



Center for Strategic & International Studies
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CSIS Georgia Forum Meeting Notes on:
Caucasus After September 11
with

Dr. Asim Mollazade

Member of the International Affairs Commission of the Azeri parliament
and a Delegate to Azerbaijan's Parliamentary Delegation to the Council of Europe

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What will be the long-term implications of the war on global terrorism on the Caucasus? The conflict-ridden and mountainous Caucasus countries are especially fertile ground for terrorists to find shelter. Are terrorists based in the Caucasus already? What measures will these countries take to prevent escalation of regional conflicts? Is this an appropriated time for the international community to focus on the resolution of the Nagorno-Karabakh conflict? How safe will oil and gas pipelines out of the Caucasus be?

At our next meeting, we will discuss these issues with Dr. Asim Mollazade, who is a member of the International Affairs Commission of the Azeri parliament and a delegate to Azerbaijan's parliamentary delegation to the Council of Europe.

In 1992, Dr. Mollazade was part of a presidential advisory group that worked for President Elchibey. During this time he was the director of the International Relations Department of the President's office and was appointed a special envoy to Nagorno-Karabakh. Following the ousting of President Elchibey in 1993, Dr. Mollazade became deputy chairman for foreign affairs in the Popular Front Party of Azerbaijan. In 1994, he founded the Democratic Development Foundation. He is the president of the Euro-Atlantic Center, which he founded in 1998. The center is dedicated to furthering Azerbaijan's entry to the Euro-Atlantic Center.

- Azerbaijan and Armenia's joining the Council of Europe has changed the South Caucasus
- After the collapse of the Soviet Union there was a security vacuum, which in turn created a humanitarian disaster
- A Hizbollah cell was found in Azerbaijan
- Islamic charity groups have organized Wahhabi groups in Azerbaijan
- An important goal for all Caucasus countries is building democratic institutions to ensure free and fair elections, and a free media
- The press in Azerbaijan is not doing well in terms of having the resources to publish (money to buy ink and newspaper) and also in terms of harassment from the government

Dr. Mollazade's perception of U.S. assistance for democracy

- U.S. help to the 3 South Caucasus countries from 1992-1997 was a total of \$1.3 billion
 - \$640 million to Armenia
 - \$560 million to Georgia

- \$100 million to Azerbaijan
- Obviously there is a disparity of assistance to the region
- 907 violates U.S. national security interests
- The U.S. (through the CIA and FBI) has cooperated with Azerbaijan in thwarting the activities of Islamic groups in Azerbaijan

Settling the Dispute Between Azerbaijan and Armenia (Nagorno-Karabakh)

- It must be solved within the framework of international law
- Karabakh as a part of Azerbaijan should have self-rule, and at the same time have links to Armenia and provide security for the Armenian minority
- Armenia must recognize the territorial integrity of Azerbaijan
- Georgia is also an important ally for Azerbaijan
- Turkey plays an important role for security in the Caucasus
 - The U.S. should help solve the economic problem in Turkey seeing as how Turkey is the U.S.' largest and most important ally in the region
 - Israel should be involved in a security framework for the region also. The security framework should be supported by the United States, Turkey, and Israel
- 80,000 Armenian citizens live in Turkey, they went there for the economic opportunities
- In the Caucasus we need an institution for free and fair elections
 - The U.S. should play a leading role in this
 - Send U.S. scholars to the region to help build an educational system
- Azerbaijan needs a pragmatic leader to lead reforms, after Aliyev's term is finished
 - There also needs to be a peaceful, democratic change of power

Q&A

Concerning succession and stability in the Caucasus, what happens when the leaders of the Caucasus states die?

- There are four big parties in Azerbaijan
- There is a split in all of the major parties
- It is not important who will be the next president of Azerbaijan, but rather how he will become president

Today (10.11.01) Russia's Duma passed a resolution condemning Georgia for harboring Chechen terrorists. Later in the day, in response, the Georgian parliament passed a resolution demanding the removal of Russian peacekeepers (from the Russian military base Gudauta in Abkhazia). What does all this mean?

- The situation in Georgia is very dangerous
- The major impediment to security in the Caucasus is the Russian military bases, including those in Armenia
- The U.S. should build a security umbrella under Turkey and Israel

Would you support an agreement for the Nagorno Karabakh conflict that involved the use of corridors to connect the Armenian populated areas to Armenia and the Azeri populated areas to Azerbaijan?

- I support a staged settlement
- No one in Azerbaijan will accept any settlement that gives Karabakh to Armenia

Will movement towards a settlement in one of the Caucasus conflicts (S. Ossetia, Abkhazia, etc.) start momentum to resolve the other conflicts? Which conflict is likely to be resolved first?

- The U.S., along with Russia can play a major role in settling these conflicts
- Russia is interested in using these conflicts as a tool to maintain its military presence in the region
- The Caucasus states need to cooperate with Russia and stop this zero-sum game
- The Russian military presence in Armenia is problematic vis-à-vis the Nagorno Karabakh situation

Why would Russia be interested in solving the other conflicts in the Caucasus before resolving the situation in Chechnya? Wouldn't Russia be afraid of setting a precedent (for example: Russia may support the independence of Abkhazia, but at the same time demands that its own territorial integrity be respected vis-à-vis Chechnya) that would be contrary to their interests in Chechnya?

- Putin wants a new pragmatic policy in the Caucasus
- Some ex-military and intelligence people may not share this view

Are you satisfied with the oil fund or should it be more transparent?

- It is out of parliamentary discussion now, therefore there is no transparency
- There is no opportunity for legislative power to have control

How much can Russia exploit the events of September 11? Would Russia intervene in Georgia to prevent the building of pipelines and to fight the Chechens?

- Georgia has the opportunity to resist Russian pressure
- Azerbaijan must help Georgia, also Turkey must send troops to the Russian military bases the Russia has and will withdraw from
- Again, a new security framework would be a new role for Turkey and Israel