

Washington Pushes the Reset Button with Moscow: Obama Administration Renews U.S. Claims On Former Soviet Space

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U.S. Secretary of State Hillary Clinton completed a four-day, five-nation tour of Eastern Europe and the South Caucasus by holding a press conference with Georgia's volatile president Mikheil Saakashvili and delivering what in effect was a harsh ultimatum to Russia.

A stern and even provocative admonishment which clearly defines the narrow parameters within which the current U.S. administration has "pushed the reset button" with Moscow.

As Clinton's own comments best illustrate, Russia is a partner of the United States when it assists in levying onerous sanctions against Iran, provides support for the nine-year American and NATO war in Afghanistan (and neighboring Pakistan), and timidly accedes to the Pentagon taking over military bases and stationing interceptor missile batteries along Russia's Western flank from the Baltic Sea to the Black Sea.

But should Russia object, however perfunctorily, however reticently, to Washington shearing the sheep too closely by recruiting former Soviet states and neighboring nations into its political, economic, energy and military blocs, then Clinton and the administration she is the foreign policy point person for will not hesitate to rebuff and even gratuitously insult its Russian "partner."

Speaking in the Georgian capital of Tbilisi and reiterating the demand that Russian troops evacuate Abkhazia and South Ossetia, ceding both to the less than tender designs of American client Saakashvili, the U.S.'s top diplomat stated, "That is the rebuke (to Russia) that no one can dispute." [1]

With Saakashvili, who graduated from New York's Columbia University (Zbigniew Brzezinski's haunts) on a State Department fellowship in the 1990s, to her side, on July 5 Clinton all but ordered Russia to remove its troops from Abkhazia and South Ossetia: "I came to Georgia with a clear message from President Obama and myself. The United States is steadfast in its commitment to Georgia's sovereignty and territorial integrity. The United States does not recognize spheres of influence. President Obama and I have also communicated this message directly to our Russian counterparts, most recently during our meetings in Washington on June 24th....As I told the [Georgian] president, President Obama and I and other American officials raise our concerns about the invasion and occupation with Russian counterparts on a consistent basis. And it is very important for us that we do so, because we are very frank in asserting our concerns and our ongoing support for Georgia's

sovereignty and territorial integrity.” [2]

Saakashvili seized on her words, crowing that Obama and Clinton were the first major American officials to use the word invasion in lieu of earlier terms that almost sound diplomatic in tone. The Georgian leader said: “President Obama was the first one to call a spade a spade, basically, to say it was an invasion. Because before, as you remember, the term ‘disproportionate use of force’ was used....President Obama was the first one to use the term.” [3]

That the U.S. invaded and still militarily occupies Afghanistan and Iraq was not mentioned by either official. That Georgia has supplied 2,900 troops for both wars wasn’t mentioned either.

At an earlier town hall meeting in Tbilisi Clinton stated her government was “appalled, and totally rejected” the Russian argument that it was protecting the lives of its citizens in the two South Caucasus republics. “We, the United States, was appalled, and totally rejected the invasion and occupation of Georgian territory. I was in the Senate at the time, and, along with my colleagues and the prior Administration, made that view very clear. We continue to speak out, as I have on this trip, against the continuing occupation.” [4]

She reached into her quiver for the familiar verbal projectiles appropriate to the occasion: Acting as guarantor for Georgia’s claims on Abkhazia and South Ossetia, which have never been part of post-Soviet Georgia, and branding Russia’s defense of the two republics as invasion and occupation. Clinton, an attorney like Saakashvili, completed her indictment of Russia with the repeated asseveration that it is not entitled to a sphere of influence on its borders and in territory that had been its own for centuries.

Despite Clinton’s claim to the contrary, the United States most decidedly recognizes spheres of influence. In its own hemisphere – the entirety of it – in the South Caucasus and everywhere else on the planet. Its own sphere of influence and those of its allies and client states. It is the policy presented in the Aesopian apologue from which the expression the lion’s share is derived: What’s mine is mine, what’s yours is ours and what’s ours is mine.

