. The government cannot support the pro-democracy upheaval in Ukraine because it opposed government repression of political dissent. However, taking a stance in defense of Russia's actions would worsen relations with the West and endanger financial assistance. Also, such support would be a *de facto* admission of Russia's right to increase its influence in the post-Soviet region, which can have far-reaching effects. For the Tajik regime, it could ultimately imply a loss of power and possibly the end of Tajikistan's independent statehood.

The prospect of a "Crimea scenario" in Tajikistan must be considered from two standpoints, including the interests of outside players and the presence of internal forces capable of initiating such a scenario. The post-Soviet experience demonstrates that Tajikistan has the potential for disintegration; it contains two regions which have previously expressed separatist intentions, although unsuccessfully so. These are the Badakhshan autonomous region in the

south, located in Pamir Mountains, and the Sughd region in the north, located in the ethnically mixed Fergana valley.

Badakhshan remains the most restless region in Tajikistan with the last anti-governmental actions taking place in 2012. Pamiris take pride in their distinct culture, language, and religion following the Ismaili Shiite branch of Islam, whereas other Tajiks are predominantly Sunnis. Politically, Badakhshan is very distant from Dushanbe and Moscow and presents a constant challenge to central government control. However, there is no viable player powerful enough to painlessly absorb Badakhshan, nor is there any open support for its separatist movement. China claimed and received about one percent of Tajikistan's land in Pamir in 2011-2013. However, radicalized Pamiris are not welcomed by Beijing, which is struggling with its own Uighur population whose region is adjacent to Pamir. The hypothetical combination of these two would be very troublesome for China. It is also questionable whether Pamiris would be interested in an association with China or any other country.

Rakhmon brutally suppressed the last anti-governmental uprising in Sughd in 1998. The armed confrontation was fueled by calls for secession by Makhmud Khudoberdyev, the leader of the armed opposition forces. Khudoberdyev relied on the support of a large population of Uzbeks living in Sughd and the possible involvement of other Uzbeks in the Fergana valley. Calls were made for support from Uzbekistan but were not heard. The

lack of support from within and outside prevented Sughd's separation.

However, in terms of geographical, political, and economic conditions, the Sughd region is more susceptible to separation than any other Tajik region. Sughd is located in the Fergana valley where ethnic Tajiks frequently intermix with Uzbeks and differ from other Tajiks in culture and dialect. Located in the north, Sughd is attached to the rest of Tajikistan only through a narrow mountain route inaccessible during most of the year. It can be blocked relatively easy, isolating the region from the rest of the country. Yet, possessing over 70 percent of all Tajik production enterprises, Sughd is the main industrial region in Tajikistan. Finally, located closer to the center of transport connections with other Central Asian republics, Sughd is in a superior geopolitical and economic position compared to the rest of Tajikistan.

Still, Sughd and Badakhshan lack the distinct and coordinated separatist movements, ideology, and resources which were present in Crimea. Tajikistan has also undergone an intensive out-migration of ethnic Russians. As of 2010, only 0.5 percent of Tajikistan's population consisted of ethnic Russians – a drop from 7.6 percent in 1989, according to Tajikistan's State Statistics agency. This is a very low number compared to the 58 percent ethnic Russians composing Crimea's population and insufficient for wide-spread pro-Russian demonstrations as the ones seen in Crimea.

CONCLUSIONS: Tajikistan's crumbling economy, a low sense of national pride among Tajiks, insignificant support from developed countries, and a distance from the world's leading democracies could eventually contribute to the repetition of a "Crimea scenario" in Tajikistan. Without doubt, Russia has created a potentially dangerous precedent which can be applied in a number of post-Soviet republics. Those experiencing stagnation in their political and economic development, like Tajikistan, are more vulnerable to violations of their sovereignty and potentially loss of territory.

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TURKEY'S GÜLEN CONTROVERSY SPILLS OVER TO AZERBAIJAN

Mina Muradova

The conflict between Turkish Prime Minister Recep Tayyip Erdogan and the Islamic Hizmet movement's leader Fethullah Gülen has spread to Azerbaijan. A scandal erupted in Turkey in December 2013, when police arrested 52 suspects on various corruption charges, including the sons of three government ministers and the general manager of the state-owned Halkbank. The operation detained people close to the Turkish Prime Minister.

