
PERCEPTIONS OF RUSSIA IN AZERBAIJAN: CHALLENGE FOR MOSCOW'S PEACEKEEPING MISSION

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10.12.2020

Jamestown (8 December 2020)

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Last September, the Russian Dossier Center investigative project, funded by opposition leader and former Yukos CEO Mikhail Khodorkovsky, published a controversial report on the countrys soft power policies toward the South Caucasus based on leaks from the Kremlin and Russian special services. The study reveals Moscows concerns and difficulties with developing pro-Russian civil society organizations inside Azerbaijan in contrast to inside Armenia and even staunchly pro-Western Georgia. According to the report, Azerbaijani non-governmental organizations (NGO), including those serving ethnic Russians, are not readily willing to promote Russian interests or help boost Moscows influence locally (Dossier.center [1], [2], 2020). In this light, the Azerbaijani publics mixed reaction to the sudden, midnight announcement of the deployment of a Russian peacekeeping contingent to Karabakh, as part of the Moscow-brokered November 9 accord to stop the war between Yerevan and Baku, once again highlighted the complexities of how Russia is perceived in Azerbaijan (Facebook.com/karimliali, Twitter.com/RuslanAsad, EurasiaNet, November 10; Daily Sabah, November 18).

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