The Ultimate Sphere: The Earth

Two years after being catapulted from the Illinois state legislature (where few outside his Chicago district had heard of him) into the U.S. Senate, Barack Obama spoke at the Chicago Council on Global Affairs (until the year before the Chicago Council on Foreign Relations) and less than two years before becoming president elucidated his notion of spheres of influence (and political Manichaeism and messianism):

“I dismiss the cynics who say that this new century cannot be another when, in the words of President Franklin Roosevelt, we lead the world in battling immediate evils and promoting the ultimate good. I still believe that America is the last, best hope of Earth.”

“We must maintain the strongest, best-equipped military in the world in order to defeat and deter conventional threats....I strongly support the expansion of our ground forces by adding 65,000 soldiers to the Army and 27,000 Marines....No President should ever hesitate to use force – unilaterally if necessary – to protect ourselves and our vital interests when we are attacked or imminently threatened.”

“The American moment has not passed. The American moment is here. And like generations before us, we will seize that moment, and begin the world anew.” [5]

One can only imagine the response of the White House, the State Department and the American mass media should a member of the upper house of parliament – on his way to being head of state, moreover – of Russia or any other nation make comparable claims.

As for what Clinton as senator from New York State and now as secretary of state branded Russia’s invasion of South Ossetia, the following is from a pro-government Georgian new source at the moment the real invasion, that ordered by Washington’s client regime in Tbilisi, commenced:

“A senior official from the Georgian Ministry of Defense said Georgia has ‘decided to restore constitutional order in the entire region’ of South Ossetia.” [6]

The “restoring of constitutional order” was attempted with heavy artillery barrages, armored assaults and onslaughts by jet fighters and American Huey helicopters. It followed seven days of Georgian bombardment of South Ossetia, which began the very day after a sixteen-day military exercise, Immediate Response 2008, was completed in the country. The exercise was conducted under NATO’s Partnership for Peace program and led by 1,000 U.S. Marines. Many of the American troops stayed behind with their equipment during the five-day Georgian-Russian war.

Three weeks earlier Secretary of State Condoleezza Rice was in Georgia and vowed to “get Russian forces to withdraw from the country ASAP,” [7] a reference to a small handful of peacekeepers that had been in South Ossetia and Abkhazia since the early 1990s. If Mikheil Saakashvili is ever tried for war crimes, as he richly deserves to be, his defense could be that he wasn’t acting alone and in fact was only following orders, the Nuremberg precedent notwithstanding.

What Appalls Hillary Clinton And What Does Not

Much of the South Ossetian capital of Tskhinvali lay in smouldering ruins and many of its residents dead in the opening hours of the war launched to coincide with the opening ceremony of the Olympics in Beijing.

After Russia responded to the deadly blitzkrieg against South Ossetia, the majority of whose residents hold Russian passports, the Pentagon airlifted U.S. Marine-trained Georgian troops deployed to Iraq at the time back home for the fighting with Russia. “The U.S. military began flying 2,000 Georgian troops home from Iraq on Sunday [August 10], military officials said, after the Georgians recalled the soldiers following the outbreak of fighting with Russia in the breakaway province of South Ossetia.” [8]

Then Senator Hillary Clinton was not “appalled” by and found no reason to “totally reject” the above developments two years ago. In fact by publicly and fervently supporting them she was complicit in what could easily have escalated into a direct U.S.-Russia confrontation, a conflict between the world’s two major nuclear powers.

After the war ended and both to reward the Saakashvili regime for providing Washington a

proxy war with Russia and to compensate it for not having received a NATO Membership Action Plan earlier in 2008 at the bloc's summit in Romania, in January of 2009 Clinton's predecessor Condoleezza Rice signed a specially crafted United States-Georgia Charter on Strategic Partnership. In December of 2008 NATO provided Georgia an unprecedented Annual National Program for the same reasons.

