THE CHANGING PERSPECTIVES AND 'NEW' GEOPOLITICS OF THE CAUCASUS IN THE 21ST CENTURY

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DR. SERDAR YILMAZ
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Foreword

The Caucasus region is enormous and in fact, merges at the intersection of the Russian Federation, the Middle East and Europe. It is a region where you can see astonishing natural beauty, a rugged topography, an outstanding variety of ancient cultures and ethnically heterogeneous population. It also bears separatist Trasist rules following barbaric Soviet control and a history of intra-communal strife.

The book, THE CHANGING PERSPECTIVES AND 'NEW' GEOPOLITICS OF THE CAUCASUS IN THE 21ST CENTURY, sheds valuable light on ongoing conflicts in Azerbaijan, Georgia and Armenia, debates about oil and natural gas potential of the Caspian Sea, energy and border disputes, the importance of the region for global and regional actors. The readers will also see state-building and national identity processes, the geopolitical implication of the North Caucasus for the region, energy security issues and security challenges in this book.

This book will be an excellent introduction to the complexities of a little-known the Caucasus region. It will guide you through in a very readable and engaging style as it covers all the salient points and issues of the North Caucasus succinctly and the South Caucasus in detail. The book consists of a special introduction part about the Karabakh issue and 12 chapters. It covers the latest available information with contemporary debates to prepare students, academics and those who are interested in fundamental issues of the region. If you start out knowing nothing about the region, you will have a premier that will teach you about the region by the time you have finished the book. It presents a picture of the evolving relations of Azerbaijan, Georgia and Armenia with regional actors like Turkey and global actors like the US, Russian Federation, China and the EU.

We would like to convey our thanks to all the contributors, who are experts in their fields, for their constructive cooperation in the submission of their valuable chapters. We are also thankful to 'Astana Yayınları' for their help and feedback. The biggest thank goes to our families for their endless patience and support.

After the last development and Russian direct involvement in the Karabakh issue, the world's attention has focused increasingly on the Caucasus region. Thus, THE CHANGING PERSPECTIVES AND 'NEW' GEOPOLITICS OF THE CAUCASUS IN THE 21ST CENTURY book will make a significant contribution to the understanding of fundamental issues of the Caucasus region.

As the editors, we would like to dedicate this book to the heroic Azerbaijani soldiers who became martyred during the struggle for the liberation of Karabakh lands from the Armenian occupation. MAY THEIR SOULS BE BLESSED…

Dr. Serdar YILMAZ
Dr. Murat YORULMAZ

February 2021

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INTRODUCTION

The 44-Day War in the Karabakh Conflict: Reasons and Results

Araz ASLANLI*

Although the roots of the Karabakh problem can be traced back to the 19th century (perhaps to even older times), it would be more correct to evaluate this problem, in its current form, as a consequence of the period between late 1980s and the "1994 Ceasefire". According to some views, very important developments took place in terms of resolution of this conflict after the "1994 Ceasefire", but in reality, all these developments had a little effect on the state of the problem. It is probably for this reason that sometimes "a hope for permanent peace", some other times "resumption of war" was talked about during the same year.

In the period from 1994 to 2020, the above-mentioned types of negotiations for the settlement of this conflict were unsuccessful, and after the increasing provocations of Armenia, Azerbaijan had to start a counterattack on 27 September 2020 in order to implement the UN Security Council resolutions. In this war, which lasted in **44 days**, Azerbaijan liberated a significant part of its territories occupied by Armenia until 1994. By the joint declaration signed on 10 November 2020, Armenia accepted its defeat, and a timetable for withdrawing from the rest of the Azerbaijani territories was determined. Russian peacekeeping forces came to the region in order to keep the process under control and additionally, a Russian-Turkish joint checkpoint was established.

Reasons of the problem

There are those who see the Karabakh conflict as "Russia's political tool for keeping the Caucasus under its control", those who see it as "an instrument of Armenia's expansionist policy" (the dream of establishing "Great Armenia" between three seas), those who claim that "it is a result of the struggle of the Armenian population that currently lives in the region to get special rights", those who think that "it is an instrument used by the Christian world against integration of the Turkic or Muslim world", those who think that the problem originated from "the unification of Karabakh region to Azerbaijan during the Stalin period", those who see it as a part of "the imperialist games in the region", and those who interpret it as a part of "the clash of civilizations".

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The struggle of the great powers for the Caucasus can be seen as the most fundamental factor in the root of this problem. Undoubtedly, ethnic and religious separatism, the goal of establishing a state in a larger territory (expanding the borders), provocations of small groups that took advantage of the loss of central state authority and other factors also played certain role in the dynamics of the conflict. However, it should be noted that the most important role among these factors pertains to the ethnic migrations carried out by extra-regional powers in line with their long-term goals, to the structures that these powers established, and to the conflicts they created with the aim of "divide and rule". The name of Karabakh region, sovereignty belongings of the region, as well as the data from Russian, French and Ottoman sources on the ethnic structure of the region (detailed information on this is presented in the book) clearly point to the Azerbaijani (Turk) identity of the region. The main document concerning annexation of the region by Russia – *Kurekchay Agreement* signed between Ibrahim Khan of Karabakh and Commander of the Russian military unit P. D. Sisianov in 1805, and the Imperial Decree of 1806 regarding appointment of Mehdi Gulu Agha as the new Khan of Karabakh (after assassination of Ibrahim Khan by the Russians) have been important in finding answers to the questions about ethnic composition and identity of the region.[1]

One of the main claims of the Armenian side on this issue, which is the claim that allegedly "Karabakh region was given to Azerbaijan by Stalin in 1921" is totally groundless. The Soviet archive documents on the developments of 1921 disprove this claim and on the contrary, once again confirm that the region belongs to Azerbaijan. As it is known, establishment of the Soviet rule in Armenia in late 1920 changed the regional balance to some extent. Leaders of Soviet Armenia conveyed their claim regarding Karabakh region to Moscow and raised it at the Caucasian Bureau of the Communist Bolshevik Party [C(b)P]. Upon these claims, Central Committee of the Communist Party of Azerbaijan held a meeting on 27 June 1921 and stated that the Armenian claims were rejected and Karabakh region could not be separated from Azerbaijan. In its meeting held on 4 July 1921, the Caucasian Bureau of the RC(b)P (it was composed of representatives of the communist parties of Caucasian republics and only one of its seven members was Azerbaijani) expressed opinion that the mountainous part of Karabakh region should be given to Armenia. But Azerbaijan strongly opposed to this. On 5 July 1921, the Caucasian Bureau of the RC(b)P had another sitting with the participation of representatives from the Central Committee of the RC(b)P. After all evaluations were made, at the proposal of Ordzhonikidze and Nazaretyan (Georgian and Armenian respectively) the sitting decided that "Taking into account the necessity of national peace between Muslims and Armenians, economic linkages between Upper and Lower Karabakh regions, and permanent connection of the region to Azerbaijan, Nagorno-Karabakh shall remain within the borders of Azerbaijan

[1] "Kurekchay Treaty", https://karabakh.org/treaties/kurekchay-treaty/.

Soviet Socialist Republic and the region shall be given a broad autonomy, with Shusha city being administrative center of the region."

Phrases in the originals of the 4 and 5 July 1921 decisions clearly show that the allegations about "Stalin's giving Karabakh to Azerbaijan", which the Armenian sources frequently refer to, are totally wrong. When one looks at the original phrases in the draft decisions presented for voting, it can be clearly seen that initially, "Giving the mountainous part of Karabakh to Armenia" (in Russian original: "Нагорную часть Карабаха включить в состав Армении"), but later "Keeping Karabakh within the borders of Azerbaijan" (in Russian original: Карабах оставить в пределах Азербайджана) is mentioned. Thus, if the region was taken from Armenia and given to Azerbaijan, there should have been a mention of "giving to Azerbaijan" or "keeping within Armenia", which was not the case.[2]

Although it is widely accepted that there was mostly a "silent period" regarding the Karabakh conflict in the Soviet times, it would be useful to remember some points. In this period, autonomy status was envisaged for Armenians living in Azerbaijan, whereas no status was envisaged for a much higher number (and naturally, a much higher ratio) of Azerbaijani Turks living in Armenia. On the contrary, Azerbaijani Turks were forcibly removed from their ancestral homeland and settled in Azerbaijan. Armenia's relieving through this "cleaning" and its location along the border with Turkey were important factors in this policy.

Outbreak of the conflict and the resolution process

Outbreak of the Karabakh conflict started together with the process of disintegration of the Soviet Union. Small-scale clashes of this period turned into a war later. Having ensured its internal unity to an important degree and with serious foreign military, political and economic support, Armenia was able to occupy Azerbaijani territories. During this occupation process, it also committed the Khojaly Genocide in 1992.[3]

In 1993, the UN Security Council adopted four resolutions (822, 853, 874 and 884) concerning the occupation of Azerbaijani territories by Armenia.[4] Immediate and unconditional withdrawal of Armenia from the occupied Azerbaijani territories was emphasized in all four resolutions. Armenia did not comply with these resolutions and continued its aggressive position towards

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2 *K istorii obrazovaniya Nagorno-Karabahskoy Avtonomnoy Oblasti Azerbaydjanskoy SSR: Dokumentı i Materialı*, (Azerneshr, Baku: 1989), p.52-53.

3 "Massacre by Armenians", *The New York Times*, 3 Mart 1992; Thomas Goltz, "Armenian Soldiers Massacre Hundreds of Fleeing Families", *The Sunday Times*, 1 Mart 1992; "Corpses Litter Hills In Karabakh", *The Times*, 2 Mart 1992; Jill Smolowe, "Massacre In Khojaly", *Time*, 16 Mart, 1992, "Nagorno-Karabagh Victims Buried In Azerbaijani Town", *The Washington Post*, 28 Şubat 1992.

4 "Resolution 822 (1993) Adopted by the Security Council at its 3205th meeting, on 30 April 1993", http://daccess-dds-ny.un.org/ doc/ UNDOC/ GEN/ N93/ 428/ 34/IMG/ N9342834. pdf?OpenElement.

Azerbaijan. Moreover, from 1991, it sabotaged all international mediation efforts, especially those initiated by Russia, Kazakhstan, Iran and the OSCE, attacked again after every time when reconciliation was reached and continued to occupy Azerbaijani territories. As a result of the efforts made in 1994, a ceasefire was achieved in May.[5] During the ceasefire period, initiatives for resolution of the conflict were carried out with the mediation of various international organizations and different countries, especially under the auspices of the Minsk Group.

Despite about 300 meetings with the participation of leaders of the two countries, foreign ministers, special representatives, Minsk Group co-chairs and leaders of the mediating countries, the Azerbaijani officials have been reiterating that "if the process continues this way, there will be no option other than resorting to military means in order to liberate the territories from occupation", while the Armenian officials continued to express their satisfaction with the existing situation and to say that "if the war starts again, Azerbaijan will face a worse situation".

Armenia has clearly violated the fundamental principles of international law and ignored the related resolutions and decisions of the UN Security Council, UN General Assembly, Parliamentary Assembly of the Council of Europe, European Parliament and European Court of Human Rights, as well as reports of the relevant institutions of the UN and the OSCE, but the mediators have considerably disregarded this situation.

Resumption of the war: beginning of the end

Although serious clashes occurred in the frontline in 2010, 2016 and 2017, the longest one of them continued only 4 days.[6] When Armenia's military provocation in July 2020 was added to its increasing political provocations, the possibility of resumption of war in the near future increased.

The developments during and after the July 2020 fights (Russia's extensively arming Armenia and Turkey's support to Azerbaijan) signaled that Azerbaijan would not stand idly vis-à-vis Armenia's provocations and that this time the war could be more extensive and longer than usual.

Immediately after the war restarted on 27 September and its destructive effects were felt, some states and international organizations called the parties for a ceasefire. Agreement on ceasefire was reached three times (on 10 October, 17 October and 26 October) with the mediation of Russia, France and USA, but the battles never stopped.[7] On the one hand, Armenia's discourse and policy of "new attacks for the occupation of new territories" as well as its targeting

5 Araz Aslanlı, *Karabağ sorunu ve Türkiye-Ermenistan ilişkileri*, (Berikan Yayınevi, Ankara: 2015), p.83-84.

6 "Nagorno-Karabakh: Azeri-Armenian ceasefire agreed", https://www.bbc.com/news/world-europe-35964213.

7 "U.S.-Armenia-Azerbaijan Joint Statement", https://www.state.gov/u-s-armenia-azerbaijan -joint-statement/.

civilian residential places far from the conflict zone, on the other hand, Azerbaijan's insistence on the implementation of the decisions taken by international organizations, especially 4 UN Security Council resolutions, and on the liberation of its territories from the Armenian occupation showed that the probability of the parties to come to a common ground was weak; on the contrary, the possibility of final victory of one of the parties was high. The war continued and ended with military and psychological superiority of Azerbaijan, which was righteous and faithful, stronger and more determined than before, and which, at the same time, felt Turkey's adequate stabilizing role.

In the aftermath of the **44-Day War**, a nine-point declaration was signed with the mediation of Russia on 10 November 2020.[8] The declaration required the military forced of the conflicting parties to stay in the places they were, provided timetables for Armenia's withdrawal from Aghdam, Kalbajar and Lachin districts of Azerbaijan, which were yet not liberated, provided for the settlement of the Russian peacekeeping forces in the region, and covered issues related to the Lachin corridor and the connection between Nakhchivan and the rest of Azerbaijan. With this step, although resolution of the Karabakh conflict was not fully achieved, the way for a comprehensive settlement was opened.

[8] "Armenia, Azerbaijan and Russia sign Nagorno-Karabakh peace deal", https:// www.bbc.com/ news/world-europe-54882564.

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K istorii obrazovaniya Nagorno-Karabahskoy Avtonomnoy Oblasti Azerbaydjanskoy SSR: Dokumentı i Materialı, (Azerneshr, Baku: 1989)

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"Nagorno-Karabakh: Azeri-Armenian ceasefire agreed", https://www.bbc .com/ news / world-europe-35964213.

"Resolution 822 (1993) Adopted by the Security Council at its 3205th meeting, on 30 April 1993", http://daccess-dds-ny.un.org/doc/UNDOC/ GEN/N93/428/3 4/IMG/N9 342834.pdf?OpenElement.

"U.S.-Armenia-Azerbaijan Joint Statement", https://www.state.gov/u-s-armenia-azerbaijan- joint-statement/.

PART I

Setting the New Stage

Azerbaijan in the 21st Century: An Assessment in the Context of Main Determinants of Domestic and Foreign Policies

Emre ÇITAK*

Introduction

Azerbaijan, which is the third actor of the Caucasus Region together with Georgia and Armenia, holds a special position with its features that will be expressed throughout the study. Gaining independence with the dissolution of the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics (USSR), Azerbaijan has gone through a really challenging and difficult process in the last thirty years. Within the framework of national, regional and international developments, Azerbaijan has been struggling for its existence, development and dignity in the context of consolidating its independence, strengthening its national identity, preserving its territorial integrity, revitalizing its economy and integration with the international community. Under the rule of four presidents and the shadow of the conflict and war with Armenia, Azerbaijan has reached its current status.

After it had existed as a socialist republic under the umbrella of the USSR for most of the 20th century, Azerbaijan stepped into a different phase in political, military, economic, social and cultural aspects with its independence in the last part of the century. Especially the increasing geopolitical, geostrategic and geoeconomic importance of the Caucasus and the activities of extra-regional powers have constituted a fundamental determining factor on Azerbaijan's policies. With the transition to the 21st century, Azerbaijan began to seek right ways to adapting to the process and consolidate its identity within the newly formed conjuncture. Energy resources, the West-East conflict in the region, the Russia-Georgia War, problems with Armenia and the victory in 2020 have been the cornerstones of the experience in the process. In addition to all of these, the main policy determinants of Azerbaijan in the past 20 years have been the Soviet heritage etched in memories, state and national identity building efforts, characteristic attitudes of the presidents and internal groups, presence in a strategic geography also called Trans-Caspian, regional dynamics and the policies of the extra-regional actors, relations developed over energy resources and of course the recapturing of its occupied lands.