Erdogan termed it a plot by the Hizmet movement and its exiled leader Gülen to overthrow the government. It was considered a response to the government's decision last November to close in 2015 the dershane, a network of private tutoring centers, most of which are run by the Gülen movement. Educational centers reportedly provide enormous financial resources to the group but also help it recruit new members and allies in government.

In late February, both government and opposition media reported that a similar "parallel structure" existed in Azerbaijan. The diplomatic missions of both countries reportedly provided the government with a list of local Gülen followers. In early March, emails showing ties between Azerbaijani officials and Gülen were leaked to the media. One of them was related to Elnur Aslanov, an official of President Ilham Aliyev's Administration.

"The Turkish government is concerned that the Hizmet movement is expanding in Azerbaijan through its wide network of educational establishments and businesses, as well as by placing figures loyal to the Hizmet movement in high-level posts in government," the Musavat daily reported on February 28.

In Azerbaijan, Gülenists have been presented as a moderate socio-religious movement, but indifferent to politics. Local authorities had concerns about this but tolerated the movement thanks to its high quality educational system, including 13 prep schools, 11 high schools, and the Qafqaz (Caucasus) University that were considered as the main part of the Hizmet Movement. In 1992, Azerbaijan became the first country outside of Turkey where the movement opened its schools. Last year, the education institutions were transferred to the State Oil Company of Azerbaijan, but preserved curriculum, management and teacher staff with no changes.

Most people cannot afford to pay the fees, so it is mainly the children of businessmen and the elite who go there. This raises suspicions that the schools are raising a new "golden" generation with Gülen's values.

In early March, the names of officials linked with Gülen started appearing in the media. The news portal Minval

called Aslanov a "patron of the Azerbaijani branch of Gülen followers."

In an interview with APA News Agency on March 1, Aslanov said that "slanders against me and a number of senior officials, who are always committed to the statehood course of the national leader Heydar Aliyev and loyal to President Ilham Aliyev, the attempts to link us with Nurcular sect are the results of deformed imagination and groundless." Aslanov stated that the period of "political myths" ended in Azerbaijan long ago, and that society is able to differentiate between tales and reality.

Aslanov was sacked on March 17 after a decision by President Aliyev, but the document did not name a reason for his dismissal. He headed the political analysis and information department in the President's administration since 2007, and is the son of Rabiyyat Aslanova, a ruling party MP, and reportedly has ties to the influential "grey cardinal" Ramiz Mekhtiyev, head of the President's Administration. He was responsible for supervising the Center for Strategic Studies, some leading pro-governmental media outlets, and the pro-governmental youth organization Ireli. Two days later, Aslanov's department was closed and merged with the Department of public-political issues.

Some media reports have termed the developments Ali Hasanov's victory over political rivals. Before Aslanov's dismissal, Ali Hasanov, who heads the Department for public-political issues in the presidential office, called for public vigilance. At a religious affairs

conference in Baku on March 7, he stated that some religious movements and missionary organizations are trying to establish themselves in Azerbaijan and to create an extensive network in order to realize their interests. Hasanov said that "the representatives of those trends should know that attempts to adapt the state policy to their interests will fail."

The issue has become highly controversial in Azerbaijan. Some political observers noted that Aslanov and others implicated by the leaked emails probably had nothing to do with Gülen.

According to Arif Hajili, a high-ranking member of the opposition party Musavat, "if a letter addressed to Gülen is a reason for firing, it is very strange because before there were a lot of publications about governmental officials linked to Kurdish PKK that created problems in relations with Turkey, but no measures were taken. Here, a person was sacked just based on an email."

Arif Yunus, a political analyst and the author of a book on Islam in Azerbaijan, termed the email "rubbish" because it was written with several Turkish grammar mistakes as well as errors from a religious point of view. "I don't believe that Aslanov is a Nurchu (a Gülen follower). It is a result of razborka (battle in Russian slang). I mean it is a power struggle between groups inside the government ... It is impossible to trust letters fabricated in a computer. I can't say what is the reason for the struggle between Aslanov and Hasanov, but the

campaign against the Gülen movement has been used for fighting against political rivals," Yunus said in an interview to Meydan TV.