In the same month the pro-U.S. government of Viktor Yushchenko in Ukraine received a comparable pact, the United States-Ukraine Charter on Strategic Partnership, and NATO also granted it an Annual National Program, the second as a substitute for the Alliance's Membership Action Plan. South Ossetia and Russia had accused the Yushchenko administration of covertly providing weaponry and troops to Georgia for the war in August.

Hillary Clinton began her recently concluded tour in Ukraine on June 2 where she addressed the Strategic Partnership Commission, which was established last year as a formal mechanism to implement the United States-Ukraine Charter on Strategic Partnership.

In the interim Yushchenko was eliminated (in fact humiliated) in the first round of this year's presidential election, only receiving 5 per cent of the vote in January.

The rejection of Yushchenko and his staunchly pro-Washington policies was also an apparent blow to U.S. designs for the country. But that didn't deter Clinton, in her visit to Kiev, from in many ways speaking as though the change in leadership had not occurred. (Yushchenko's spouse, Kathy, a former State Department and Reagan White House official, is from Chicago, whose suburb of Park Ridge gave the world Hillary Clinton.)

Clinton met, as is a formal requirement under the circumstances, with current president Viktor Yanukovich, but also with his opponent in this February's runoff election, the pro-American Yulia Timoshenko.

Addressing the Strategic Partnership Commission, Clinton continued pushing the military integration of Ukraine under both bilateral and NATO arrangements, for the world as though Yushchenko had not lost the first and Timoshenko the second round of the presidential election. Her comments included:

"Ukraine has participated in nearly every NATO operation as a member of the Partnership for Peace, and we hope to deepen our security cooperation later this month with the U.S.-Ukraine SEA BREEZE exercise. Increasing our ongoing bilateral defense cooperation, particularly in Ukraine's defense reform and military transformation is another area where we see great promise.

"And regarding NATO, let me just say very clearly, Ukraine is a sovereign and independent country that has the right to choose your own alliances. And NATO's door remains open...." [9]

Community Of Democracies And Missiles

She departed Kiev/Kyiv for Krakow and on July 3 met with her Polish counterpart, Foreign Minister Radoslaw Sikorski. Like Ukraine's Viktor Yushchenko, Sikorski's wife is an American, former member of the Washington Post editorial board and adjunct fellow at the American Enterprise Institute Anne Applebaum. Sikorski is a former British citizen, adviser to Rupert Murdoch, resident fellow of the American Enterprise Institute in Washington, D.C. and Polish defense minister.

Recall that Secretary Clinton abhors and abjures “spheres of influence.”

While in Poland she and Sikorski signed an updated agreement on the stationing of U.S. interceptor missiles in the country. The two formalized a pact superseding one “signed two years ago between Sikorski and the then secretary of state Condoleezza Rice. According to new missile defence plans, mobile launchers incorporating SM-3 interceptors will be placed in Europe. Poland will probably station the system between 2015 and 2018.” [10] The day before Polish Defense Ministry spokesman Janusz Sejmej revealed that “Defense Minister Bogdan Klich said the Americans promised to bring the SM-3s here after 2015 but definitely before 2018.” [11]

The SM-3 (Standard Missile-3) is an interceptor missile with a substantially longer range than the Patriot Advanced Capability-3 missiles the U.S. moved into Poland this May, 35 kilometers from the border with Russia’s Kaliningrad district.

Another Polish Defense Ministry spokesman, Robert Rochowicz, was quoted late last month announcing that “The first contingent of American troops and Patriot missiles stationed in northern Poland have returned to base in Germany, with the second round scheduled to be in the country in late June or early July.”