This study focuses on the role and experience of Azerbaijan in the Caucasus region in the 21st century in accordance with the general framework of the book. The construction of the state structure of Azerbaijan, its foreign policy preferences and the conflict issues are the topics that will be primarily addressed. Thus, it is planned to include the main determinants in Azerbaijan's domestic and foreign policy practices. Azerbaijan-centered perspective will be

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presented through the study. Previously, the experience of Azerbaijan with the independence process after the dissolution of the USSR will be expressed in general terms in order to present the informational section for the readers. The chapter will come to an end with a regional analysis and future projection based on the Azerbaijan-Armenia War that took place in 2020.

Independence Period and Azerbaijan in the 90's

Despite the difficulties it faced, Azerbaijan, which experienced a stable and safe process after the dissolution of the USSR, became an important actor firstly in the Caucasus and gradually in the international area. Blessed with a strategic geographical location, crucial hydrocarbon riches and a rapidly growing economy, Azerbaijan is a key actor at the crossroads of Southwest Asia and Southeast Europe. With the Ottoman, Russian and Prussian Empires background, it has a highly affluent heritage historically and culturally.[1]

Azerbaijani Supreme Soviet passed a declaration on the re-establishment of the independent Republic of Azerbaijan, which had primarily appeared between 1918 and 1920, on 31 August 1991, in reaction to conservative coup in 19 August. Only after half and one month, on 18 October 1991 Azerbaijan declared its independence.[2] It is possible to state that Azerbaijan, celebrating its 30th year of independence under the administrations of Ayaz Muttalibov, Ebulfez Elchibey, Hayder Aliyev and Ilham Aliyev so far, has experienced a tough experience in the light of lots of factors. Nation-building and state-building efforts came to the fore as the most important issue in this context. Undoubtedly, there are plenty of elements that make up the identity of a nation. It is possible to specify these factors as geography, history, culture, experience, demographic characteristics and external intervention. In this sense, breaking away from the Soviet citizen identity and adopting a national identity has become a necessity to crown the independence. State-building, on the other hand, is seen as a process that includes many institutional and structural aspects, consolidating sovereignty and independence, ensuring stability and order, and activating welfare and dynamism.

Along with its independence, Azerbaijan's economic troubles and identity problems from the Soviet years were at the forefront. Although the disintegration of the Soviet Union was not seen as a surprise as it is sometimes claimed, it should be stated that Azerbaijan experienced a serious problem of national awareness after decades of the Soviet umbrella. On the other hand, as a newly independent state in a geography where the Soviet Union had already withdrawn, it faced a serious challenge so hard to tackle. It has been observed that as a country that had to consolidate its independence in a conjuncture with

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1 Sana Imran, "Nation Branding Endeavours of Azerbaijan: Reshaping National Image", *Strategic Studies*, Vol: 38, No:1, 2018, p.109.

2 Charlotte Hille, *State Building and Conflict Resolution in the Caucasus*, Leiden: Brill, 2010, pp.265-267.

many unknowns and in a sensitive geography, Azerbaijan experienced a really compelling process.[3]

The most serious test of Azerbaijan in independence period was to eliminate social, economic and security problems by abstaining from the tension that may arise between Russia seeking for influence over the region after Soviet demise and other actors like Iran, USA, Turkey having close attention to the region to fill the power gap. In this context, it has become essential as a newly independent state to establish healthy relations by establishing a balance between the actors and to implement policies without compromising its independence and sovereignty. Undoubtedly, it is only possible to get support and help from other states without getting negative reaction and avoiding from being under influence and pressure, with a pragmatist balance policy. Therefore, Azerbaijan adopted and implemented such an approach by its own experience.

There broke out a war dated between 1988-1994, due to the 1988 and 1991 decisions of Armenians living in Nagorno-Karabakh, having an autonomous status connected to Azerbaijan, to become independent and then to join Armenia. In the last years and immediately after demise of the USSR, the deep-freeze problem of the Caucasus turning into a serious war, in fact, carried clues about the future of the region. When the ceasefire was signed in 1994, Armenia occupied Lachin, Aghdam, Kalbajar, Fizuli, Jabrayil, Gubadly, and Zangilan districts, as well as Nagorno-Karabakh. From this date until 2020, Armenia continued to keep almost 20% of Azerbaijani territory under unlawful occupation.

The Karabakh problem created a serious trauma on Azerbaijan. With the invasion of Armenia, a demographic, political, military and economic burden fell on the shoulders of the newly independent state. The heartbreaking human lost, the situation of the displaced citizens, the cost of the war on the economy, the unrest in the society and domestic politics during the war were refered to that burden.[4] During the war, a situation occurred in which approximately 20.000 people lost their lives, over one million Azeri had to flee from their homes and were called "kaçgın", and the gross national product (GDP) decreased by almost 60%.[5]

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3 Güner Özkan, "Kafkaslarla İlişkiler", Haydar Çakmak (Ed.), *Türk Dış Politikası: 1919-2008*, Ankara: Platin, 2008, pp.834-835; Yelda Demirağ, "Türk Dış Politikasında Güney Kafkasya", Yelda Demirağ and Özlen Çelebi (Eds.), *Türk Dış Politikası: Son On Yıl*, Ankara: Palme Yayıncılık, 2011, pp.94-95; Svante E. Cornell, *Azerbaijan Since Independence*, New York: Routledge, 2011, pp.46-59.

4 Svante E. Cornell, *op.cit*, pp.126-131.

5 Mert Bilgin, *Hazar'da Son Darbe*, İstanbul: IQ Kültür-Sanat Yayıncılık, 2005; Pınar İpek, "Azerbaijan Oil Boom and Challenges", Mustafa Kibaroğlu (Ed.), *Turkey's Neighborhood*, Ankara: Foreign Policy Institute, 2008; Alec Rasizade, "Azerbaijan's Prospects in Nogorno-Karabakh", *Journal of Balkan and Near Eastern Studies*, Vol:13, No:2, pp.215-231; Frederick Coene, *The Caucasus: An Introduction*, London: Routledge, 2010.

Energy is seen as equivalent to destiny for Azerbaijan. Once gained its independence, its energy resources were seen as a treasure for Azerbaijan that many other newly independent states that left the Soviet Union did not have. While, generally saying, possessing energy resources has potential to bring a serious return with successful managed processes, it can also turn into a nightmare for some states. The existence of oil and gas deposits in the Caspian Sea fields had long been known and commercialized; but as a sovereign state, Azerbaijan had to take its own decisions and sign international agreements. Azerbaijan's policy on energy required a challenging and multi-dimensional work in the context of both the creation of a sector of serious investment and the inclusion of external actors in the process.[6] While the Karabakh War continued, Azerbaijan continued to negotiate with energy companies and signed agreements on Guneshli and Chirag oilfields in 1992 even though they couldn't be accomplished.[7] The Azerbaijan International Consortium (AIOC), comprising foreign oil companies and SOCAR, signed the "deal of the century" with Azerbaijan government in September 1994. Signing the agreement of 8 billion dollar on Azeri, Guneshli and Chirag oilfields with such leading energy companies as British Petroleum, CHEVRON, INPEX, STATOIL, EXXONMOBIL, TPAO, ITOCHU and HESS was a really outstanding initiative of Azerbaijan as a newly independent country.[8] The natural gas reserves in the Shah Deniz field in 1999 was also a highly effective discovery that made a great difference for Azerbaijan's future.

The last decade of the 20th century represents an intense period in which Azerbaijan's destiny was drawn. While trying to adapt to the new regional and international conjuncture as a newly independent state, it had to deal with its problems and stand strong against the intense activities of non-regional actors. The burden of the war, economic problems, stabilization, occupied territories, demographic problems, regulations regarding institutional structure and establishing intimate relations with other states constituted to be on the main agenda of Azerbaijan in that decade. It should be stated that the presidential periods of first years, in which Ayaz Muttalibov and Ebulfez Elchibey faced more problems and dangers than opportunities, were spent with the struggle to protect independence. After coming to power Haydar Aliyev managed to form respectable and stability promiser domestic and foreign policy by his experience of ruling of Soviet era and successful balancing policy among Russia, Turkey, Iran and USA.

Priorities and Practices of Azerbaijan in the 21st Century

The 21st century presented a process in which Azerbaijan found its identity, under the reign of a new leader, in the light of national, regional and

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6 Tina Flegel, *Foreign Actors' Influence on Azerbaijan's Energy Policy: Decisions Under Complex Uncertainty*, Berlin: Springer, pp.255-396.

7 Pınar İpek, 2008, *op.cit*., p.121.

8 M. Fatih Tayfur and Korel Göymen, "Desicion Making in Turkish Foreign Policy: The Caspian Oil Pipeline Issue", *Middle Eastern Studies*, Vol: 38, No:2, April 2002, p.105.

international developments and with the experiences gained in the previous decade. The main determinants of Azerbaijan in the beginning of the century such as reform in domestic politics, efficiency in foreign policy, development of economy and trade partnerships, completion of state and nation building processes, activity in the international area, taking back the occupied lands became the guidelines. It is possible to classify these determinants as internal and external factors, also.

Heydar Aliyev, who served as the President of Azerbaijan for ten years, went through a serious and wearing period when Azerbaijan experienced difficulties in many aspects. Although he could not save Azerbaijan's territory from the occupation of Armenia, many developments such as establishing international recognition, ensuring domestic stability, initiating energy projects, solving demographic problems, realizing industrial breakthroughs and establishing close relations with non-regional states took place during his period. It is possible to state that the approaches of Ilham Aliyev, elected President after Heydar Aliyev's death in 2003, constitute the basic dynamics of Azerbaijan's policies since then. Although the opposition objected the presidential candidate of Ilham Aliyev after his father on the grounds that the country would turn into a dynastic state, they could not find sufficient support from the public. Issues such as the continuation of the balance policy between Russia and the West, the continuation of stability and economic development, the realization of the projects being worked on and the recapture of the territories occupied by Armenia became more prominent for the citizens.[9] His charismatic and strong leadership profile resulted in strengthening his authority in a short time. It is possible to see the legacy of the presidents of Azerbaijan that, as a valid norm in the Soviet Union, the rule of authoritarian political leaders over the people has been more effective.[10] Ilham Aliyev, on the one hand, adhered to the general practices put forward by the predecessor president, on the other hand, revealed a new mentality in government and foreign relations. With the effects of the conjuncture, Azerbaijan had a more modernist, public-oriented and balanced approach in domestic and foreign policy. Strong emphasizes on such topics as equal income distribution, nationality, common understanding of history, national culture, common destiny and common pain caused by the occupation of Armenia have been the most important factors in his rule that also had constituted the dynamics of the nation-building process that started right after its independence.[11] It is possible to state that Ilham Aliyev behaves so calmly and makes long-term policy calculations, and his priority lies in economic development and social peace. The solution of the Karabakh issue and the

9 Alec Rasizade, "Azerbaijan After Heidar Aliyev", *Nationalities Paper*, Vol:32, No:1, 2004, p.138.

10 Ceylan Tokluoğlu, "Perception of State and Leadership in Post-Soviet Azerbaijan (1991-2009)", *Middle Eastern Studies*, Vol:48, No:3, 2012, p.322.

11 Ceylan Tokluoğlu, "Definition of National Identity, Nationalism and Ethnicity in post-Soviet Azerbaijan in the 1990s", *Ethnic and Racial Studies*, 2005, pp.723-724.

liberation of the occupied territories have been only linked to a planned process in which popular support is provided and economic superiority is established.[12]

From the first years of independence until today, the nation-building process has been intensified, efforts have been made to increase national awareness, especially with the presence of Karabakh and the occupied territories on the agenda, and steps have been taken to strengthen citizenship ties with the emphasis on democratization and equality. Especially the prosperity created by economic development and the balancing policy followed in foreign policy, as well as the fact that Azerbaijan avoided being affected by regional and global problems had positive effects on the public opinion. It is seen that the process of creating a national identity where modernization and traditional cultural ties are intertwined has been successfully held over time. It should also be noted that the emphasis on identity in nation building in Azerbaijan has had two aspects: ethnicity based nationalism and citizenship based nationalism.[13]

By the 2000s, Azerbaijan had a population that increased rapidly compared to the Soviet period and reached 8 million, with a high percentage of young and working people. Of course, economic difficulties of the post-Soviet period, burden of the war with Armenia and people who had to leave their homes, the collapse of the industrial networks that existed in the Soviet era, the economic shrinkage in the transition to the market economy led to decrease in employment rate, monthly income and the quality of the labor force. That situation directly or indirectly triggered demographic problems such as increase in infant deaths, decrease in marriage rate, and the orientation of qualified personnel to opportunities abroad.[14] Thus, socio-economic issues that Azerbaijan to deal with quickly became the priority of ruling elites.

Especially after the shaky 90s, the awareness of the importance of economic breakthrough in ensuring inner peace, consolidating the rulership and conducting foreign relations more easily increased rapidly. There was observed an economic potential in Azerbaijan in which agriculture, tourism and industry sectors like energy, petrochemical products, textile, machinery, and export items like oil, natural gas, cotton, fruit, vegetables, gold and other minerals were included.[15] According to World Bank data, Azerbaijan's GDP was 8.7 billion dollars in 1991, 3 billion dollars in 1995 following the war, 5.2 billion dollars in

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12 Svante E. Cornell, *op.cit*, p.111.

13 Rauf R. Garazov, "Azrbaijani History and Nationalism in the Soviet and post-Soviet Periods: Challanges and Dilemmas*, Dynamics of Asymmetric Conflict*, Vol:5, No:2, 2012, p.140.

14 S. Muradov, "Demographic Trends in Azerbaijan on the Threshold of the Twenty-First Century: Principle Tendencies and Problems", *Sociological Research*, Vol:40, No: 3, 2001, p.35.

15 Jens Hölscher, "Azerbaijan in Transition", *IAI Working Paper*, No:12/20, 2012, pp.4-6.

2000, 13 billion dollars in 2005, 52.9 billion dollars in 2010, 75.2 billion dollars in 2014 while it was realized 48 billion dollars in 2019.[16]

Although the presence of hydrocarbons represented a strong support for Azerbaijan in the independence process, the situation known as the "curse of oil" soon reminded itself. That situation, which is also included in the literature as the Dutch Disease, is based on the fact that when the growth of the country's economy based on a single item, it may create structural problems by leaving other sectors undeveloped. Evaluating Azerbaijan's economic prosperity shaped by oil and natural gas exports, Shannon O'lear expresses that the curse of resources creates a sensitive economy that rises above a single resource sale and may cause such consequences as reducement in the diversity in the economy by undermining the development of other sectors, neglected social welfare, rise in income inequality, and dominance of the ruling class and privileged segments on the sector in question. [17]

Undoubtedly, for Azerbaijan, the Armenian-occupied territories have formed both the most important redline and the national cause and the main determinant of its policies. While Karabakh, at the center of the conflicts that started in 1988 and flared up after the collapse of the Soviet Union, created political, cultural, historical, geographical-strategic and economic value for Azerbaijan, while its occupied lands became a matter of honor.[18] When it came to the beginning of the 2000s, despite the intensity of diplomacy after the ceasefire, no solution was found and the heat of the problem continued. Especially within the framework of the Minsk Group, concrete steps could not be taken despite the 1997 and 1998 drafts and the heavy bilateral meeting traffic in 1999. In the process that has come to the present, decades after its establishment, the Minsk Group negotiations have not been concluded with a final decision. With the all-year experience, it may be stated that the Minsk Group could not produce a solution to the problem, but prevented the escalation of the conflicts with the negotiation ground. From the Azerbaijan side, the influence of the Armenians who live in countries of three co-chairmen of the Minsk Group and their strong lobbying activities and the fact that national interests are at the forefront rather than a fair solution initiative leaves the negotiations inconclusive.[19] The 2000s witnessed a process of intense meetings attended by presidents or foreign ministers within OSCE. OSCE's intense belief that the problem would be resolved peacefully remained inconclusive despite Azerbaijan's positive approach. Despite awaring of Russia's pro-Armanian

16 World Bank Databank, "Azerbaijan Country Profile: GDP", https://data.worldbank.o rg / indicator/NY.GDP.MKTP.CD?locations=AZ.