KYRGYZSTAN'S ATA MEKEN PARTY BREAKS UP PARLIAMENTARY COALITION TO DISMISS PRIME MINISTER

Jamil Payaz

On March 25, Kyrgyzstan's Prime Minister Jantoro Satybaldiev resigned following the dissolution of the parliamentary coalition, which was triggered by the withdrawal of the Ata Meken party on March 18. Ata Meken accused Satybaldiev of, inter alia, corruption issues while he headed a state agency that reconstructed Osh and Jalal-Abad after the ethnic clashes in 2010. Ata Meken's leader boasted later that his party got rid of the government with which the public was dissatisfied.

There are various speculations as to the motives of Ata-Meken's decision. Many consider the action as an attempt by the party to resurface on the political scene ahead of the parliamentary elections scheduled for 2015. The party won the lowest number of seats in parliament in 2011, despite the popularity of its leader Omurbek Tekebaev, who authored the Constitution introducing what is considered the first semi-parliamentary system in Central Asia. Equally important, the party has also been struggling to recover its reputation after its opponents branded it as a party of "marauders," claiming its members raided the properties of the former president's family.

Over the last year, Tekebaev has aggressively exploited the issue of the Kumtor gold mine to attack

Satybaldiev's government. Eloquently using populist rhetoric, he contended that Kyrgyzstan should own at least 67 percent of the shares held by the mine's operator Centerra, claiming that the government took too soft a stance in the negotiations and urged not to be afraid of renouncing the existing agreement. However, Ata Meken was less enthusiastic about supporting Respublica, the party of Tekebaev's rival former Prime Minister Omurbek Babanov, when it tried for several months to gather MP signatures to call for a vote of no confidence in Satybaldiev in relation to largely the same issues.

It is not clear what Ata Meken gained from exiting the coalition in the long run since President Atambaev, through his SDPK party, suggested that Vice Prime Minister Joomart Otorbaev be appointed Prime Minister of the future cabinet. Although nominally an Ata Meken member, Otorbaev has abstained from political intrigues and was firmly moving ahead with strategic projects buttressed by the president, including the creation of a Bishkek-based parity enterprise with Centerra, accession to the Russia-led Customs Union, the sale of KyrgyzGaz to Gazprom, and the tentative decision to sell half the shares in Manas International Airport to Russia's Rosneft. Following his appointment as acting Prime Minister on March 26,

Otorbaev reaffirmed his commitment to the deal reached between his predecessor and Centerra, and no deviation is expected from the course President Atambaev has taken. Therefore, it remains to be seen how Tekebaev will react to these controversial issues closer to the elections. They are likely to become politicized further, especially due to increasing fears among the public that the transfer of state assets to Russian companies undermines Kyrgyzstan's independence.

Former Finance Minister Akylbek Japarov argues that the five factions with a relatively equal number of seats in parliament will produce only a technocratic government, which will be further crippled by the need to respect the views of the coalition faction leaders and the president. Although supported by the President, Satybaldiev had no united team, as the coalition factions have divided among themselves the ministerial posts, as well as state agencies. President Atambaev has called on the factions to stop this practice, which he said leads to "political corruption."

SDPK has invited all five factions to enter a coalition, but MPs believe that the same factions, SDPK, Ar Namys, and Ata Meken, are likely to form a new coalition. Republica unequivocally wants to bring back its leader Babanov to the post of Prime Minister, despite the fact that size of the party's parliamentary faction has

shrunk. A dozen of its members have organized into MP groups, with some even revoking their party membership and expressing interest in joining SDPK or other parties outside parliament. Currently, it has 12 seats as opposed to the initial 23.

In fact, all factions except for SDPK have become smaller with the creation of a number of MP groups, such as Onuguu (Progress), Democrats, Bir-Bol (Stay United), and Yntymak (Harmony). The other opposition party, Ata Jurt, is facing internal obstacles to join the coalition, since three of its MPs were stripped of their mandates after spending a year in prison and two have been arrested on charges of corruption. It thus seems that SDPK's attempt to form a broader coalition is not likely to materialize, and the future coalition will not be immune to impulses of faction leaders like Tekebaev at least until the next elections in 2015.

Edil Baisalov, a well-known public activist, argues that this system leaves the government and legislative branches negligent to the actions they take. He says the government should be formed of MPs to ensure their accountability for decisions they make, and cabinet members should return to parliament after their work ends to make sure they are held accountable to their voters.