The first deployment consisted of six Patriot missiles, forty military vehicles and one hundred American troops. Perhaps regarding the very day Clinton was in the country, the Defense Ministry spokesman added, “Further training of Polish troops stationed at the base in northern Poland will resume in the coming days when a second battery of missiles arrives.” [12]

Training foreign nationals in the United States to return to their homelands and assume posts as defense ministers, foreign ministers and presidents is not establishing a sphere of influence in the countries so affected, it’s certain Clinton would assert. Neither is basing American troops and missiles half a world away from the U.S. but only a few kilometers from Russian territory.

In Clinton’s words, “We’re...NATO allies, and the United States is deeply committed to Poland’s security and sovereignty. Today, by signing an amendment to the ballistic missile defense agreement, we are reinforcing this commitment. The amendment will allow us to move forward with Polish participation in hosting elements of the phased adaptive approach to missile defense in Europe. It will help protect the Polish people and all of Europe, our allies, and others from evolving threats like that posed by Iran.” [13] How placing intermediate-range American interceptor missiles near the Baltic Sea protects Poland from “Iranian threats” is a question it would be entertaining to hear Clinton explain.

She characterized the “phased adaptive approach” to deploying ever more sophisticated and longer-range U.S. missiles in Eastern Europe in much the fashion President Obama did last September 17; that is, as a “stronger, swifter, and smarter” alternative to the earlier George W. Bush version. “[T]his approach will be available on the time table set forth to defend portions of Europe years earlier than the original plan could have met. And this approach provides opportunities for allied participation. So instead of it being a unilateral U.S. commitment, it is now a commitment of the alliance. And it is very important for us that we get that kind of ownership and buy-in – which we are – from NATO. [14]

The division of labor in the foreign policy of the “world’s sole military superpower” [15]

primarily leaves the troops and missiles, the training of Polish special forces and pilots, and the recruiting of 3,000 Polish troops to the killing fields of Afghanistan to Pentagon chief Robert Gates, though Clinton has had a hand in the first and the third matters.

Her formal role is as the purveyor of “soft power,” what in another culture might be called diplomacy but which in American practice is no less intrusive and coercive than the “hard power” complement.

From Madeleine Albright To Hillary Clinton, From Iron Curtain To Steel Vise

During her Polish visit Clinton was in Krakow for the tenth anniversary of the founding of the the Community of Democracies, “a joint venture between one of Radek’s [Radoslaw Sikorski’s] predecessors and one of mine: Minister Geremek and Madeleine Albright.” Though neither was present, one for fairly obvious reasons, she added: “Thank you, Madeleine, and thanks to the memory of Minister Geremek.”

Her comments were delivered under the rubric of “Civil Society: Supporting Democracy in the 21st Century,” and included blasts at the targets of the day:

“North Korea, a country that cannot even feed its own people, has banned all civil society. In Cuba and Belarus, as Radek said, civil society operates under extreme pressure. The Government of Iran has turned its back on a rich tradition of civil society, perpetrating human rights abuses against many activists and ordinary citizens who just wanted the right to be heard.

“The idea of pluralism is integral to our understanding of what it means to be a democracy....[The] iron curtain has fallen. But we must be wary of the steel vise in which many governments around the world are slowly crushing civil society and the human spirit.” [16]

China, Russia, Egypt, Zimbabwe, Congo, Ethiopia and Burma/Myanmar were also singled out for chastisement under the Steel Vise rubric. (So far has the U.S. progressed from the Iron Curtain motif/trope).

Three facts must be registered on this score.

During her secretary of state confirmation hearing in the Senate in January of 2005, Clinton’s immediate predecessor Condoleezza Rice updated the U.S. international enemies list with what she called “outposts of tyranny.” They were (and evidently still are) Belarus, Burma/Myanmar, Cuba, Iran, North Korea and Zimbabwe. At the time the BBC asserted that Rice’s “comments were reminiscent of Mr Bush’s ‘axis of evil’ speech in 2002, in which he identified Iraq, Iran and North Korea as threats to US security.” [17]

As seen above, Clinton in Krakow castigated all six of the “tyrannical outposts.”