17 Shannon O'Lear, "Azerbaijan's Resoruce Wealth: Political Legitimacy and Public Opinion", *The Geographical Journal*, Vol:173, No:3, 2007, p.209.

18 Thomas de Waal, *Black Garden: Armania and Azerbaijan Through Peace and War*, New York: University Press, 2003.

19 Shamkal Abilov, "OSCE Minsk Group: Proposals and Failure, the View From Azerbaijan", *Insight Turkey*, Vol:20, No: 1, 2018, pp.155-156.

approach, Azerbaijan has persistently pursued a strategy of being in the negotiations in order to gain the support of the international community.[20]

Failure to provide concrete progress with diplomatic negotiations, Armenia's not taking a step back and Russia's clear demonstration of its military support to the other party resulted in Azerbaijan increasing its military spending and investment from year to year. According to the data of Stockholm International Peace Research Institute (SIPRI), while the military expenditures of Azerbaijan and Armenia were close to each other in the 90's, Azerbaijan increased the expenditures of the opposite side by two, then by three, and then by four. Finally, in 2019, while Azerbaijan spent 1.85 billion dollars in military requirements, Armenia provided 670 million dollars.[21] Military expenditures of Azerbaijan and Armenia in recent years constitute approximately 4-5% of their GDP. Although the rates are almost the same, it should be stated that Azerbaijan's GDP is approximately 49 billion dollars in 2019 and Armenia's is 14 billion dollars. [22] As the international recognition of Azerbaijan increased, the pipeline projects became more efficient, and its economic prosperity and military capacity increased, Armenia understood that it would not win in a new military struggle and sought more support from Russia. [23] In this context Azerbaijan has moved economic, military, cultural relations with Turkey to a higher point, which has been seen as a stabilizing political force. Since its independence, Turkey has represented a friend-model country for Azerbaijan that expresses lots of links with the motto of "one nation, two states", successfully carried out the state-building and nation-building process, strengthened its independence over the years and completed the integration phases into the world economic market.[24] Turkey's financial, technical and training aid and support in international platforms has been crucial for Azerbaijan with its claims against Armenia.

Generally, Azerbaijan has to maintain balancing approach in foreign policy. Policy makers create a delicate balance on the slippery ground between territorial dynamics, regional imperatives and international pressures. Azerbaijan has been in pursuit of setting up multi-dimensional relations and forming cooperation with Russia, USA, Iran, Turkey, Israel, India, Pakistan, Europe, China, and Central Asian states. Undoubtedly, Azerbaijan welcomed

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20 Süha Bölükbaşı, *Azerbaijan: A Political History*, London: I. B. Tauris, 2011, pp.210-213.

21 Stockholm International Peace Reseach Institute (SIPRI), "Military Expenditure by Country: 1988-2019", 2020, https://www.sipri.org/sites/default/ files/Data%20 for% 20all%20 countries %20from%201988%E2%80%932019%20in%20constant %20 % 282018%29%20USD.pdf.

22 World Bank Databank, "Military Expenditure (% of GDP)- Azerbaijan", https:// data.worldbank. org/indicator/MS.MIL.XPND.GD.ZS?end=2019&locations=AZ&start=1993&view=chart.

23 Tracey German, "The Nagorna Karabkh Conflict Between Azerbaijan and Armenia: Security Issues in the Caucasus", *Journal of Muslim Minorty*, Vol:32, No:2, pp.217-218.

24 Umut Arık, "The New Independent States and Turkish Foreign Policy", Kemal H. Karpat (Ed.),*Turkish Foreign Policy: Recent Developments,* Madison, Wisconsin University Press, 1996, p.33

cooperation, support and assistance offers of many states in political, economic, military, technical and technological, scientific, cultural and sports fields since its independence. However, the redline of Azerbaijan has been strong emphasis of interdependence and stressed denial of dominance of any state. In this context, a pragmatist and balancing oriented and multi-sided foreign policy understanding has been adopted. For instance, below-mentioned pipeline projects became active in 2005 and in 2006 respectively while Azerbaijan signed a security agreement with Iran to fight narcotics, organized crime, and terrorism in August 2004. On the other hand, Aliyev declared 2006 as the Russian Year in response to declaration of 2005 as Azerbaijan Year in Russian Federation.[25] The declaration of 2016 as "The Year of Multiculturalism" and 2017 as "The Year of Islamic Solidarity" seem to be important examples. The issue of Nagorno-Karabakh and its occupied territories has been the main factor in these multi-dimensional relations.[26] Being on the land and air transit route in the Eurasian region provides Azerbaijan a serious geostrategic importance. That feature, which has been tried to be highlighted since its independence and made various investments in this sense, has been brought to the agenda with a new perspective. Azerbaijan has sought to establish a physical, commercial and cultural link between Central Asia-Caucasus-Europe. Therefore, it has also directly supported regional integration initiatives that have potential to create dynamism in the Caucasus.[27]

Although Azerbaijan-centered perspective is adopted in the study, the policies of Georgia and Armenia and the orientation of other states to the region are undoubtedly one of the main determinants of the country. The historical relations with the other two actors of the region draw the direction of every step Azerbaijan takes. In addition, the fact that the Caucasus has received intense interest from non-regional actors creates a serious policy diversity. Both the policies of these actors on the region and their bilateral relations with Azerbaijan have brought about a dynamic process.

Azerbaijan and Georgia have been experiencing an uncommon problem-free neighborhood process for years. Through 2000s one of the major developments affecting the relations was Transcaucasian projects initiated and facilitated by Turkey while the other one was Russia-Georgia War of 2008. As energy and transportation projects that add value to the region brought the two states closer to each other, it is possible to state that bilateral solidarity was demonstrated in 2008, even though there was no strong resistance against the

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25 Hooman Peimani, *Conflict and Securtiy in Central Asia and the Caucasus*, California, ABC-CLIO, 2009, p.252.

26 Sana Imran, *op.cit*, p.110.

27 Anar Valiyev and European Council on Foreign Relations, "Azerbaijan", *Absorb And Conquer: An EU Approach To Russian and Chinese Integration In Eurasia,* European Council on Foreign Relations, 2016, p.29.

increasing Russian influence on the region during the war. [28] On the other hand, Armenia pursued a policy based on direct hostility against Azerbaijan. The insistence of possesin on Nagorno-Karabakh's caused a war with Azerbaijan and reaction-awakening occupation of other districts of its neighbor besides Nagorno-Karabakh. Coupled with troubles with Turkey, the occupation led to exclusion of Armenia by regional actors and it became more dependent on Russia over time.

Azerbaijan had an increasing importance during the period of intense relations with the near abroad that Russia started under Putin administration. It is impossible to deny the influence of Russia in the search for economic influence especially through energy politics in the region.[29] Azerbaijan focuses on the maximum gains it may achieve in bilateral relations, while opposing Russia's growing influence in the region. In this context, Azerbaijan prefers balancing, small compromise or complete neutrality from time to time with its relations to Russia.[30] Turkey has been pursuing a close policy towards the region because of its neighborly relations, historical ties, cultural sharing, search for economic partnership, regional power identity and security needs.[31] Continuously highlightened ethnic and cultural ties make Turkey advantageous in relations with Azerbaijan in response to other states. On the other side, Iran has an intense interest in Azerbaijan due to its aim of spreading regional influence and the sensitivity of the situation of millions of Azeri in the country. In addition, it should be stated that Iran, as country rich in hydrocarbons, closely monitors Azerbaijan's energy sector. The USA and European states have established close relations with Azerbaijan in order to be effective in the strategic Caucasus politics, and to take part in energy projects through the oil and natural gas reserves in the Caspian Sea. Intense attempts have been made for Azerbaijan to have Western-oriented understanding. Although Azerbaijan has never applied to NATO or made an official statement in this direction, it should be stated that it maintains close relations with the Organization. Keeping its relations with NATO at a certain level due to its sensitive location, Azerbaijan took a close stance especially in military training and technical support issues. For example, the relationships developed with military training in 2008 were

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28 Andrew C. Kuchins, Jeffrey Mankoff and Oliver Backes, "Azerbaijan's Foreign Economic and Security Policy", *Azerbaijan in a Reconnecting Eurasia*, Centre for Strategic and International Relations, 2016, pp.9-10.

29 Fariz Ismailzade, *Russia's Energy Interests in Azerbaijan: A Comparative Study of the 1990s and the 2000s*, London: GMB Publishing, 2006, p.18.

30 Anar Aliyev and Narmina Mamishova, "Azerbaijan's Foreign Policy Towards Russia Since Independence: Compromise Achieved", *Southestearn European and Black Sea Studies*, Vol:19, No:2, 2019, pp.271-272.

31 Ali Faik Demir, "Türkiye'nin Güney Kafkasya'ya Yönelik Dış Politikasını Oluşturmasında Rol Oynayan Unsurlar", Mustafa Aydın and Çağrı Erhan (Eds.), *Beş Deniz Havzasında Türkiye*, Ankara: Siyasal Kitapevi, 2006, pp.116-117.

put into practice with the Defense Education Enhancement Program (DEEP), which was implemented in conjunction with NATO in 2009.[32]

For Azerbaijan, foreign policy is expected to serve political stability and economic development in the main context. While relations with other states and international organizations ensure the establishment of a political order through democratization, cooperation with other states and energy companies on the basis of energy relations has created a positive impact on the economy.[33] It is necessary to express that Azerbaijan has been conducting an intense public diplomacy activity in order to increase its international recognition and to gain a more concrete place within the international community. Undoubtedly, the main goal here has been to increase the awareness and support of other societies regarding Armenian occupation, which could not be achieved through diplomatic activities carried out by the parties. In this context, it is possible to utter international organizations hosted, civil society meetings, sports activities and intensive promotional activities carried out abroad as the implementations of that goal. Hosting 2012 Eurovision Song Contest, 2015 European Games, 2017 Islamic Solidarity Games and some matches of UEFA European Football Championship 2020 (postponed to 2021) stands out as the concrete steps of Azerbaijan in this matter.[34] As an additional information, Azerbaijan`s participation in the Non-Alignment Movement in 2011 seems to be an important development. It is possible to define its evolution from observer membership to full membership in this formation, which is also considered as The Third World, as a manifestation of the search for an independent and balancing-based foreign policy beyond being a short-term and sudden initiative for Azerbaijan.[35]

The energy sector came to mean of great opportunity for the financial bottleneck after dissolution of USSR, and the increasing economic difficulties due to the ongoing conflict and internal problems throughout the 90s. Commercialization of hydrocarbon resources and attracting foreign investment to the country have been the main priority in this context, and the Baku-Tbilisi-Ceyhan Oil Pipeline (BTC) and Baku-Tbilisi-Erzurum Natural Gas Pipeline (BTE) were put into operation in 2005 and 2006, respectively. Azerbaijan, which follows a distinctively effective policy in the process of designing and realizing projects, has both increased its national income in the years following the oil flow and has become a more recognized state in international politics over time.[36] Energy policies, which are of great importance for the region in general and for Azerbaijan in private, could be directly affected by both national

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32 Thomas Fedyszyn, "Moving Westward: The Azerbaijan DEEP Experience", *Connections,* Vol:11, No:4, 2012, pp.91-92.

33 Ceylan Tokluoğlu*, op. cit*., pp.325-26.

34 Chira Loda, *op. cit*., pp.44-47.

35 Jason E. Strakes, "Azerbaijan and the Non-Aligned Movement: Institutionalizing the 'Balanced Foreign Policy' Doctrine", *IAI Working Paper*, No: 15/11, 2015, pp.5-6.

36 Chira Loda, "Azerbaijan, Foreign Policy and Public Diplomacy", *Irish Studies in International Affairs*, No:27, 2016, pp.39-40.

problems and regional dynamics.[37] While relations based on energy were run for economic development on the one hand, they were also meant as a card for other states and companies against Armenia even when the first signatures were signed in 1994. The prosperity from energy projects over the past years has unfortunately not ensured an international pressure against Armenia to Azerbaijan's taking back its lands. Only sometimes, under pressure from Azerbaijan, American companies brought up various theses against the Armenian diaspora in Washington.[38] Nevertheless, with the effects of BTC and BTE on economic development, stabilization, attracting investment, increasing mobility, creating employment, attracting international attention, helping the development of different sectors there came out positive economic, political and demographic impacts on the region.[39] After the realization of BTC and BTE, many projects were brought to the agenda for the delivery of Azerbaijani oil and gas to Western markets, and ultimately, the Trans-Anatolian Natural Gas Pipeline (TANAP) was launched in 2018. TANAP, which creates the Southern Gas Corridor (SGC) together with the South Caucasus Pipeline (SCP) and the Trans Adriatic Pipeline (TAP), is recognized as one of the best projects in the energy field. It is planned that the gas flow starting with 16 bcm over TANAP, which has a length of 1850 km, will increase by 31 billion bmc over the years. Meeting the natural gas demand in European markets and creating alternative routes are seen as the main objective of the project.[40]

It is possible to state that the 2008 Russia-Georgia War had a significant impact on Azerbaijan's foreign policy. Russia's absolute victory and its practices in Abkhazia and South Ossetia raised serious concerns over the former Soviet Republics. It wouldn't be wrong to claim that Azerbaijan began to follow a policy of bandwagoning towards Russia after witnessing the military power and dare of Russia.[41] Before the war, the social activities of Western non-governmental organizations, various economic aid programs from the US and EU states, NATO's perception on Azerbaijan as a safe zone for Afghanistan operations, and passionate search for an alternative energy corridor to Russia and Iran led an intense Western interest in Azerbaijan which had gradually been resulting in a pro-Western line in the minds of political elites and public opinion.[42] Being together in BTC, BTE and rail projects with Georgia, Turkey

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37 Pınar İpek, "Azerbaijan's Foreign Policy and Challanges for Energy Security", *The Middle East Journal*, Vol.63, No:2, 2009, pp.237-238.

38 Alec Rasizade, "Azerbaijan's Prospects in Nagorno-Karabakh", *The Journal of International Issues*, Vol:15, No:2, 2011, p.163.

39 Muhammad Zubair Iqbal and Nasir Shah, "The Baku-Tbilisi-Ceyhan Pipeline: Political and Economic Impact", *Pakistan Horizon*, Vol:68, No:1, 2015, pp.70-72.

40 Fatih Erdem, "TANAP, 'Silk Road of Pipelines' Serving for Environmental and Social Justice", *IAIA18 Conference Proceedings: Environmental Justice in Societies in Transition*, 2018, http://www.tanap-seip.com/environment/TANAP_Silk_Road_of_Pipelines.pdf

41 Anar Aliyev and Narmina Mamishova, *op.cit*, p.274.

42 Aytan Gahramanova, "Internal and External Factors in the Democratization of Azerbaijan", *Democratization,* Vol:16, No:4, 2009, pp.794-795.

and Azerbaijan didn't stand clearly against Russia while advocating reestablishment of stability and territorial integrity in the region.

Although the domestic and foreign policy makers of Azerbaijan have proved differences periodically from the 2000s to the present day, spread of income equality to the society, development of institutionalization in the functioning of the state, enhancement of military power, commercialization of energy resources in the most profitable way, increase of international recognition, gathering international support for retaking of the occupied regions and neutralizing non-regional states, at least Russia in particular, pursuing a policy of balance between global and regional powers in foreign relations have been main approaches. In this context, Azerbaijani economy looks to the future with hope as a state that is growing gradually, social solidarity is increasing, has ensured its stability and finally liberated its occupied territories from the occupation of Armenia. In this context, Azerbaijan looks to the future with hope as a state whose economy is prospering, social solidarity is increasing, stability successfully ensured and occupied territories freed.