GEORGIA'S FORMER PRESIDENT REFUSES TO BE INTERROGATED BY PROSECUTOR'S OFFICE

Eka Janashia

On March 22, Georgia's prosecutor's office announced its intention to summon Georgia's former President Mikheil Saakashvili for questioning as a witness in multiple criminal cases. Saakashvili should have appeared before prosecutors on March 27 but he refused to comply with the agency's demand and even declined its later offer to question him via Skype.

Cases where the former president is wanted for questioning include, among others, the death in 2005 of former Prime Minister Zurab Zhvania; the halved prison terms through presidential pardon in November, 2008, of four convicts sentenced for the 2006 Sandro Girgvliani murder; the previous government's attempts to put Cartu Bank, founded by former Prime Minister Bidzina Ivanishvili, in bankruptcy in late 2011 and early 2012; the police raid on Tbilisi-based Imedi TV station in November, 2007; and the alleged misspending of GEL 8.83 million from the Special State Protection Service (SSPS) funds between 2009 and 2012.

On March 17, in an interview aired at Imedi TV, Ivanishvili said that he has been disappointed by President Giorgi Margvelashvili and no longer maintains "informal relations" with him. "[Margvelashvili] has shown principally different features and character after the [presidential] election," he said and disclosed various differences between them.

Margvelashvili's decision to start using the glass-dome presidential palace constructed during Saakashvili's presidency was one of the reasons for the rift between the old friends. According to Ivanishvili, Margvelashvili had previously insisted that the palace is a symbol of "violence, evil and indecency," but then changed his mind and started holding official meetings there.

The former PM's statements gave rise to speculations about a possible split within the Georgian Dream (GD) coalition. On the next day, however, public attention was instead directed to a YouTube video titled "Saakashvili killed Mr. Zurab Zhvania." The footage uploaded by an anonymous user allegedly depicts a number of injuries on the bodies of Zhvania and Raul Usupov, a person who died together with the ex-PM (see the October 10, 2013 issue of the CACI Analyst).

The opposition United National Movement (UNM) claims that the video was published by the government itself to curtail its own incapacity and signs of internal divisions. It argues that the law enforcers already has all the materials necessary to conclude the investigation but it is lucrative for GD to raise new questions from time to time. To end long-lasting speculations over the case, the government should publish all

materials regarding Zhvania's death, UNM insists.

Zhvania's return to the spotlight was shortly replaced by the news that Saakashvili was summoned for interrogation. The international reaction was quick. The U.S. Department of State stated, "no one is above the law, but launching multiple simultaneous investigations involving a former president raises legitimate concerns about political retribution, particularly when legal and judicial institutions are still fragile." Štefan Füle, EU Commissioner for Enlargement and the European Neighborhood, also expressed concern over Saakashvili's subpoena. "No one is above law but European practice [and] standards must be followed scrupulously," he wrote.

Several civil society groups - International Society for Fair Elections and Democracy (ISFED); Transparency International Georgia; and Georgian Democracy Initiative and Civil Development Agency (CIDA) - issued a joint statement saying that some circumstances related to the summoning of Saakashvili may damage the investigation's objectivity and pleaded to the authorities not to trigger suspicions that the process is politically motivated.

In an interview with Rustavi 2 TV, Saakashvili termed his summoning by the Prosecutor's office part of an "Ivanishvili-Putin game" and unveiled details regarding his departure from Georgia.

"According to senior U.S. and EU officials, there was a direct order from

Putin to arrest me", Saakashvili said. During a visit to Brussels in November 2013, Saakashvili said he was told by the President of the European Commission, José Manuel Barroso, that his arrest would undermine Georgia's Euro-Atlantic integration and that he should leave the country in order to save Georgia's Western path. While he considers his recent vocal support for Ukraine to imply a risk of moves against him by the Kremlin, he's not going to make "Putin's dreams come true," Saakashvili said.

When Saakashvili did not appear before the prosecutor's office on March 27, the agency announced that it would offer the ex-president to answer questions via Skype with no need to travel to Tbilisi.

After speaking with Saakashvili over the phone, his ally in the UNM and former mayor of Tbilisi, Gigi Ugulava, said the former president is ready to testify as a witness via video link only before the court but not before the prosecutors alone. Such an interrogation will take place if any of the cases that the prosecutor's office is investigating goes to trial, Ugulava said.

Prime Minister Irakli Gharibashvili termed Saakashvili's refusal to comply a step of man afraid to answer tough questions. In response, UNM insisted that the Prosecutor's office is still informally run by the former chief prosecutor with criminal record, Otar Partskhaladze, which undermines the agency's credibility.