Second, during a question and answer period two days later in Georgia in which Clinton had the opportunity to prove her mettle on matters of human rights, freedom of expression and so forth, she demonstrated the difference between how a faithful client state is treated as opposed to any nation, whatever its political system may be, that pursues a foreign policy not entirely subordinated to U.S. diktat.

On July 5 Georgian head of state Mikheil Saakashvili spared no pains proving which category

he was in, telling Clinton: “Mrs Secretary of State, you can see shelves of works by Thomas Jefferson and books by authors of the US constitution in my study. I read them frequently.” [18]

It is not likely that Saakashvili, who received his law degree in the U.S., would make that claim under oath, though the truth has always been an elastic concept, a nebulous notion to the Columbia Law School graduate.

When Jailing Children, Rigging Elections And Repressing News Media Are Acceptable

During a meeting with Georgian women, a human rights lawyer asked Clinton:

“I want to tell you that there are more than 61 political prisoners in the country. And I want to ask you, when you had a meeting with President Saakashvili, ask him why does it happen that he has so many political prisoners in Georgia today, why the judiciary is not independent in Georgia, why the Georgian people are deprived of a free choice during the last elections in the country, why media is not free in Georgia, why don't we have free electoral environment?”

She added, “after I became [an opponent of] Saakashvili, then it happened so that many of my family members are in prison. My brother is in prison, just because I am an opponent and (inaudible) Saakashvili. My child has also been a victim when he is at school (inaudible). There was a (inaudible) to imprison him (inaudible). And these (inaudible) opposition, and because I fight for supremacy of law, rule of law, and freedom and democracy.”

The “community of democracies” heroine from Foggy Bottom responded:

“Thank you very much. And as I said, we raised all of these concerns in meetings with officials. I will raise these and other concerns when I meet with the president. This is what I do. And I don't always know everything that is going on in any society. But our ambassadors around the world keep us informed.

“And I want to be clear that the United States supports the Georgian people. We support Georgian democracy. And we are going to do everything we can to further those values. And many of the issues you mentioned are ones that we will raise. But the people of Georgia are raising them. So, indeed, that's the best forum of all.” [19]

No need to be too tough on an ally who jails political opponents and harasses family members, even children, of an attorney who attempts to defend them.

After all, as Clinton added shortly after the above-quoted masterpiece of “diplomatic” equivocation and evasion, “Well, the United States supports Georgia's aspirations for NATO leadership and for NATO membership, and we appreciate your and your government's efforts to meet the requirements of NATO membership. And we are grateful, too, for what Georgia is doing in providing troops for Afghanistan, which is an opportunity for the Georgian military to work with the United States and other NATO member militaries to develop some of the assets that are needed to be able to apply successfully for NATO membership.” [20]

Chicago: Model For World Democracy And Political Pluralism

Third, Clinton represents an administration whose head, Barack Obama, his Senior Advisor David Axelrod, White House Chief of Staff Rahm Emanuel, and senior adviser and assistant Valerie Jarrett are products of the Chicago political system, the last big city political machine in the country.

Chicago has a population of almost three million, more than that of scores of nations including several NATO members. Every chief executive, the mayor in Chicago, has been a member of the same political party for the past 80 years. The City Council has 50 alderman and although the post is formally non-partisan – candidates don't run in party primaries and aren't required to identify their party affiliation – currently 49 of the 50 are active members of the Democratic Party. During the past several decades that number has often been 50.

For the past 55 years its mayor has been a leader for life and has been named Richard Daley. Richard J. Daley from 1955 until his death in 1976 and his son Richard M. Daley, a de facto hereditary autocrat, from 1989 to the present with only a slightly more than twelve-year hiatus.

Clinton may want to tread more cautiously in future when condemning other nations for their lack of – to use her own word – pluralism, when she serves a political cabal emanating from a one-party, dynastic, corruption-saturated system. Her criticisms of North Korea, in particular, raise parallels she might prefer be ignored.