In Lieu of Conclusion: Victory and the Future

2020 will always be remembered as a special year for Azerbaijan in the future. The de facto occupation of Karabakh, which deeply shook Azerbaijan's national security, territorial integrity, sovereignty and prestige, has come to an end. Since the ceasefire of 1994, the lack of a peaceful solution in the international arena and intermittent border conflicts has already increased the expectations for a new war in the Caucasus. After the clashes that took place on the border line in the Tovuz region in July 2020 diminished, another flared up again in the Nagorno-Karabakh region on 27 September. The war ended with the ceasefire between Azerbaijan and Armenia at the table where Russia was present on 10 November. As Armenian Prime Minister Nikol Pashinyan admitted, Azerbaijan got an absolute and crushing victory in the war. According to the ceasefire, the parties remained in their current position, the occupied territories would gradually be given to Azerbaijan back, Russian peacekeeping forces would be deployed in the Nagorno-Karabakh region and Armenian soldiers would withdraw gradually, the displaced people would return to their homes, a link road would be formed between Azerbaijan and Nakhchivan Autonomous Republic.

Undoubtedly, the occupation of Karabakh and other districts created severe political, economic, cultural and demographic consequences for Azerbaijan, while it has been a matter of honor for its national identity and a matter of respect in the international arena. With the victory, Azerbaijan both achieved its purpose and reached a position that it cannot easily lose in the region. Azerbaijan tested its will, economic strength, bilateral and multilateral relations established patiently for years, pragmatist balancing foreign policy, military power, its impact in the international area and national consciousness among the society during the war between 27 September-10 November. As a result, it forced the other side to accept defeat. Undoubtedly, Azerbaijan

bypassed a serious threshold by solving a situation in which a significant part of its territory was occupied as a result of a defeat with another war. That development may create many political, economic, demographic, cultural, military and commercial consequences in favor of Azerbaijan in the future. Thus, it is possible to express Azerbaijan's policy that contains strong emphasis on law and peace talks, prioritizes public welfare and national identity, targets economic development through successful energy politics, sets out concrete will to increase military power in cooperation with states such as Turkey, Russia, Israel and based on a balanced and pragmatic relations with other actors has reached to fruition.

It is quite natural that the occupation of its territory puts a heavy burden on a state. After being exposed to this situation for nearly 24 years, Azerbaijan will start to experience its independence and the 21st century from the beginning with a promising ceasefire agreement. Of course, it should not be overlooked that the West will seek to balance again against the influence that Russia, which is effective in the ceasefire process, has created in the Caucasus recently. Although many states support publicly or semi-publicly during the war waged by Azerbaijan, Russia's strong presence at the ceasefire table should not be overlooked. Surely the image reflected to the world from the negotiating table has been a matter of concern for the United States, European states, Turkey and Iran. After its indisputable superiority to Georgia in 2008, the position formed in the eyes of Azerbaijan and Armenia after this war has shown that Russia is returning to the Caucasus completely. After this process, how the economic, political, military and diplomatic relations in the Caucasus will be realized will be an important issue to be examined. In the following period, how the economic, political, military and diplomatic relations in the Caucasus be shaped will be an important issue to be examined.

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National Identity, Foreign Policy and Conflicts in Georgia

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Introduction

The 1990s are the years when the world system was rearranged and almost everything about the past was changed. During these years, the Soviet Union collapsed and/or dissolved, and many new states emerged out of the eastern block. New states/governments, having been separated from a 70-year-old communist system, were born into a new world order where the capitalist system prevails. The new world order that they were born into was in no ways familiar to them—neither institutionally nor societally. For this reason, they pushed hard for maintaining their existence in this system. The effort to keep up with the new world order has always been tiresome, but it was even harder for the post-Soviet Union countries. For the first time in 70 years, the former Soviet states had to confront the international community alone. These states had to redefine themselves both in terms of domestic and foreign policy. In other words, these states had to re-determine their national identity, their perception of the world, and their position in their regions and within the world (Minesashvili 11).

The first action that these post-Soviet Union countries should take was the [re-]construction of the national identity and the simultaneous creation of a new foreign policy. However, at the end of the Soviet Union period, the political and economic structure of the Caucasian region countries was inextricable. Ethnic groups were made hostile to each other in various regions, and a constant instability was created. As a result, hostilities became permanent (Kantarcı 227). It is precisely for this reason that a severe national identity construction was carried out in countries that gained their independence in the Caucasian region, and this national identity construction was held in "I *versus* other" form. This dominant stance in national identity construction opened up a broader gap between ethnic minority groups and countries—even caused conflicts in some places.

Undoubtedly, Georgia is one of the Caucasian countries where this situation was most experienced in the region. From the perspective of both ethnic structure and the nation-building process, Georgia emerges as one of the most complicated and conflict-ridden countries. It also requires special attention, as it is pregnant with new conflicts.

In this context, within the scope of this study, Georgia's national identity construction, the effect of national identity on Georgian foreign policy, and the conflicts in Georgia are discussed. In this direction, firstly, the development of

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the Georgian national identity in the historical process is touched briefly. Then, post-independence national identity building policies are included. Finally, the conflicts between Abkhazia and South Ossetia, which are the results of the national identity construction process, and their consequences are discussed.

National Identity and Foreign Policy

We can talk about three different variables as the source of foreign policy. These are cultural goals, ideological goals, and material interests. These three variables, from time to time, are influential in shaping the foreign policies of countries. For example, the Islamic Republic of Iran's dependence on religious belief, so that the infidels are not influential in the Islamic world, shows a cultural impulse. Similarly, in 1970's Germany, West Germany's easing of restrictions on East Germany despite all ideological differences shows ethnic sensitivities. Again, Soviet foreign policy practices show how effective the ideology is in foreign policy. Soviet Russia was closely involved with Indonesia and Angola, although they were of little strategic importance for carrying out the World Proletarian Revolution that Marx envisioned. When we look at the effect of material interests on foreign policy, we come across a rational choice approach. As shared by the realist paradigm in general and liberal thought to a lesser extent, the desire for security, comfortable life, material development, and domination are the most fundamental values of humanity. Since these values reflect the people's wishes, they are also accepted as the "national interests" of the states concerned.

Moreover, based on the assumption that states pursue their goals in rational ways, states are expected to act within this foreign policy paradigm. In the war between India and Pakistan in 1971, India signed a friendship agreement with the Soviet Union to prevent Pakistan's possible alliance and the People's Republic of China. Examples include France's partnership with the Russians to protect themselves from Germany, and the Soviet Union and China's abandonment of socialism as an economic system in the early 1990s—the interests of these states on prosperity and sovereignty apparently had a more decisive influence than their ideological commitment to the ideas of Marx, Lenin, and Mao (Fisher 52).

As can be seen in the examples above, cultural goals, material interests, and ideological goals have a direct or indirect influence on states' foreign policy choices. It is crucial for states or governments to make sure that all these three influences (*i.e.*, cultural, ideological, and material) are included in their choices and/or decisions concerning their foreign policies (Bayar 85). In this context, national identities that states or countries build throughout history can be effective in forming their foreign policies along with many other parameters, since societies that build their national identity interact with different cultures and classify them as "one of us *versus* the other." National identities include legends, myths, heroisms, successes, and failures. That's why almost every society has specific historical duties and missions they assign to themselves. Thus, states consider themselves different from others. In this sense, a

country's national identity plays a vital role in shaping that country's relations with the world in a regional and global context (Efegil 200).

In essence, each state's identity is a product of identity creation practices. Identity creation practices are related to the processes of nationalization of states, that is, establishing a new state as a political entity and creating a sense of having a (national) identity (Bloom 55). Collective memory plays a significant role in these processes because identity is constructed through symbols, myths, beliefs, habits, and knowledge that make up the collective memory (Bilgin 53).

Georgian National Identity in the Historical Process

During the great occupations for centuries, Georgia has been a buffer state between and/or among many countries. Pre-Christian Georgia (Kartli-Iberia Kingdom) was neighbors with Persians in the East and Ancient Greeks in the West. Post-Christian Georgia was disconnected from the Christian world, especially after the Ottoman conquest of Istanbul in 1453. After this process, the national identity of Georgia was constructed over religion. The logic behind was that Georgia could only protect herself in this way. For this reason, Georgia has always sought help from the Christian West. With the Bolshevik revolution of 1917, Georgia became a part of the Soviet Union until 1991. In the late 1980s, the term "*kartveloba*" began to refer to Georgian history, culture, language, and land—formally or informally. The discourse behind this term coincides with the Georgian ideology in the Middle Ages. But with a difference. Ideology was no longer the ideology of the elite; from that time on, the ideology belonged to whole society. The institutionalized and democratized education system in the Soviet Union reached each and every Georgian, causing a well-educated generation to be raised. This factor, which has been influential in the process of creating national identity since the 19th century, has been completed in the modern age (Mirzayeva 538).

At the end of the 1980s, at the heart of the dissolution process, as in all peoples within the Soviet Union, national unions aiming at independence were formed in Georgia. The most important of these was the Ilia Çavçavadze Association, established in the autumn of 1987 in Georgia. This association, also known as the "Fourth Group," is considered one of the most important national organizations. The association carried out activities around issues such as the defense of the Georgian language and heritage, preservation of historical structures, and resistance against Russification. Later, in 1988, new organizations emerged such as the Society of Saint Ilia the Righteous led by Zviad Gamsahurdiya, and others under the leadership of Georgia Chanturia Association (Eşiyok 53).

In retrospect to the Georgian national identity's historical development before independence, Orthodox Georgian Christianity, Georgian language, and historical Georgian identity appear as three critical components. Although Georgia's Christian identity causes controversy from time to time, it plays a vital role in establishing connections with Europe through identity.

Characterized by the lack of a free civil society and the corresponding political culture, the post-Soviet reality provided a fertile environment for enlivening and reinforcing the ethnoreligious myths and symbols that determined the direction and pace of the transition process. In search for a new identity, it can be observed that religion often provides the value system needed.

The three components mentioned in the post-independence period once again have an important place. These components have been influential in constructing Georgia's national identity, in the country's internal conflicts during the post-independence period, and in shaping its foreign policy. The post-independence history of Georgia is divided into three periods: [i] the Zviad Gamsahurdiya period, which is also considered the nationalist period, [ii] the Eduard Shevardnadze period expressed as the reasonable period, and [iii] the Miheil Saakashvili period, where integrative policies are more prominent.

Zviad Gamsahurdia Period (1991-1992)

In 1990-1991, Gamsakhurdia played a special role in reconstructing the idea of *kartveloba* and in reviving Georgian legends. Çavçavadze's future secular project was turned into a religious project based on the past by Zviad Gamsakhurdia. As can be deduced from his addresses, the reason why Gamsakhurdia chose this path was that he saw the Georgian Orthodox Church as the sole factor that was capable of preserving Georgian unity and territorial integrity. Besides, Georgian historiography was another essential issue in the preservation of Georgian identity. It served protecting Georgian people from being assimilated among “enemy” Muslims. The Church played a vital role in maintaining common identity and language (Mirzayeva 539).

The rise of nationalism in Georgia, or rather the rise of ethnoreligious nationalism, took place not only during Gamsakhurdia's presidency of the Georgian Supreme Soviet, but also during his presidency of Independent Georgia. Gamsakhurdia tried to unite the Georgians around ethnoreligious nationalism, but this unification work also brought about discrimination against those who did not hold the Orthodox faith. Therefore, its form of nationalism reveals a close link between Georgian ethnicity and Orthodox Christianity (Vachridze 84). This link is crucial. That is, without taking Gamsakhurdia's understanding of nationalism observed in the Soviet period into account, the current state of Georgian nationalism cannot be understood. The importance of Georgian Orthodox Christianity and Georgia's ongoing influence on ethnic minorities can only be understood by taking Gamsakhurdia's Soviet-era nationalism into account.

Gamsakhurdia is one of the most influencial political actors in the independence process of Georgia. Merab Kostava —a key figure in the Georgian national movement— founded the Georgian Helsinki Group in 1976. The main goal of this group was to protect Georgian culture from Soviet ideology. This focus led Helsinki Group to operate separately from the Moscow Group. The

group played an essential role in “preparing the ideological background of independent Georgia.” By 1988, Gamsakhurdia and his supporters founded the Georgian People's Front which aimed at supporting Gorbachev’s reforms and gathering information concerning Soviet-Georgia events that may be useful in gaining independence (Wheatley 42).

Nationalist trends have not been experienced only by Georgians. In the last phase of the Soviet Union, these trends were on the rise among ethnic minorities, and different groups triggered each other's nationalism. In the context of this mutual influence, it can be said that the rising nationalism among minorities contributed to the strengthening of Georgian nationalism. The most basic example of this is Abkhaz and South Ossetians. Georgian nationalism has developed with the search for the independence of different ethnic minorities such as Abkhaz and South Ossetians within Georgia's borders (Aydıngün and Asker 132). In this sociopolitical environment, Gamsakhurdia reacted sharply to the demands of ethnic communities for independence and intensified Georgian nationalist loyalty. He also considered minority groups as potential traitors of the country and developed a strict nationalist discourse to prevent them from leaving Georgia (Nodia and Scholtbach 10).

The increasing Georgian nationalist movements in the last period of the Soviet Union triggered the Union's dissolution and/or collapse and facilitated Georgia's independence. However, the influence of nationalist movements is not limited to this. In the post-Soviet period, it led to the division of the Georgian people. During this period, a group of radical Georgians emerged and showed an uncompromising attitude. Radical Georgians opposed any compromise with Soviet-era Georgian rulers in domestic politics and with Moscow in foreign policy. A second group also emerged in this period. This group, expressed as moderate Georgians, took a more careful and reasonable approach to the old power centers. Nevertheless, with the arrival of Gamsakhurdia in the Georgian administration in 1991, the group that gained the upper hand was the radical Georgians (Aşurov 88).

The political side of Gamsakhurdia demonstrated the indispensability of the Georgian Church and language for the restoration of state independence. For this reason, his nationalist project was based on moral values that could build an old collective unity. However, another nationalist leader of the period, Batiashvili of Iraq, expressed his emphasis on religion quite strikingly and said "as a Georgian, I owe myself to be a Christian." The Gamsakhurdia Government's indifference to the solutions of economic problems and to the current situation prevented Georgia from taking advantage of its historical opportunity of establishing a national state. It deepened religious fundamentalism and extremism. This brought along conflicts among minorities (Mirzayeva 540).

As mentioned above, extreme nationalist attitudes triggered conflicts between ethnic groups in Georgia and the Georgian state, and the pressure initiated by the Georgian administration in Abkhazia and South Ossetia resulted in the struggle for independence that started in 1991. The extreme nationalist

policies that drew attention during the Gamsakhurdiya period increased ethnic conflict and opposition groups' supporters. Trying to turn this situation into an opportunity, Russia tried to increase its influence in the region, and attempted to take the area under its control within the scope of her "Near Abroad" policy. Thus, Russia forced Georgia to leave Abkhazia and South Ossetia regions using the Russian Armed Forces in the area. As a result, Gamsakhurdiya, acting with the single and indivisible Georgia policy in the region, actually dragged the country into a civil war. His inconsistent behavior harmed Georgia's unity and solidarity. The conflict between the government and the opposition turned into an armed struggle, and he had to take refuge in Chechnya on January 6, 1992, with the concern of his life safety.

Eduard Shevardnadze Period (1993-2003)

Eduard Shevardnadze served as Minister of Foreign Affairs during the Gorbachev period and became the head of the newly established administration after the military *coup* in 1992. In 1993, he was elected as the head of state. Shevardnadze's positive reputation in the international arena protected him from the criticisms of the West. The political leader performed his duty to regulate the economic conditions, control Georgia's territory, and devise the relations established with minorities (Mirzayeva 540).

When Shevardnadze's political stance is examined, the fitst thing to see is that he tried to implement an equilibrium policy. This policy led Georgia to become a member of the Commonwealth of Independent States in 1993. Membership of the Commonwealth of Independent States caused the opening of Georgian lands to the Russian Federation in order to stop the civil war. Besides, economic partnership with the Russian Federation proved to be vital. Partnership was of critical importance for sustainable economic development in Georgia.

