

## NOTE FROM THE EDITOR-IN-CHIEF

### Nasimi Aghayev

Events in the Caucasus have continued to offer observers choice issues for analysis. On everyone's mind, of course, is the lack of development in the normalization of relations between Turkey and Armenia. The two sticking-points – the “Armenian genocide” issue and that of acknowledging Azerbaijan's call for first making progress toward a resolution of the Nagorno-Karabakh conflict – have remained major obstacles in the way forward. The “genocide” obstacle has been strengthened by the statement of the Constitutional Court of Armenia that the application of the protocols signed in October 2009 should comply with the paragraph 11 of the Armenian Declaration of Independence. The said declaration determines for Armenia a goal of achieving the international recognition of the “genocide” on the one hand, and raises territorial claims against Turkey on the other hand. Ankara's reaction to the statement has been quite harsh, since such an understanding on the part of Armenia of the normalization process wouldn't allow for setting up the bilateral “historical commission” envisaged in the protocols – an issue, which has been regarded by Turkey as the major achievement in the whole process.

Second, the hype surrounding the “resetting” of U.S.-Russian relations has also not yielded any substantial fruit. It has, however, given South Caucasian countries cause for concern, as the Obama Administration slowly – but surely – turns its gaze toward other parts of the world, and onto other global issues. As a result, Russia has now arguably achieved a greater degree of confidence, assured that the “West” is kept at arm's length from its sphere of influence in its neighboring countries. As our [Caucasus Update](#) pointed out, the other international issues to which the Obama Administration's focus has shifted in the New Year include (i) Iran's nuclear ambitions and (ii) the protracted conflict in Afghanistan. In particular, Azerbaijan will keep a close eye on developments in Iran for the obvious reasons of national security and the large Azerbaijani population there. This situation – akin to the Nagorno-Karabakh conflict, Russia-U.S. relations and the Armenia-Turkey protocols – is on hold for the moment. Although these issues seem quiet for the time being, the potential for sparks to suddenly begin flying is ever present.

Events within Russia's own borders have continued to spiral out of control: the situation in the North Caucasus remains volatile after the attempted assassination of Ingushetia's president Yunus-bek Yevkurov, and Moscow has since been scrambling to find a solution - a task, which will unlikely get easier even after the appointment of a “federal-level” leader in charge of North Caucasian affairs.

Our Winter 2010 issue, then, allows us to analyze these cases in point while we catch our collective breath. Russia figures prominently in our current issue: One paper centers on the concept of Russia's attempts to influence its neighbors, and a second on its National Security Strategy of Russia. Furthermore, another paper takes a profound look at language rights in Tatarstan, while a comment tries to illuminate the peaceful co-existence of the two major religions in Kazan and the issue's interview is with one of the leading scholars on conflict in the North Caucasus. Finally, we present, among others, reviews of the books dedicated to the 2008 war between Georgia and Russia, and to the comparative study of the power politics in the US and Russia. An in-depth assessment of the state transformation in Georgia and Armenia, and an analysis of the prospects of turning EU

into an important international actor after the ratification of the Lisbon Treaty are presented alongside the solid evaluation of the reforms in Central and Eastern Europe since the fall of the “Iron Curtain”.

There is also some positive CRIA-related news to report: We have now officially been added to another influential academic database – the EBSCOhost – and have also signed a license agreement with the academic database GALE (part of Cengage Learning). In addition, we have also formed a new partnership with the largest foreign policy web portal in Germany, [www.aussenpolitik.net](http://www.aussenpolitik.net), which belongs to the German Council on Foreign Relations (DGAP). And, as our readership increases, the launch of our redesigned web page will make the CRIA a user-friendlier forum of scholarship.

As always, it is with sincere pleasure that we invite you to explore our new issue. We look forward to your comments, questions and future written contributions, and we thank you for choosing our unique Review as a source of information on affairs that affect the South Caucasus.