(Chicagoan Rod Blagojevich, former governor of Illinois, is currently on trial for attempting to sell – auction off to the highest bidder – Obama's former senate seat. He was handcuffed by federal agents at his Chicago home on December 9, 2008 and subsequently impeached and removed by the state legislature. When he first became governor in 2003, his congressional seat was ceded to Rahm Emanuel, who had never held elected office before. Emanuel, now White House Chief of Staff, has been subpoenaed by Blagojevich's attorneys as he had held phone conversations with Blagojevich during the period the latter is accused of peddling the senate seat of an incoming American head of state. Valerie Jarrett, Tony Rezko and Ari Emanuel are other names that have surfaced as cast members in the murky drama.)

Baku: Chicago On The Caspian Sea, Launching Pad For Future Wars

After leaving Poland following a lecture on “what it means to be a democracy,” Clinton arrived in Azerbaijan, whose President Ilham Aliyev inherited his post from his late father Heydar, a tradition the native of the Greater Chicago area can well appreciate.

She met with her counterpart, Foreign Minister Elmar Mammadyarov, and the two lost no time in exchanging praises.

Clinton: “[T]he bonds between the United States and Azerbaijan are deep, important, and durable....Our soldiers have stood shoulder-to-shoulder in Kosovo, Iraq, and Afghanistan.”

Mammadyarov: “We believe that United States is...a global power, is interested in bringing and spreading stability and prosperity all around, in all corners of the world. And besides that, if you took a look inside of the – our bilateral ties, how it's developed through the years of our – after restoration of independence for Azerbaijan, it's an open secret that United States provide us a great support, particularly in so very important and vital project like building up of the oil pipeline (inaudible). It's – we know clearly that U.S. Administration –

both, by the way, Republicans and Democrats - was very strongly behind the project. And, at the end of the story, this is starting to be a success story for the region. I think we are probably one of the few that can say that, with assistance of the construction and after the inauguration of the pipeline, the real money and the real prosperity comes particularly to Azerbaijan, at the same time it is also supporting Georgia." [21]

The U.S. ambassador may have had a few words with the foreign minister after such an effusive and detailed exposition. Some matters are best left among friends.

Clinton didn't add Azerbaijan to the Iron Vise category. And for good reason, issues pertaining to human rights, civil society, transparency and political pluralism notwithstanding.

Her visit followed by less than three weeks that of Defense Secretary Robert Gates, whose trip in turn was the first by a Pentagon chief in more than five years. [22] Clinton is the first secretary of state to visit Azerbaijan since James Baker did in 1992, shortly after Azerbaijan became an independent nation.

As Associated Press reported beforehand, "Clinton's stop in Azerbaijan will accelerate efforts by the Obama administration to strengthen relations. Defense Secretary Robert Gates in June became the highest-ranking administration official to visit Azerbaijan; he delivered a letter from President Barack Obama thanking President Ilham Aliyev for allowing the U.S. to move troops and supplies through his airspace en route to Afghanistan.

"Azerbaijan also is part of an overland supply chain that is a critical alternative to the primary land route to Afghanistan through Pakistan. About one-quarter of all war goods comes through the oil-rich Caspian Sea nation." [23]

Since the tightening of sanctions against Iran by the United Nations Security Council, the U.S. and the European Union, stories have circulated on Internet news sites about Azerbaijan being used by Washington for military strikes against Iran.

An Azeri news source recently quoted Alexei Vlasov, General Director of the Social and Political Process Studies Information and Analytical Center at Moscow State University, as stating: "The upcoming Clinton visit to Baku is a way to get Azerbaijan to answer one question - how would it behave, if a strike on Iran would happen?" [24]

Another Russian political analyst, Andrei Areshev of the Strategic Culture Foundation, offered these insights last month:

"Matthew Bryza, whose provocative activities in August 2008 [during the Georgian-Russian war] are public knowledge, was appointed as ambassador to Baku; U.S. Defense Minister Robert Gates visited [Azerbaijan]; the upcoming visit of Hillary Clinton to the South Caucasus was announced....One can suppose a more global purpose - Iran. The Islamic Republic is being surrounded by a circle of American military bases....The opinion that 'the U.S. will be trying to involve Azerbaijan in its policy aimed at the isolation and weakening of Iran' has serious grounds. A new war in Karabakh will force Russia out of the South Caucasian region in case of any outcome, and it may become a logical continuation of the anti-Iranian policy of the U.S., as well as a preparatory stage for a large-scale armed conflict in the Middle East." [25]

The allusion to Karabakh is in reference to a potential armed conflict between Azerbaijan, which claims it as its own, and Armenia, which would defend the Nagorno-Karabakh Republic in the event of an Azerbaijani attack.

In late June Azerbaijani President Aliyev inspected large-scale military exercises held on the 92nd anniversary of the nation's armed forces, drills which included over 4,000 troops, 100 tanks, 77 armored vehicles, 125 artillery systems, 17 combat planes, 12 combat helicopters and four transport-combat helicopters. [26]

His speech at the event included the following threats:

“At any time we have to be able to liberate our homeland [Karabakh] from invaders. Along with political and diplomatic efforts, we must have a strong army, and this process is going well. Today the level of the Azerbaijani army is very high.”

“We have to increase our military strength. Today, the Azerbaijani army is ready to honorably fulfill all tasks assigned to it. Combat capability, professionalism, patriotism, a strengthened material-technical base, demonstrated by the state of attention and respect for the army – all these factors will enable us to liberate [our] homeland from invaders.” [27]

The president also boasted that over the last seven years “military expenditures in Azerbaijan increased by more than 13 times. Today in Azerbaijan military expenditures for 2010 amount to 2 billion 150 million dollars, which exceeds the entire state budget of Armenia.” [28]

That is the military that could be directed against not only Karabakh and Armenia but potentially Iran as well as part of a broader U.S. and allied attack.

Since 1991 Azerbaijan has been closely allied with its ethnic cousins in Turkey. But with the Turkish government increasingly adopting a foreign policy approach Washington objects to – closer relations with Iran, strained ones with Israel – the U.S. is placing more emphasis on military cooperation with Azerbaijan (as well as Georgia) to achieve its geopolitical objectives in the region and throughout the Broader Middle East.

For example, “Roughly a quarter of all supplies bound for Afghanistan travel via Azerbaijan.

“And since 2001, about 100,000 military personnel have also traveled through ‘the Caucasus spur,’ a designation that includes Azerbaijan, on their way to deployment in Afghanistan, according to Pentagon data.

“Beyond possibly probing a larger transit role, American officials are looking into the possibility of using Azerbaijan as a supply source. The Azerbaijani Ministry of Defense Industry signed protocols in mid-May with three US weapons manufacturers for the production of mortars, machine guns, grenades and cartridges....Defense Industry Minister Yaver Jamalov said on May 14 that the US companies’ representatives will visit Azerbaijan soon to test the pilot products and possibly to sign contracts....” [29]

Battle For The Caucasus, Former Soviet Union As America's New Frontier

After leaving Azerbaijan on July 4, Clinton went to Armenia. Since at least last October she has been attempting – with some degree of success – to not so much assist as supplant the Organization for Security and Co-operation in Europe’s Minsk Group/Process [30] in resolving the dispute over Karabakh.

Clinton’s mission is to intrude the U.S. – and NATO – further into the South Caucasus by directing negotiations between Azerbaijan, Armenia and Turkey. The end result is designed to limit Russian and Iranian influence in the region. Politically and economically. After all, Clinton is averse to “spheres of influence” as has been recorded.

The lingering conflicts that arose from the fragmentation of the Soviet Union – Karabakh, Abkhazia and South Ossetia in the South Caucasus and Transdniestria to the northwest – are the pretexts for the U.S. and NATO to intervene in former Soviet space in the guise of mediators and arbiters.