On the other hand, Shevardnadze tried to improve relations with countries in the West, including the United States, to protect the country from potential Russian domination. Besides, it sought to provide international economic and political assistance for Georgia's post-Soviet nation-state development. Success in gaining access to global funds from the USA is regarded as an important progress. Georgia also participated in various European Union programs to ensure food security, enhance transportation infrastructure and improve Georgia's political capacity. With the help of international assistance, Shevardnadze achieved relative success in the early years of his presidency. %% Policies and reforms in the fields of economy and politics gained pace, and being close to the West as a necessity of national security bacame legitimate among politicians. Thanks to all these actions he took, he maintained the country's worldwide recognition (Nodia and Scholtbach 33-34).

Shevardnadze conducted his work in a rather tricky political environment until the end of 1995. At the root of the difficulties lies the adverse conditions of 1992 when he took over the administration. The lack of control of the central

Tbilisi Government in Abkhazia, especially in South Ossetia, the declining dependence of the Adjara region to the central government, and the rule of armed groups affiliated to the former president Gamsakhurdia called "Zviadist" are the most important examples of these negative conditions. (Çelikpala 4).

Shevardnadze, who had a pro-Russian stance, broke his ties with nationalist groups. He entered the October 1995 elections with the Georgian Citizens Union Party he founded. Thanks to the constitutional change before the election, he could run for the office once again. Shevardnadze was elected president with the support of 74% of the voters, and his party gained the majority of the Georgian Parliament with 24%. The success of Shevardnadze and his party continued in the 1999 general elections, and in the presidential elections of the following year (Çelikpala 8).

In 2003, the parliamentary elections emerged as a political turning point that caused Shevardnadze's legitimacy to be shaken. The 2003 parliamentary election results announced by the Georgian Central Election Commission contradict the results of international observers. The Central Election Commission did not hesitate to make an official statement that Shevardnadze's party won. However, international observers such as the International Association for Fair Elections and Democracy and the National Democratic Institute of the United States pointed Mikhail Saakashvili's party as victorious or the winner. Due to these inconsistent results, allegations of voting fraud or gerrymander were brought up, and Shevardnadze's legitimacy was questioned (Nodia and Scholtbach 19). Street protests took place, Saakashvili entered the parliament with protesters holding roses each, forcing Shevardnadze to leave the building and declare his resignation (Hille 244-245). As a result, Shevardnadze announced to go for an early presidential election, which went down or passed into history as "the Rose Revolution."

There seem to be two different projects in the construction of Georgian national identity in this period. One of these aims at building a nationalism focused on ethnic origins. The other regards national identity as synonymous with civilization, and in this context, aims at swerving into the West. Georgians' rigorous position concerning the phenomenon of national identity prevents minorities from fully exercising their citizenship rights, *e.g.*, lack of representation at the state level—during Gamsakhurdia's reign, only Georgians could benefit from citizenship rights. With Shevardnadze's acceptance of the 1995 Constitution, although equality of all citizens —regardless of language, religion, ethnicity— was accepted, suspicions towards national minorities gradually deepened. When all these are taken into consideration, one may claim that Shevardnadze's presidency is charachterized by a quest for balance and stability (Mirzayeva 541).

Mikhail Saakashvili Period (2004-2013)

After the Rose Revolution, Mikhail Saakashvili came to power in 2004 with 96 percent of the vote. The Soros Fund and other US-backed international

organizations contributed to Saakashvili's election campaign. US support's main reason can be expressed as Saakashvili's adoption of Western values and his desire for integration. When he came to power, he was expected to follow a pro-Western policy and drive Georgia away from Moscow. His promising attitude towards establishing close relations with Europe and opening the distance with Moscow provided international support for Saakashvili's electorial campaign.

However, when he came to power, Saakashvili determined the improvement of relations with the Russian Federation as an essential foreign policy element. At the same time, he did not want to lose the support of the USA. Georgia had high expectations from the USA in solving the Abkhazia and Ossetia problems. In a way, Georgia remained at a point between the USA and the Russian Federation regarding foreign policy preferences. While Washington was of primary importance for Georgia, the people's support for the continuation of relations with Moscow seems to be the reason for staying in-between (Köktaş 98).

There were two problems that Saakashvili should primarily solve. First, he was supposed to solve economic problems, he had to improve the economic conditions and the distribution of wealth. Second, he was expected to solve ethnic struggles, he had to provide an environment of compromise between multi-ethnic structures living in the geography—there was an administrative legacy from the Soviets, and this legacy was maintained in the same way. The grievances of ethnic communities began to be relieved *via* the Rose Revolution (Dorokhina 85-88).

The Saakashvili administration can be expressed as the period when [re-]integrative policies began to develop in Georgia. Undoubtedly, Saakashvili's goals included ensuring the integrity of the country, employing the integration with the West, and fighting against corruption. The political leader aimed at building a healthy state, however, its requirements, *i.e.*, the need to adopt the nationalist discourse in creating a healthy state, brought along significant challenges. In this context, the first decision was to change the national flag, more precisely to return to the flag used between 1918-1921. This flag consists of a large red cross that divides the white background into four, each filled with one small red cross. The flag draws attention to Georgia's Christian past and shows its eagerness to say in the Christian civilization again (Aydıngün and Asker 141).

In January 2008, he was elected as the Georgian president for a second term, receiving 56% of the votes, but he has lost his authority significantly (Nichol 3). Due to the Russian intervention in the same year and the subsequent economic crisis, Saakashvili tried to improve its economic ties with neighboring countries (Keskin 47).

As a result, Saakashvili tried to consolidate democracy and strengthen the economy by establishing strong ties with the West. He also sought to ensure the territorial integrity of Georgia by providing fundamental civil rights. Although Saakashvili achieved partial success in his first period, his political authority

was shaken by the August War outbreak in 2008. Economic problems inflicted another heavy blow on his weakening authority. As a result, Saakashvili's 10-year-rule came to an end with the Presidential Elections of 27 October 2013 (Nichol 3-5).

The Abkhazian Problem

As Mikhail Gorbachev came to power in the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics, a new era started with the policies "*glasnost*" and "*perestroika*." With the *glasnost* reform policy, Gorbachev administration took steps to ensure the transparency in democracy and to improve rights and freedoms. *Perestroika* policy, on the other hand, focused on restructuring and/or structural reforms in order to achieve economic growth. Gorbachev's policies in this period were significant concerning independence movements (Eylemer 109).

During this period, Abkhazians' expectations about the status of their region intensified. In June 1988, a group of Abkhazians sent a letter to Gorbachev, requesting the return of Abkhazia's status as the Soviet Socialist Republic of Abkhazia (Toft 94). Thereupon, the Likhni Declaration was signed in 1989. The fact that this declaration acknowledged Abkhazia as a separate republic within the USSR increased the tension between Tbilisi administration and Abkhazia and initiated violence (Aydin 17).

Abkhazians and Ossetians did not participate in the elections held on May 26, 1991, and Gamsakhurdiya, who was elected as the president, started to pursue policies based on Georgian nationalism. Gamsakhurdiya, adopting the idea of "Georgia for Georgians," tried to influence regional policies to protect the rights of Georgians living in Abkhazia. As a result, he was protested by the Abkhazian administration (Demirag 47). After Shevardnadze took office in March 1992, Abkhazia declared her *de facto* independence, and in 1992, the Constitution of Georgia was repealed and the Constitution of Abkhazia was adopted (Hopf 228).

As a result, on August 14, 1992, Georgian forces set foot on the capital of Abkhazia, Sukhum, and war began between the two sides. As a result of Russia's mediation, a ceasefire was declared after the Sochi Treaty of 27 July 1993. However, Abkhazia once again declared her independence on September 20, 1993. Despite the efforts of international organizations involved in the process, the problem remained unsolved (Bozkaya and Eylemer 119).

Tension between Georgia and Abkhazia continued until 2008. International actors and organizations such as the United Nations and the OSCE held talks to lower the tension, but the desired result was not achieved.

The unilateral declaration of independence of Kosovo on February 7, 2008 and the acceptance of this declaration in the world put the Abkhazian administration into action. In August 2008, Abkhazia joined the war between Georgia, South Ossetia, and Russia. After the war, Russia recognized the independence of South Ossetia and Abkhazia and signed amity and cooperation agreements (Bozkaya and Eylemer 119).

South Ossetia Problem

The capital of South Ossetia is Shinvali. The people of the region are Ossetians and Georgians, respectively. The Ossetians, who were together before, were divided into two as the South Ossetia Autonomous Region and the North Ossetia Autonomous Region during the Soviet period. South Ossetia was attached to Georgia and North Ossetia to the Russian Federation (Mert 61). In November 1988, South Ossetia reacted to a draft/proposed law on the enhancement of Georgian language in Georgian parliament, and as a result of these reaction, the Georgian parliament unilaterally declared that South Ossetia abolished its autonomy (Ağacanov 71).

Political tensions began between Georgia and South Ossetia when South Ossetia declared its independence in 1990. After the declaration of independence, Georgian troops set foot on the capital and ignited a civil war. In order to end the civil war, the Russian Federation called for a peace force to be placed between Georgia, North and South Ossetia in 1992. After that, conflicts in the region settled for a short time. However, it did not provide a permanent solution (Gold 26).

As of 2004, Georgia increased control at the South Ossetian border. South Ossetia, on the other hand, wrote a letter to the Duma, expressing her historical relationship with Russia and demanding her independence and the protection of the Russians in its territory. The letter also stated that this demand reflected the will of the people of South Ossetia. A group of people infiltrating South Ossetia captured Georgian soldiers. After 2004, minor conflicts occurred between Georgia and South Ossetia, and the leaders of Georgia and South Ossetia reached agreements, albeit for a short time (Önal 83-84).

In the 2004-2006 period, diplomatic relation networks were established between the UN, OSCE, USA and Russia in order to ensure lasting peace in the region. The paradox in Russia's regional policy has an effect that determines the fate of the South Caucasia. This paradox is undoubtedly related to the inconsistent position of Russia, which both feeds the problems in the region and is involved in cooperation for the solution of these problems (Bozkaya and Eylemler 122).

As a result of the referendum held in South Ossetia in November 2006, independence from Georgia was reiterated. This situation interrupted the negotiations carried out to ensure permanent peace. In 2008, another conflict occurred between the Tbilisi administration and South Ossetia. Both sides blamed each other for initiating the war. Georgian troops continued to advance/proceed and gain ground in South Ossetia. In return, Russia sent troops to South Ossetia and bombed Georgian lands for five days. Abkhazia also got involved in the war, fought against Georgian forces alongside Russian and Ossetian troops. Russia stated that it recognizes South Ossetia's independence after the war (King 6-7).

Conclusion

Some of the problems that Georgia faced recently appear as having deep historical roots. Some of them, on the other hand, appear as emerging especially in the process of independence and in the process of constructing national identity after gaining independence. The reason why such serious adverse or side effects were experienced in this process seems to be that the national identity was built on assimilating and marginalizing (or alienating, othering) terms rather than inclusive elements in a fragile geography—both in terms of religion and ethnicity. This national identity, which was being constructed in Georgia, has deeply influenced her foreign policy, especially in the first years of independence. In the early years, severe attitudes and/or policies in the establishment of domestic peace and in maintaining relations with the Russian Federation caused prejudiced and marginalizing attitudes towards former Soviet employees at home, and hostile attitudes towards Russia in foreign policy.

Considering Abkhazia and South Ossetia problem, nationalist policies stand out as the most important reasons why these two regional problems cannot be solved peacefully. This ethno-religious nationalism implemented by Georgia in the post-independence period made the disputes or agones with these ethnic and religious minority groups inexhaustible.

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The Dynamics of Armenian Foreign Policy Within the Context of Regional Conflicts

Gamze HELVACIKÖYLÜ*

Introduction

Almost after three decades of their independence, South Caucausian states have not gone that far related with their conflicts. Even if they inherited a common strategic environment, they have ongoing conflicts which effect their relations and increase the instability in the region. Georgia, Azerbaijan and Armenia, being all small states, have borders with important regional actors; Turkey, Iran and Russia. Their geographical position have brought them some drawbacks for their economic development. Armenia and Azerbaijan are the landlocked states while Georgia has a sea exit. Additionally, they all have limited military capabilities for sustaining their security and that has made them somehow reliable on other states.

Figure 1. Map of South Causus



Source: https://www.eda.admin.ch/deza/en/home/countries/south-caucasus.html, (accessed on 20.12.2020).

After the collapse of Soviet Union, US and EU have been much more interested in the region and tried to fill the empty seat of a great power. However, as Putin came in power, Russia has gained its regional and global power back and pursued assertive strategies to prevent South Caucausian

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states develop closer relations with the West. Russia returning back into the game had some implications for the status of years long conflicts since Russia is a game changer actor in the region.

Armenia as a small state, following a more irredentist foreign policy in the region, has always been dependent on a powerful Russia in the history. The alliance between Armenia and Russia caused that the conflicts carried over for a long time unless they were to be solved in a way Armenia aimed. Regarding the ambition of Great Armenia, both politically and economically Armenia followed a Russia-first strategy while there have also been attempts to diversify this policy by building closer relations with the West.

In this article, Armenian foreign policy and the relations with its neighbours will be analyzed based on the conflicts. Firstly; Armenian foreign policy regarding the presidential terms, secondly; relations with Azerbaijan and Nagorno-Karabakh conflict, thirdly; relations with Georgia and Javakheti Armenians and lastly relations with Turkey and genocide allegations will be discussed.

The Elements of Armenian Foreign Policy

Following the collapse of Soviet Union, Armenia has been one of the states which gained independence at the same time with Azerbaijan and Georgia in the Caucaus region. However, Armenia has always acted dependent on Russia as part of small state political strategy. Armenia, as a small state, lacks power of implementing a structured foreign policy for its survival and therefore follows an irredentist foreign policy which is a very common application for small states in the post Cold-war era. This small state irredentism is the main rootcause of many conflicts all around the world.

After its independence in 1991, the most important issues for Armenia's foreign policy were related with the border conflicts. Considering the aim of Great Armenia, Armenia had problems with all of its neighbours; Azerbaijan, Georgia and Turkey. Especially, Nagorno-Karabakh issue with Azerbaijan has caused Armenia to rely on Russia for its military security.

Another factor which has an effect on Armenian foreign policy is Armenian Diaspora. Armenian state and diaspora follow the political agenda together in order to achieve Great Armenia. However, the relation between the state and diaspora is not clear on who follows who. Although, Armenia is a locked state and needs to develop closer relations with its neighbours, we observe diaspora's effect on domestic politics which prevent from doing so.

Throughout the years after the dependence, despite the change of leadership, Armenia has followed a consistent foreign policy strategy. The first president Levon Ter-Petrossian was in charge between 1991-1998. Ter-Petrossian prevented to put the recognition of the genocide allegations on the

priority for normalizing relations with Turkey.[1] Since the occupation of Azerbaijan's territories continued during his presidency, it resulted in the closure of Turkish-Armenian border. His tendency to emphasize the importance of the normalization of relations with Turkey caused him to have conflict with diaspora. Moreover, diaspora provided support for Armenian Revolutionary Federation (ARF) after the presidential elections. This led to banning of ARF in Armenia in 1994. With diaspora's support, ARF became strong in United States (US) and continued its anti-Petrossian campaign. In 1996, Ter-Petrossian was elected for his second term and the campaign stating the elections were rigged were started.

Lisbon Summit of the Organization for Security and Cooperration in Europe (OSCE) in 1996, stated that Armenia should withdraw from the occupied territories with his military from Nagorno-Karabakh and all refugees should return back to their home. In 1997, a new peace plan was also drafted in order to resolve Nagorno-Karabakh conflict. This process increased the volume of the campaign against Ter-Petrossian and due to the pressures from both domestic society and diaspora he resigned.