It is becoming clear that the U.S. government's recent advice for the

Georgian government “to leave the past in the past,” has not been observed (see the 03/05/2014 issue of the CACI Analyst). However, more alarmingly, the ongoing tensions may pose an obstacle to concluding Georgia’s Association Agreement with the EU.

PRESIDENT ATAMBAYEV VISITS KAZAKHSTAN

Arslan Sabyrbekov

On March 26, Kyrgyzstan's President Almazbek Atambayev paid a one day visit to Kazakhstan. The sides used this meeting to discuss ways of further strengthening bilateral relations and ways to cooperate in the framework of integration processes taking place in Eurasia.

The meeting took place in Almaty, Kazakhstan's largest and financially strongest city. The heads of the two states discussed a number of issues of bilateral concern, including trade, investment, water and energy, as well as aspects of cultural and humanitarian cooperation. Both presidents put special emphasis on the activities of the joint Kazakh-Kyrgyz Investment Fund, created in 2011 with the primary objective of assisting Kyrgyzstan in its economic development. Kazakhstan's President Nursultan Nazarbayev stated that the "Kazakh-Kyrgyz Investment Fund plays one of the leading roles in enhancing bilateral economic relations and since its creation, Kazakhstan's trade with Kyrgyzstan has increased by 41 percent, therefore exceeding one billion dollars." President Nazarbayev also informed the delegates that over the course of Kyrgyzstan's independence, Kazakh businessmen invested over one billion dollars into the economy of the neighboring state.

In turn, President Atambayev thanked his Kazakh colleague for his kind invitation, noting that Kazakhstan is a leading country in the region in terms of its impressive socio-economic

development and its tremendously important contribution to ensuring regional peace and stability.

Local experts made different assumptions after Atambayev's visit to Kazakhstan. Some believe that the visit took place on the request of the Russian Federation with the objective of accelerating Kyrgyzstan's entry into the Customs Union and encourage it to fully join Kazakhstan in recognizing the recent referendum in the Crimean peninsula as legitimate.

According to Guljigit Isakov, Director of the Bishkek based NGO Fair Elections, "in terms of its foreign policy towards Kyrgyzstan, Russia delivers its messages through Astana, which for example remains to be the case regarding Bishkek's entry into the Customs Union under preferable terms." Isakov added that the meeting might have focused on Bishkek's two diverging positions on the situation in Ukraine, where it first officially recognized the current Ukrainian political leadership and also recently made a surprising statement that the referendum in Crimea was legal and demonstrates the peoples' democratic choice, unlike Astana which fully supports Moscow's position over the Ukrainian crisis. Isakov stated that Bishkek is on its way to losing sovereignty and might turn into a modern type colony.

Alikbek Djekshenkulov, Kyrgyzstan's former Minister of Foreign Affairs and leader of the opposition political party

Akyikat, has also strongly condemned Bishkek's ambivalent position on Ukraine and called on the country's leadership to pursue a stable and predictable foreign policy. According to Djekshenkulov, "in a globalized world and as a small country, Kyrgyzstan should conduct a multi-vector foreign policy and pursue its national interests." Djekshenkulov justified Astana's position on Ukraine as a preventive measure for preserving its territorial integrity and as yet another protection from Russian pressure, which can take place in the future.

Other local experts believe that the situation in Ukraine was not a major subject discussed during the meeting between the two presidents in Almaty. Azamat Akeleev, a Bishkek based civil activist and economist, expressed an unexpected point of view by suggesting that during the meeting President Nazarbayev could have called on his Kyrgyz counterpart to refrain from joining the Russia-led Customs Union. Akeleev believes that "President

Nazarbayev wants to find a common position with Kyrgyzstan since the next project of the Russian Federation after the Customs Union is the establishment of a free economic zone. This project is alarming to Kazakhstan since it will severely undermine the country's economic independence." According to Akeleev, Astana is looking for options to diminish Moscow's influence and pressure and has recently discussed Kazakhstan's accession to the World Trade Organization with President Obama. Kazakhstan's prospective WTO membership was also raised at the last G20 Summit in Saint Petersburg, where President Nazarbayev personally appealed to the heads of states and governments to support his country's quick accession into the Organization.

Bishkek has already developed and submitted its terms to entry the Customs Union, which contains around four hundred preferences and is awaiting the next round of discussions.