The appeal to Armenia in this respect has resulted in that country sending its first troops to Afghanistan this year and may lead to its eventual departure from the Russian-led Collective Security Treaty Organization mutual defense bloc.

During the last leg of Clinton’s five-nation trip in Georgia, the country’s State Minister for Reintegration – that is, for forcibly seizing Abkhazia and South Ossetia – stated, “I would like to [recall] Clinton’s statement in Krakow. She noted that Washington would oppose the annexation of the occupied territories by Russia. It is important to sign a charter of strategic partnership between the United States and Georgia, [to determine] bilateral cooperation.” [31]

The resolution of the Georgia-Abkhazia and Georgia-South Ossetia conflicts, like the Armenia-Azerbaijan conflict over Karabakh, may not be peaceful. Shortly before Clinton’s arrival in the Georgian capital, U.S. ambassador John Bass [32] said that “The United States will never quit supporting Georgia and protecting its territorial integrity” [33], citing similar pledges by Assistant Secretary of State for Bureau of European and Eurasian Affairs, Philip Gordon [34]:

“The President made it clear to President Medvedev last week and we’ve been consistent in noting that we respect Georgia’s sovereignty and territorial integrity and we call on Russia to abide by its commitments in the August, 2008 ceasefire, which...called upon the parties to move their military forces back to where they were before the conflict began. And that hasn’t been done. And we’ve been absolutely clear and consistent from the start that we believe that should happen....” [35]

Gordon also insisted that the U.S. had not and would not cease supplying the Saakashvili regime with arms, despite Russia calling on it to, as “Georgia is a sovereign state. It has the right to defend itself.” He added, “The United States appreciates the contribution that Georgia has made to the peacekeeping operation in Afghanistan, and will continue to cooperate with it in the military sphere.” [36]

The only sphere of influence in the former Soviet Union Washington objects to is Russia’s. Since 1991 the U.S. has seen that vast expanse of land as its own new private preserve, the American empire’s final frontier. Hillary Clinton’s extended Fourth of July weekend trip to Eastern Europe and the South Caucasus is a renewed initiative to that end.

Notes

- 1) Washington Post, July 5, 2010
- 2) Joint Press Availability With Georgian President Saakashvili
U.S. Department of State, July 5, 2010
- 3) Ibid
- 4) Remarks at a Town Hall With Georgian Women Leaders
U.S. Department of State, July 5, 2010
- 5) Remarks of Senator Barack Obama to the Chicago Council
on Global Affairs – April 23, 2007
http://www.thechicagocouncil.org/dynamic_page.php?id=64
- 6) Civil Georgia, August 7, 2008
- 7) Sunday Times, August 15, 2008
- 8) Associated Press, August 10, 2008
- 9) Remarks At the Closing of the Strategic Partnership Commission
U.S. Department of State, July 2, 2010
- 10) Polish Radio, July 3, 2010
- 11) Reuters/Warsaw Business Journal, July 2, 2010
- 12) Polish Radio, June 25, 2010
- 13) U.S.-Poland Bilateral Missile Defense Signing and Joint Press
Availability With Polish Foreign Minister Sikorski
U.S. Department of State, July 3, 2010
- 14) Ibid
- 15) Obama Doctrine: Eternal War For Imperfect Mankind
Stop NATO, December 10, 2009
<http://rickrozoff.wordpress.com/2009/12/11/obama-doctrine-eternal-war-for-imperfect-mankind>
- 16) “Civil Society: Supporting Democracy in the 21st Century,” at the
Community of Democracies
U.S. Department of State, July 3, 2010
- 17) BBC News, January 19, 2005
- 18) Rustavi 2, July 5, 2010
The State Department website has: “Madam Secretary, you could have
seen on my bookshelves works by Thomas Jefferson and other founding
fathers, framers of the U.S. Constitution – I keep going back and
reading them.”
- 19) Remarks at a Town Hall With Georgian Women Leaders
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