Robert Kocharian, the second president of Armenia, came after Ter-Petrossian and was in duty between 1998-2008. Compared to his predecessor, Kocharian followed a more strict policy regarding the conflicts which Armenia was part of. In that sense, it can be said that Kocharian established a better alignment with diaspora about the priorities of Armenian foreign policy. ARF was allowed to operate in Armenia again as a voice of the diaspora in the domestic environment. In Kocharian era, international recognition of genocide allegations became a priority.[2] Additionally, for the resolution of Nagorno-Karabakh conflict, the attack to the Armenian Parliament had some impact for future. In 1999, Prime Minister Vazgen Sarkissian and Speaker of the Parliament Karen Demirciyan were among the members who were killed at this attack. Even though, Sarkissian seemed to be against Ter-Petrossian's plan for Karabakh resolution, an image was created that he could compromise for a possible solution and also support Kocharian for this. The assassination of him seemed as a clear message for Armenia's standpoint about this matter.[3]

Ser Sarkissian was elected as the President of Armenia in 2008. Like Kocharian, Sarkissian was also born in Nagorno-Karabakh, he first carried the duty of Defence Minister and in 2007 he became Prime Minister. During his presidency, Nagorno-Karabakh continued to be the number one priority of Armenian foreign policy. Sarkissian faced economic problems which he needed to manage conflicting interests of Armenian foreign policy. August 2008 Russia-

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1 Mürsel Bayram, "Ermenistan Dış Politikasında Reelpolitikle Psikopolitiğin Çatışması: Cumhurbaşkanlığı Dönemleri Bağlamında Bir Analiz", *Ahi Evran Üniversitesi Sosyal Bilimler Enstitüsü Dergisi*, Vol: 2, No: 3, 2016, p.70.

2 Selçuk Ural, Güzin Çaykıran "Robert Koçaryan Dönemi Ermenistan Dış Politikası", *Kafkas Üniversitesi Sosyal Bilimler Enstitüsü Dergisi*, Vol: 8, 2011, p.122.

3 Kamer Kasım, "Armenia's Foreign Policy: Small State Irredentism", *Review of Armenian Studies*, Vol: 25, 2012, p.136.

Georgia conflict caused economic problems for Armenia since Armenia-Georgia border, which carried out the main traffic of foreign trade, was closed. Since its borders with two neighbours (Turkey and Georgia) were closed, this resulted in Sarkissian to reconsider normalization of relations with Turkey.

The negative perceptions for Azerbaijan and Turkey have been a major political discourse for Armenian foreign policy. Victimization of Armenia, as a discourse, was not only used to get attention from great powers but also for strenghtening domestic environment of nationalism. The conflicts with the neighbours acted as a tool for defining national identity and connecting the Armenians with the diaspora. When the discourses of the presidents are compared, Ter-Petrosian tried to avoid promoting negative discourse while Kocharyan hardened the political discourse for underlining the foes. The third president Sarkishyan emphasized on resolving the conflicts but after facing the criticisms of the diaspora, he had to step back to guarantee his second term of the presidency.

All of the three presidents of Armenia took place in the negotiation process with Azerbaijan within the framework of Minsk Group of the Organization of Cooperation and Security in Europe (OSCE). The aim has always been achieving the continuity of current situation in which Armenia held the corners.

It seemed quite successful in terms of maintaining the status quo for nearly 30 years of conflict. Additionally, the support of diaspora has always been important for being strong in the domestic politics. Since Armenian Diaspora was a crucial tool of foreign policy, in the National Security Strategy, specific referral to preserving national identity has been mentioned as an important element to preserve and maintain the identity of the nation both within its borders and via its diaspora. Moreover, a possible threat has been stated as a risk of assimilation of Diaspora Armenians.[4]

The design of Armenian foreign policy for balancing between Russia and the West was based on the term complementarity.[5] However, this principle of Armenian foreign policy has lost its balancing power when Armenia decided to join to Eurasion Union which was a customs union initiated by Russia.[6] This decision could be due to the fact that Russia being dominant over the economy of the country more than any other party. For this reason, Armenia stated that the only possibility of cooperating with European Union (EU) could be the case if not contradictory to the agreements for Eurasion Union. This decision was

4 Brenda Shaffer, "Foreign Policies of the States of the Caucaus: Evolution in the Post-Soviet Period", *Uluslararası İlişkiler*, Vol: 7, No: 26, 2010, p.63.

5 Alexander Markarov, Vahe Davtyan, "Post-Velvet Revolution Armenia's Foreign Policy Challenges", *Demokratizatsiya: The Journal of Post-Soviet Democratization*, Vol: 26, No: 4, 2018, p.532.

6 Aram Terzyan, "The EU vs. Russia in the foreign policy discourse of Armenia: the fragility of normative power or the power of Russian coersion?", *Eastern Journal of European Studies*, Vol: 8, No: 2, 2017, p.190.

perceived as a change in complementarity principle towards a Russia-First perspective.[7]

In 2018, a velvet revolution occurred and the new government proposed a new foreign policy program. Following this, Armenian Prime Minister Nikol Pashinyan has visited Iran and Brussels for building cooperation regarding the framework of Armenia-EU Comprehensive and Enhanced Partnership Agreement which was signed in 2018. These can be evaluated as the efforts of adopting Armenian foreign policy for multiple stakeholder engagement. Regarding this, Armenia searched ways of building a friendly partnership with EU and US for financial assistance. However, this efforts were questioned by Russia for the possibility of mistrust.

Following this in 2019, Armenian Foreign Minister Zohrab Mntsakanyan has gathered together with the bodies of the ministry and mentioned about the pillars of the foreign policy.[8] The first pillar was stated as ensuring the sovereignty by pursuing an independent foreign policy. This principle refers to the protection of all citizens regardless of their ethnic or religious roots. The second pillar was adressed as pan-Armenianism which means the collaboration of Armenian state and diaspora all over the world under the umbrella of national agenda. The third pillar was defined as the interaction to pinpoint Armenia's will for equal and mutually beneficial cooperation with any other state. Furthermore, this pillar referred for building regional peace and stability whilst contributing into the global security.

However Russia's perception on the efforts for the diversification of foreign policy of Armenia has not been promising. For Armenia, Russia has always acted as a counterweight regarding its adversaries in the region; Azerbaijan and Turkey. Although Pashinyan defended himself that they were not in power due to a western supported movement, he has been criticized for breaking the balance between Russia and the West by favoring relations with EU and US more.

Based on the conclusions of the European Council on 11 May 2020, EU stated the principles with the eastern members as strategic, ambitious, flexible and inclusive.[9] In the short term, EU seems to plan on reducing poverty, increase the economic wellbeing and focus on the reform agenda in these states which Armenia is also included. In that sense, it can be stated as Armenia's search for a multi-vector foreign policy has been on the agenda for a while. Although

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7 Aram Terzyan, "The Aftermath of the 'Velvet Revolution': Armenia Between Domestic Change and Foreign Policy Continuity", *Eastern European Union of Regional Studies*, Vol: 5, No: 2, 2019, p.29.

8 Marianna Mkrtchyan, "Armenian Foreign Minister announces three pillars of foreign policy", *ArmInfo*, August 27, 2019, https://arminfo.info/full_news.php?id=44666&lang=3, (accessed on January 14, 2021).

9 Dennis Sammut, "Two years after the Velvet Revolution, Armenia needs the EU more than ever", *European Policy Centre*, June 2, 2020, https://www.epc.eu/en/publications/Two-years-after-the-Velvet-Revolution-Armenia-needs-the-EU-more-than~33e910, (accessed on January 14, 2021).

Armenia did not sign the Association Agreement with EU as planned at the November Eastern Partnership Summit in Vilnius in 2013, negotiations continued to work on a different agreement. As a result, the Comprehensive Economic Partnership Agreement (CEPA) was signed by Armenia on 24 November 2017 at the Eastern Partnership Summit hoping it would promote a better environment for investments.[10]

Moreover, Armenia also has been working on to increase regional cooperation with Iran and China based on the economic projects in the region. Regarding the New Silk Road Project, Armenia could be involved in as part of a transit route for China as well as providing Iran a gateway to EU via the agreements which has been signed between Armenia and EU. But still these alternatives can be initiated by Russia in the framework of Russian-Chineese and Russian-Iranian relations.

The Political Relations with Azerbaijan: The Longest Conflict of the Century "Nagorno-Karabakh"

Nagorno-Karabakh conflict has been the most discussed conflict of the 20th century having its roots back to Soviet Union. At the Versailles Peace Conference, Nagorno-Karabakh has been recognized as a territory of Azerbaijan Democratic Republic of 1918-1920. After South Caucasus was invaded by Soviet Union, the issue has become a discussion topic again. But Caucasus Bureau of the Central Committee of the Russian Communist Party of the Bolsheviks decided that Nagorno-Karabakh was part of Azerbaijan Soviet Socialist Republic (SSR) in 1921 and furthermore in 1923 it was granted with an autonomous status.[11]

Nagorno-Karabakh Autonomous Oblast requested to become a part of Armenian SSR in February 1988. This attempt was rejected by both Azerbaijan SSR and also by the Supreme Soviet of the USSR with the referral of Article 78 of the USSR Constitution. According to this article, autonomous republics or oblasts which are part of union republics could not unify with other republics without the approval of union republic that they are part of. In 1991, Azerbaijan gained its independence and removed the autonomous status of Nagorno-Karabakh. After this, the Parliament of Nagorno-Karabakh organized a referandum on December 10, 1991 and declared its indepence from Azerbaijan in the early 1992 which was only recognized by Armenia.[12]

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[10] Stepan Grigoryan, "Armenia's U-turn back to 'multi-vector foreign policy'", January 12, 2018, https://oc-media.org/ opinions/armenias-u-turn- back-to-multi-vector-foreign-policy/, (accessed on January 14, 2021).

[11] Sergey Minasyan, "The Nagorno-Karabakh conflict in the context of South Caucasus regional security issues: An Armenian perspective", *Nationalities Papers*, Vol: 45, No: 1, 2017, p.133.

[12] Kaan Diyarbakırlıoğlu, "The Nagorno-Karabakh Conflict between Azerbaijan and Armenia from the Historical Perspective", *International Journal of Social, Political and Economic Research*, Vol: 7, No: 2, 2020, p.416.

Figure 2: Map of Azerbaijan Democratic Republic 1918-1920



Source: https://www.defenceturk.net/gecmisten-gunumuze-daglik-karabag-sorunu-ve-ermeni-politikalari, (accessed on 20.12.2020).

After the collapse of Soviet Union in 1991, Russian armed forces withdrew from Azerbaijan and the forces of Armenia and Nagorno-Karabakh achieved to gain control over the region. The villages of Imarat and Garvand were attacked on September 24, 1991 and many Azerbaijanis were killed and expelled from their homes. In the late 1991, Armenians blocked Khojaly by closing all roads, destroying communication lines to prevent people to ask for help and by collecting all the weapons from the people. Following this, Khojaly was attacked by Armenian forces on February 25-26, 1992 which is known as Khojaly events. With the support of 366th Russian Regiment, the city was destroyed by all means. This was the beginning of the war at the end of which seven districts of Azerbaijan were occupied by Armenia between 1992-1994. Armenians occupied Nagorno-Karabakh on May 8, 1992 and other rayons in 1993.[13]

Even though United Nations Security Council (UNSC) had decided that Nagorno-Karabakh is part of Azerbaijan and Armenia should leave these lands on July, 31 1993, Armenia did not take any actions and continued the occupation.[14] For the conflict resolution, the mediation talks were started in 1992 by Minsk Group of the Council for Security and Cooperation in Europe. The organization was lateron renamed as the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe in 1994. As a result of these efforts, a ceasefire was

[13] Vicken Cheterian, "The Last Closed Border of the Cold War: Turkey–Armenia", *Journal of Borderlands Studies*, Vol: 32, No: 1, 2017, p.84.

[14] Farid Shafiyev, Vasif Huseynov, "Peace Negotiations Cannot be Held Forever: Breaking the Deadlock in the Armenia-Azerbaijan Conflict", *Insight Turkey*, Vol: 22, No: 4, 2020, p.100.

signed on May 5, 1994 in Bishkek known as Bishkek Protocol with Russia's mediation. At first, Russia competed to be the chief mediator in this conflict to be more dominant on the solution but in 1994 an agreement was made to be co-chair of OSCE's Minsk Group. In 1997, it was revised as sharing this role with USA and France. According to this protocol, nearly 20% of the lands of Azerbaijan was occupied by Armenia. During this war, nearly thirty thousands of people were killed and one million people became refugees.[15]

Figure 3: Map of Occupied Rayons



Source: https://www.defenceturk.net/gecmisten-gunumuze-daglik-karabag-sorunu-ve-ermeni-politikalari, (accessed on 02.01.2021).

In the beginning of 2000s, the members of OSCE's Minsk Group were willing to settle this conflict and in 2001 a high level meeting was held. In June 2006, a summit was held in Prague and the Prague Document was shared with the parties of the conflict. This was followed by Madrid summit in November 2007 and the Madrid Principles document was published which foresees the withdrawal of Armenian forces from the lands of Azerbaijan, normalizing the relations between the sides of the conflict and establishing peacekeeping activities in addition to organizing a referendum for the determination of the status of Nagorno-Karabakh. These intensive efforts towards the resolution of this conflict was slowed at some point after 2009.

Following this downward effect, there has been various violations in Nagorno-Karabakh. On April 2, 2016, Armenia violated the ceasefire and it lasted for four days between 2-5 April. It was meaningful that this violation happened when the presidents of the two states were in US for a nuclear

[15] Emin Şıhalıyev, "The Armenian Question in the Context of the Clash of Civilizations and Geopolitical Interests, Its Impact on Armenia-Azerbaijani Relations and Vision of the Near Future", *Review of Armenian Studies*, Vol: 27, 2013, p.100.

security conference.[16] According to the aftermath of such four-day war, it created more disadvantages for Armenia compared to Azerbaijan in terms of economic and motivational drawbacks. Azerbaijan was able to gain the control over six more points which is important for its security. The ceasefire was agreed upon the efforts of Russia and this defeat harmed the image of Sarkissian and opposition gained power against him.

Almost four years after on September 27, 2020, the ceasefire was violated again and the war between Armenia and Azerbaijan started. Although it was decided to make an agreement for a ceasefire for three times on October 10, October 17 and October 26, the armed conflict has never stopped. The Armenian side pushed further to gain control of new territories as a result of this war while Azerbaijan side insisted on the implementation UNSC resolutions about the issue. As a result, Azerbaijan gained military success in this war and 44 days after, Russia announced that the sides of the conflict have agreed upon an agreement to end the war on November 10, 2020. According to this agreement, Armenia should leave the occupied lands of Azerbaijan and Armenia was defeated.

[16] Nazim Caferov, "4 Gün Savaşı ve Bölgesel Dengeler", *Deutsche Welle: Gündem / Dünya*, April 6, 2016, https://www.dw.com/tr/4-g%C3% BCn-sava%C5% 9F%C4%B1-ve-b%C3% B6l gesel- dengeler/a-19168839, (accessed on January 14, 2021).

Figure 4: Map of Armenia-Azerbaijan Peace Deal



Source: https://www.bbc.com/news/world-europe-54324772, (accessed on 12.01.2021).

After this announcement, protests have been started in Armenia calling for Pashinyan to resign by proclaiming him as a traitor. On January 11, 2021 Russia, Armenia and Azerbaijan gathered to talk about the details of the agreement in Moscow. Although Putin announced the agreement as a resolution of years long conflict, Pashinyan stated that the status of Nagorno-Karabakh and how the connection will be built between Naxcivan remained still uncertain. Therefore, it seems that there are many areas to be discussed in order to fully resolve this conflict although it is proved that Nagorno-Karabakh belongs to Azerbaijan.

It can be said that Russia's position regarding this conflict have shifted in favor of Azerbaijan to the contrary how it has been ever since. Pashinyan was criticized about his policies regarding Russia and West by Russian nationalists so far. Igor Korotçenko, editor in chief of National Defence review in Russia, criticized Pashinyan by closing Russian televisions and filling important seats

with Soros supporters but still asking Russia for help when in need.[17] However, Nagorno-Karabakh conflict is a two-sided problem for Russia since it is important to keep both Armenia and Azerbaijan close. This time, Russia followed a more passive neutralist strategy to see the failure of Armenia to give a message. The defeat of Armenia by Azerbaijan means that without the support of Russia, Armenia is left alone for its problems. However, this conflict has been used by Russia to control the actions of both sides.

On the other hand, a direct support to Armenia from Russia would risk Russia's position for mediation like in the case of Turkey. Due to Turkey supporting Azerbaijan from the beginning of this conflict in the 1990s and having historical problems with Armenia, Turkey could not play a mediator role in the resolution process. But, it can be possible for Turkey and Armenia to form a baseline for the establishment of diplomatic relations and opening borders. Since Turkey closed its border with Armenia as a response for the Khojaly events and Nagorno-Karabakh conflict, resolution of this conflict can create positive implications for Turkish-Armenian relations as well.

The History of the Relations with Turkey; Genocide allegations and closed borders

The relations between Turks and Armenians have its roots back to Ottoman Empire. Despite the fact that Armenians were a very important part of "millet" system of Ottoman Empire, genocide allegations for 1915 events defined the directions of the relations between Turkey and Armenia. As a result of nationalism movement and series of wars, Turkey was founded by Mustafa Kemal Atatürk while Armenia became part of Soviet Union. Treaty of Lausanne in 1923 can be considered as the freezing point for the relations. Furthermore, Armenia does not recognize Treaty of Kars signed in 1921 which defines the mutual borders. Until the collapse of Soviet Union in 1991, land borders were closed except for Kars-Leninakan railway.

[17] Sabir Askeroğlu, "Dağlık Karabağ İşgali ve Rusya'nın Tutumu", *İran Araştırmaları Merkezi*, October 2, 2020, https://iramcenter.org/daglik-karabag-isgali-ve-rusyanin-tutumu/?send_cookie_ permissions=OK, (accessed on January 14, 2021).

Figure 5: Map of Armenia and Its Neighbours



Source: https://www.britannica.com/place/Armenia, (accessed on 12.01.2021).

Despite the fact that Turkey suggested establishing an objective historical investment committee, the idea was not admitted by Armenia and throughout the years and Armenia tried to force Turkey to recognize 1915 events as genocide. Armenian Secret Army for Liberation of Armenia (ASALA) started its operations and killed many Turkish diplomats, their families and other people all around the world between 1975-1991.[18] The plan for the recognition of genocide allegations consisted of different stages; first of all the international recognition of genocide, secondly making Turkey pay the reparations and thirdly extending the territorial demands based on Great Armenia map including the areas which belong to Turkey according to signed treaties.

After the collapse of Soviet Union, Armenia gained its independence and Turkey recognized Armenia along with the other independent states in 1991. Although diplomatic relations were not established, the borders were opened. Short after, the Nagorno-Karabakh conflict started with Khojaly events and due to Turkey's ethnic connection with Azerbaijan, Turkish President Süleyman Demirel decided to close borders with Armenia. As a result, economy worsened in Armenia and Russia became a dominant actor in Armenian politics. Moreover, many Armenians immigrated to other countries as a result of economic collapse due to geographic isolation.

[18] Davut Han Aslan, Osman Kaan Celiktas, "The Relationship of Turkey With Armenia", *Knuv*, Vol: 2, No: 44, 2015, p.98.

In 2001, The Turkish-Armenian Reconciliation Commission (TACR) was established in Geneva with the focus on the improvement of the relations and bring new perspectives for solutions. According to the report by International Center for Transitional Justice, it was stated 1915 events could not be defined as genocide due to the retroactive applicability of the Convention not being possible. But Armenian side insisted on the demands for recognition and since the talks were deadlocked, TACR fell apart in 2004. Regarding the objectivity, in 2002, Turkish Council of Ministers decided to open all the archieves for the access of researchers and individuals without any limitation. However, it was not possible to convince Armenia for doing the same. In 2005, Turkish Prime Minister Recep Tayyip Erdoğan proposed to form a commission of historians for the examination of the issue. Armenia's opposition to this proposal strenghtened Turkey's hand within the international arena. The reason for the opposition was to prevent putting the issue at the debate and maintain national identity since it is an important claim for the existence of Armenia.

Regarding the recognition of genocide allegations, Armenian Diaspora had significant efforts to put pressure on both Turkey and third parties. Turkey has been very much concerned with the number and level of recognitions around the world since the second and third steps of the plan of the Armenian Diaspora is payments and lands. According to Armenian Declaration of Independence, Turkish East Anatolia territory is called as Western Armenia and Ağrı Mountain in Turkey is used as a symbol of Republic of Armenia.

In July 2008, President of Armenia, Sarkishyan stated that he had some doubts regarding Turkey's proposal on a joint historical commission while adding the normalization of the relations by establishing a political dialogue should be the priority. Moreover, in order to form a commission, two states needed to establish mutual relations beforehand. In September 2008, Turkish President Abdullah Gül was the first Turkish President who ever visited Armenia. He attended the Turkey-Armenia Football Cup and even shook hands with the President of Armenia which was defined as "football diplomacy".[19] In 2009, Armenian President Sarkishyan visited Turkey as well. At that time, Foreign Minister of Turkey Ahmet Davutoğlu was inspired by the old saying of Atatürk which was "peace at home, peace in the world" and designed Turkish foreign policy around "zero problems with the neighbours" policy.

While Turkey and Armenia took a step for rapproachement in April 2009, it also had an important impact on US. US President Barack Obama did not use the term genocide in his speech on 24 April. Rather, he used "Mets Yeghern" which means Great Disaster in Armenian language.[20] Although none of the US presidents have used the term genocide, there was an expectation by Diaspora

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19 Emre İşeri, Oğuz Dilek, "The Limitations of Turkey's New Foreign Policy Activism in the Caucausian Regional Security Complexity", *Turkish Studies*, Vol: 12, No: 1, 2011, p.50.

20 Nurşen Mazıcı, "Turkish-American Relations and The Armenian Issue", *Review of Armenian Studies*, Vol: 18, 2008, p.87.

for Obama to use it. However, the rapprochement of two states created a warmer climate in the relations and Sarkishyan was accused of causing this.

On August 31, 2009 Turkey and Armenia agreed to sign protocols. "Protocol on the Establishment of Diplomatic Relations between the Republic of Turkey and the Republic of Armenia" and "Protocol on the Development of Relations between the Republic of Armenia and Republic of Turkey" were signed by the foreign ministers of the two states in Zurich in October 2009.[21] They included agenda items such as establishing diplomatic relations, opening diplomatic missions, opening the borders etc. These protocols stated that Turkish-Armenian border would be opened within two months once the protocols are ratified. Moreover, it was also stated that existing borders which were defined by international treaties would be recognized.

The protocols created domestic criticisms in Armenia and Armenian Revolutionary Front claimed that the protocols caused undermining effect for international recognition of Armenian genocide allegations and legitimatize the border which is not in favor of Armenia. Moreover, it was said that Turkey linking the normalization to the resolution of Nagorno-Karabakh conflict was an indirect pressure for Armenia to admit the Azerbaijani claims on the issue.

These protocols had an impact on Turkish-Azerbaijani relations as well. Although Turkish Prime Minister explained that Turkey would not open its borders unless the occupation of the territories of Azerbaijan ends, this was not included officially on the protocols. For this reason, Azerbaijan was disappointed that Nagorno-Karabakh problem was not referred officially. Turkey needed to continue its effort to convince Azerbaijan on this matter to keep the relations at a balanced level. This situation was criticized by US and accused Azerbaijan being a blocker on the normalization process of Turkish-Armenian relations.

However, the items on the protocol could not be carried out. Although, on January 12, 2010 The Constitutional Court of Armenia made its decision that the process of the ratification by the parliament could be started, on April 22, Armenian President Sarkishyan declared that they stopped the ratification process whilst still remaining committed to the normalization process. The reason for this was due to the fact that Armenian Constitutional Court claimed the protocols could not be applied in the legislative process which contradict provisions to the constitution and requirements of the Declaration of Independence of Armenia. The Declaration of Independence refers to genocide allegations and Western Armenia to the lands which belong to Turkey and this could not be questioned.[22] In February 2015, Sarkishyan declared the withdrawal of the protocols from the parliament and in March 2018 declared that the protocols as invalid. Sarkishyan could not take any actions without the

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[21] David Shahnazaryan, "Nervous Neighbors: Five Years After the Armenia-Turkey Protocols", *Turkish Policy Quarterly*, Vol: 13, No: 3, 2014, p.47.

[22] Aslan Yavuz Şir, "Turkish-Armenian Relations and The Think-Tank Effect", *Review of Armenian Studies*, Vol: 19, No: 20, 2009, p.127.

approval of diaspora and in order not to seem as a dealbreaker, directed the blame for Turkey to set preconditions for the implementation of the protocols.

Turkish-Armenian relations can not be considered without Armenian-Azerbaijan relations and Nagorno-Karabakh conflict. Turkey supports Azerbaijan in this conflict and during the war in 2020, Turkey explained that the support for Azerbaijan would never be ended. As Azerbaijan won the war and Armenian occupation would be ending in Nagorno-Karabakh, Turkish President Erdoğan suggested that the borders between Turkey and Armenia can be opened once the ceasefire agreement is fully implemented.

From Armenian side, it would be an important development since currently Armenia is dependent on solely Georgia for international trade. Therefore, Turkish border would be an alternative for Armenia in terms of connecting with the rest of the world. However, this may not happen easily since two states still have a dispute over genocide allegations. This issue is a critical item on the agenda of foreign policy for both states. While Armenian diaspora pushes hard the third parties to recognize the genocide allegations, Turkey works for the opposite way of the decision.

The Political Relations with Georgia; "Javakheti Armenians" as a source of conflict

Starting with the invasion of the Kingdom of Georgia in 1801, Russia has become a powerful actor in the South Caucaus. Russia's expansion in the region has led to major changes in the demographic structure. The population of Armenians increased in the region especially in Samtskhe-Javakheti region of Georgia which enabled Russia to suppress Georgian riots against itself. Moreover, Russia evaluated Armenians always with a higher status than other Caucausian groups that will easen up the process of Russian expansionist policies in the region.

In the 19th century, the agricultural feudal system started to evolve into capitalist system and this resulted in the class shift between Armenians and Georgians. Armenians got richer since they took place in the commerce life more than Georgians. As a result of this, Georgian feudal lords sold their lands to Armenians due to economic reasons and this caused Armenians to gain control over the economic chain in the country. In addition to this, nationalist movements were arising and Armenians had more ambitions than any other nation for having their own land in the region. In that sense, the idea of Great Armenia was built and in 1890 Armenian Revolutionary Federation known as Dashnaktsutyun was established in Tbilisi.[23] Dashnaktsutyun operated very actively for making propaganda about Great Armenia in the early 20th century. Furthermore, Georgian lands and culture were stated as part Great Armenia.

[23] Yalçın Rzazadeh, "Ermenistan ve Gürcistan İlişkileri", *Çağdaş Azerbaycan Kültür Derneği*, June 22, 2020, https://www.cagazder.com/2020/06/22/ermenistan-ve-gurcistan-iliskileri/, (accessed on January 14, 2021).

Javakheti has always been the poorest region of Georgia with less investments for the infrastructure. Javakheti received almost no attention during Cold War since it was close to Turkish border. This situation was perceived by Armenians as an intentional blocker for their relations with Armenia. As a result of Perestroika policy, irredentist demands of Armenians were triggered for the occupation of Javakheti. Furthermore, the events in the Nagorno-Karabakh played a catalysor role on this.[24] Because both of these regions were positioned close to Armenian border with a majority of Armenian population. While Nagorno-Karabakh became a priority, Armenians formed a national-popular movement called as Javakhk in 1988 and started to supply weapons to the local units of volunteers. The aim of Armenians in Javakheti was to get autonomy if unification to Armenia would not be possible.

After the collapse of Soviet Union, diplomatic relations were established between Georgia and Armenia on July 17, 1992. However, the status of Samtskhe-Javakheti Armenians has always been an issue in the relations. Moreover, despite the fact that Armenians' willingness to have their own land and achieve Great Armenia, they always needed the support of Russia to reach this ambition. This increased the dependancy of Armenia on Russia even more. In the second half of the 1990s, Georgia gained more control over Javakheti region through implementing important policies. On the other hand, Armenia realized that it would be more beneficial to have closer relations with Georgia to prevent becoming a landlocked state rather than unifying Javakheti with Armenia. The Presidents of Georgia and Armenia met in Javakheti in spring 1997 to discuss the status of the problems in the region. According to that, local Armenians were granted the rights of cultural autonomy and there was no schooling problems. Moreover, President of Armenia Ter-Petrossian claimed that Yerevan would not provide support any attempts of destabilization in Javakheti. However, The Dashnaktsutyun party was very powerful in Armenia and among the Armenian diaspora which had effects on the stabilization lateron.

The issue remained stable until 2004. Ethnic tensions began again in 2004 and violent demonstrations occured between 2005-2006. In the meanwhile, Mikheil Saakashvili came in power in 2004 and formed strong state institutions in Javakheti, closed the Russian military base and promoted Georgian as official language. This increased the demands for autonomy in Javakheti because Armenians could have education in their language previously, many of them worked at the Russian base due to the lack of other employment opportunities and moreover perceived the base as a guarantee to a possible threat from Turkish border. Moreover, many Armenians in Javakheti were given Armenian passport even though Georgia does not provide dual citizenship.

[24] Voitsekh Guretski, "The Question of Javakheti", Caucausian Regional Studies, 1998, http://poli.vub.ac.be/publi/crs/eng/0301-05.htm, (accessed on January 14, 2021).

The August war with Russia in 2008 increased the speculations over the Javakheti region resulted in Georgia to close its border with Armenia.[25] Since Armenia had no other exists, a whole isolation started for Armenians. The international trade over Georgia stopped suddenly and many Armenians working in Russia were not able to travel anymore. This caused major problems on the economic wellbeing of the country.

Another issue of conflict between Georgian-Armenian relations, is the opening of Abkhazia railway. This railway has two main routes; north and south. North route is between Russia and Abkhazia whereas the south route starts from Yerivan and ends in Russia via Tbilisi. After the demands of independence by Abkhazia, the route was closed in 1992 and Armenia could not use this route ever since.[26] Although Armenia has used Georgian land border for its trade with Russia, especially during winter conditions the volume of the trade is negatively effected. The opening of this railway is also important for Russia since Georgia cancelled the agreement in 2011 on the carriage of the military equipment and personnel. After this Russian base in Armenia has faced major problems in terms of maintenance and current alternatives of this railway route has been costly and timely for both Armenia and Russia.

Two states had church issue regarding the churches in their territories. This problem has been discussed between Armenian Apostolic Church and Georgian Orthodox Church.[27] The negotiations were for the official recognition of these churches and their registration. The thesis of both sides are about the ownership of the churches in Georgia. According to Georgians, the churches belong to Georgians originally but Armenians have replaced the Georgian materials in the church with Armenian ones. After the collapse of Soviet Union, Georgia restored the churches and opened them for the public service. However, this was evaluated as cultural genocide by Armenia and Armenians in Georgia. Although both churches belong to the same sect of the religion, after the independence of Georgia and Armenia they held important place in terms of national identity. In 2014, an ethnic tension occured between Georgians and Armenians at one of the Armenian churches in Tbilisi which shows the importance of the churches among both nations.

The routes of pipelines in the Caucaus have been a major dispute for these states, furthermore an area of competition. Caucaus region is important in terms of delivering the oil and natural gas of Caspian Sea. However, the instabilities in the region created drawbacks for the definition of the possible routes. One of the disputes was about including either Armenia or Georgia in

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25 Aybars Görgülü, "Towards a Turkish-Armenian Rapprochement?", *Insight Turkey*, Vol: 11, No: 2, 2009, p.24.

26 Anthony Rinna, "Yerevan's Choice: Armenia and its Integration into the Eurasian Customs Union", *Iran and the Caucaus*, Vol: 18, 2014, p.401.

27 Aslan Yavuz Şir, "Ermenistan'la Gürcistan Arasında Yeni Bir Dönem Mi, Yeni Gerginlikler Mi?", January 10, 2019, https://avim.org.tr/tr/Yorum/ERMENISTAN-LA-GURCISTAN-ARASINDA-YENI-BIR-DONEM-MI-YENI-GERGINLIKLER-MI, (accessed on January 14, 2021).

the route. Baku-Tbilisi-Ceyhan pipeline was designed in this way, because of the problems in Turkish-Armenian relations, Turkey blocked Armenia to be involved and US blocked Iran due to the economic sanctions. But even though Armenia was not included as a state, Armenians were included in the project since the pipeline passes from where Armenians live in Georgia.

Figure 6: Map of Pipeline Routes



Source: https://www.tuicakademi.org/kafkasyada-etnik-gruplarin-boru-hatlari-uzerindeki-etkisi/, (accessed on 12.01.2021).

Conslusion

Armenia followed an irredentist foreign policy regarding its claims in the region and continued the status quo of the conflicts with its neighbours. Even if South Caucaus gained independence from Soviet Union, it can not be said that these states can act independent from Russia. Regarding the conflicts between Azerbaijan, Georgia and Armenia, Russia always played an active role for a possible mediation. Knowing that, Armenia followed a strategy for sticking Russia's priorities in the region for political stability and security.

Since Armenia is a landlocked state and has closed borders with two of its neighbours, the only exit it has is Georgia with which Javakheti Armenians form an important agenda item. The history of this conflict goes back to early 19th century when many Armenians were immigrated to those lands changing the original demographic structure of the region. Knowing the autonomy demands of Javakheti Armenians, Armenia understood the importance of good relations with Georgia when the border was closed right after Russian-Georgian war in 2008. This resulted in a major blockage for Armenian trade whose main partner is Russia.

Even if from time to time Armenia tried to shift for a multi-vector foreign policy, it is clear that still Russia has a major effect on the country. The tendency for developing friendly relations with EU and US via Armenian diaspora was not welcomed by Russia. Not only politically but also economically Armenia is dependent on Russia. The reason for this can be explained as Armenia insisting on the continuation of its conflicts in the region rather than working for a resolution.

Regarding Nagorno-Karabakh conflict, Armenia insisted on the occupation of Azerbaijani territories and as a punishment of the willingness for a multi-vector foreign policy, it was left alone in the war in 2020. Russia avoided to provide direct political and military support for Armenia and watched the defeat to give a message that Armenia had no other friend than Russia. Moreover, by doing this Russia was able to play a mediator role for resolution. So in terms of Russian foreign policy, we can talk about a major success.

In addition to Russia factor, Armenian foreign policy can not be evaluated apart from the diaspora. While Armenia faced economic and political problems, diaspora played a crucial role for both political matters and economic wellbeing of the country. On the other hand, Armenian administration would not be able to make decisions on the issues which diaspora is against. Especially regarding the rapprochement between Turkish-Armenian relations, we can say that the idea was a deadborn child considering that diaspora was against such resolution from the beginning.

The main ambition of Armenian diaspora is the international recognition of the genocide allegations and as a result of this making Turkey pay for reparations and achieving Great Armenia via uniting with Western Armenia referring to the lands of Turkey. Although Armenian administration wanted the borders to be opened with Turkey, it could not be possible regarding these goals of diaspora. Moreover, even the signed protocols were not been able to be ratified for the implementation.

Considering all the conflicts in the region and elements of foreign policy, we can foresee that the effect of Russia and diaspora would continue at a high level on Armenia. Especially due to economic reasons, Armenian administration can not act apart from these two and needs to follow a common agenda set set by Russia and approved by the diaspora. In the short run, conflicts with the neighbours also do not seem to be resolved since the relations in the region are very complex and have implications on one another. In that sense, resolution of one conflict can be a good startpoint for Armenia to change its position in the region and its perspective for foreign policy discourse.

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Border Conflicts among Dagestan, Chechnya, Ossetia-Alania and Ingushetia Autonomous Republics

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Introduction

Northern Caucasia has been an arena among several nations and giant empires for centuries due to its geographical position, political and reach culture, ground and underground treasures. Recently, geopolitical importance of Northern Caucasia has increased significantly due to changing political dynamics. Furthermore, besides the neighbor countries, the volatility of the territory has become the focus of interest for EU, USA, China and Middle Eastern countries. Northern Caucasia was redesigned by emphasizing that the problems of the territory like unemployment, economic crimes, power of local actors, bribery cannot be solved by the security forces. According to the Authorized Representative of the President of the Russian Federations for Northern Caucasia Federal Region, Northern Caucasia consists of 7 autonomous republics—Dagestan, Chechnya, Ingushetia, Northern Ossetia-Alania, Kabardey-Balkar, Karacay- Circassia and Adygea--- and two Krays—Krasnodar and Stavropol.[1] The word "kray" means state, border, location.[2] Northern Caucasia occupies an area of 258.300 km2.

Risks threatening the territory also increase in parallel with the increasing importance of Northern Caucasia. Unemployment of youth, mediocre economic conditions, increase in crime rates, conflict environment due to ethnical differences and border conflicts are only a few of the risks in the territory. One of the most significant aims of this study is to reveal the conflicts in the region under the frame of the border conflicts. Especially the border conflicts among the autonomous republics within the state borders create a significant risk for the Russian Federation. The border conflicts were examined for four autonomous republics within the state borders of Russian Federation namely: Dagestan Autonomous Republic, Chechnya Autonomous Republic, Northern Ossetia-Alania Autonomous Republic and Ingushetia Autonomous Republic.

This paper deals with geographical position, geographical characteristics, and demographic structure of Northern Caucasia in detail in order to examine border conflicts better. Furthermore, ethnical structure of the region was

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1 "Severo-Kavkazskiy federal'nyy okrug'', Ofitsial'nyy sayt polnomochnogo predstavitelya Prezidenta Rossiyskoy Federatsii v Severo-Kavkazskom federal'nom okruge, http://skfo.gov.ru/district/, (Accessed on December 10, 2020).

2 ''Kray'' Glosbe Elektronik Sözlük, Tanım, https://ru.glosbe.com/ru/tr/ %D0 %BA %D1 %80 % D0%B0%D0%B9, (Accessed on December 10, 2020).

explained briefly. A General Issues map is drawn for Northern Caucasia by itemizing the problems of the region. Problems encountered today are dealt with, after giving the historical background of the region. In the conclusion part of the paper, proposals are made for the solutions of the border problems.

Geographical Position of Northern Caucasia



Source: https://eurasiangeopolitics.com/72orth-Caucasus-maps/ (Accessed on 22 November 2020).

The mountainous region between Taman Peninsula in the northeast of Blacks Sea and ApÇeron Peninsula in the west of the Caspian Sea is called Caucasia. The name Caucasia and Caucasian is used first as "Kavkasos" mountain in the "Chained Joy and Enjoyment" written by Greek Writer Aeschylus who lived in 6th of 5th centuries B.C.[3] It was stated that this term was used by the local people lived in Dagestan in 479. Furthermore, a village located on a smooth hill in the Sarnur River Valley in Dagestan was entitled as Caucasian.[4]

The Northern Caucasia Region occupies a large area between 42° 30' Northern Latitude and 45°00 Eastern Longitude and it lays between the Black Sea and Psou River in the west and the Caspian Sea in the east. The Region goes up to lower Don in north and reaches to the peaks of Large Caucasian Mountain Ranges. It should also be mentioned here that Northern Caucasia acts as a bridge with Europe. When we consider its location close to Middle and Near East and Central Asia countries, we can see that the region is in the intersection point of the transportation routes.

3 Mehmet Fahrettin Kirazoğlu, *Osmanlılar'ın Kafkasya Ellerini Fethi (1451-1590*), Ankara: Türk Tarih Kurumu Basımevi, 1993.

4 Cemal Gökçe, *Kafkasya ve Osmanlı İmparatorluğunun Kafkasya Siyaseti*, İstanbul, İstanbul Kitapevi, 1979.



Source: https://tr.pinterest.com/pin/434878907743591659/ (Accessed on 12 December 2020).

Northern Caucasia has a mild territorial climate, but it has also a subtropical climate in the Black Sea coast. Climate conditions in the region do not only change from west to east or from north to south but also on the basis of the elevation from the sea level. Most of the flat areas are located in the steps containing very fertile black soils and chestnut soils; towards to the east, steps turn into semi deserts smoothly. In the coastal area between Novorossiysk and Batumi, humid large leafed forests grow on yellow and red soils in a subtropical climate. The shoulders of Caucasian ranges are covered with forests reaching up to 2000 meter elevations. There are Alpine and Subalpine meadows at higher altitudes. The highest peaks are covered with glaciers. The two cities which are located in the highest altitude in Russia are in the Northern Caucasia. These are Tırnıauz and Teberda which are near the Elbrus Mountain. Both settlements are above 1000 meters. Kislovodsk, Karaçayevsk, Vladikavkaz, Essentuki and Zheleznovodsk are the nearby locations. Elbrus is a saddle shaped two conned peak of a dormant volcano located in Kabardey-Balkara and Karacay- Circassia. 5642-meter-high Mount Elbrus is the highest mountain in Europe, Caucasia and Russia. Another important mountain in the region is Mount Dykh-Tau. It is 5205 meters high. Besides these, Koshtan-Tau is 5152 meters high. The region has a high rain perception because of the air masses stopped at the shoulders of the mountains are elevated and give their humid back in the form of rain. Therefore, the climate of the mountainous areas is different than the mountain shoulders and the plains. In the winters, a snow layer up to 5 cm covers the ground. In the northern shoulders glacier borders start directly. Even in hot summer days, the temperatures do not reach above 0

at the attitudes above 4000 meters. The rains precipitated in autumns and winters frequently cause floods.

Although there is not an exact figure for the number of the lakes in Northern Caucasia Region, it is known that this is over 1700.[5] We haven't encountered any works about this issue in our study since the mountainous areas in the region are very high. Northern Caucasia has an authentic structure with its high mountain ranges, arable lands, dry areas, large plains and long river networks. Don, Kuma, Kuban, Terek and Sulak are the longest rivers of the region. Water sources in the region are distributed in a very unjust manner. Shoulders of Caucasia and Azov-Black Sea Plain have a dense river network. The left side of River Don and steps in the northeastern parts are not reach of water. Therefore, Caucasian river network can be divided into two characteristic areas: 1) Northern Caucasia Rivers and 2) Trans-Caucasian Rivers. Thanks to the areas which have dense large rivers, fertile black soils are enriched for harvest. After that fruit gardens, vineyards, tea lands pass directly to the dry areas. The coldness at the top of the mountains turns into hotness in the shoulders and the plains. In general, black soil turns into chestnut soil. We can see that in Krasnodar Area, the western part of Stavropol Area, where grains and especially wheat are produced. Corn and rice is produced in the lands irrigated by River Kuban and its smaller branches in Dagestan. Besides these, sunflower, sugar beet and tobacco are also grown in the area. Gardening and vineyards are also seen in the region. Subtropical products like tea, date, fig and citrus fruits are grown in the Black Sea coast in Krasnodar.

Furthermore, significant part of mountain rivers is transformed into a hydro energy source and a lot of geothermal sources were found. Besides nuclear power station and hydroelectric power stations there are power stations operating with gas, petrol products and coal.

The region is the top iron and metal supplier "feeding" the Russian metal companies. The Region is rich of metals and mines. Besides these, there are copper, lead, zinc, tungsten, molybdenum, uranium and iron reserves in the Region. Commercial benthonic clays, tuff cores, granite, diorite, diyabas porfrits are among the underground sources of the Region. There are about 150 known mine deposits.

[5] Gornyye ozera Severnogo Kavkaza, Kavkaz Eto, https://etokavkaz.ru/vodoemy/ozera, (Accessed on November 05, 2020).

Name of the Republic or Kray	Population	Area
Dagestan	3,110,800[6]	50 300 км^2
Chechnya	1,478,700[7]	17 300 км^2
Karacay-Circassia	465.528[8]	14 100 км^2
Adygea	454.744[9]	7 600 км^2
Kabardey-Balkar	868.350[10]	12 500 км^2
Ingushetia	507.061[11]	3 685 км^2
Northern Ossetia-Alania	696.837[12]	8 000 км^2
Krasnodar Kray	5,675,462[13]	76 000 км^2
Stavropol Kray	2,803,573 [14]	66 500 км^2

The populations of Stavropol Kray, Krasnodar Kray and other autonomous republics are given on the basis of 01.01.2020 consensus data.

6 Chislennost' naseleniya, Dagestan respublika, 2 803 573 https://dagstat.gks.ru/storage/mediabank/%D0%9D%D0%B0%D1%81%D0%B5%D0%BB%D0%B5%D0%BD%D0%B8%D0%B5%20%D0%A0%D0%B5%D1%81%D0%BF%D1%83%D0%B1%D0%BB%D0%B8%D0%BA%D0%B8%20%D0%94%D0%B0%D0%B3%D0%B5%D1%81%D1%82%D0%B0%D0%BD(1).pdf, pp.4, (Accessed on November 12, 2020).

7 Operativnaya informatsiya, Chislennost' naseleniya, Chechenskaya respublika, https://chechenstat.gks.ru/folder/38713, (Accessed on November 18, 2020).

8 Otsenka chislennosti postoyannogo naseleniya Karachayevo-Cherkesskoy Respubliki na 1 yanvarya 2020 goda i v srednem za 2019 god, https://stavstat.gks .ru/storage/mediabank/%D0%A7%D0%B8%D1%81%D0%BB%D0%B5%D0%BD%D0%BD%D0%BE%D1%81%D1%82%D1%8C%20%D0%9A%D0%A7%D0%A0%20%D0%BD%D0%B0%2001.01.2020%20%D0%B8%20%D0%B2%20%D1%81%D1%80%D0%B5%D0%B4%D0%BD%D0%B5%D0%BC%20%D0%B7%D0%B0%202019%20%D0%B3%D0%BE%D0%B4.pdf, (accessed on November 18, 2020)

9 Operativnaya informatsiya, Respublika adygeya, https://krsdstat.gks.ru/population_ra, (Accessed on November 18, 2020).

10 Naseleniye Kabardino-Balkarskoy Respubliki: chislennost', krupnyye goroda, http://www. statdata.ru/naselenie/kabardino-balkarskoi-respubliki, (Accessed on November 18, 2020)

11 Naseleniye Respubliki Ingushetiya, http://www.statdata.ru/naselenie/respubliki-ingushetiya, (Accessed on November 18, 2020).

12 Naseleniye Respubliki Severnaya Osetiya-Alaniya, http://www.statdata.ru/ naselenie/respubliki-severnaya-osetiya, (Accessed on November 18, 2020).

13 Naseleniye Krasnodarskogo kraya, http://www.statdata.ru/naselenie/krasnodarskogo-kraya, (Accessed on November 18, 2020).

14 Naseleniye Stavropol'skogo kraya, http://www.statdata.ru/naselenie/stavropolskogo-kraya, (Accessed on November 18, 2020).

Border Conflicts in Northern Caucasia



Source: https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:North_Caucasus_regions_map.png (Accessed on 18 November 2020).

Northern Caucasia is the most volatile region in the Russian Federation. The foundations of the border volatility in the region were laid in the Soviet Union period, and volatility became deeper after the dissolution of USSR. According to several academic works, volatility in Northern Caucasia stems from factors like ethnical or religious diversity. On the other hand, analysis shows that these factors can serve only as an additional stimulus for the occurrence of conflicts. The situation is the same for economic problems. While these factors are considered as issues increasing the severity of conflicts in the Region, they cannot be shown as the grounds for conflicts alone. The researchers listed these factors which affect the internal and external security of Russian Federation in Northern Caucasia as follows:

- Tense relations between neighbor nations,
- Mutual border claims and land demands,
- Unjust acts of Federal Government in the Region,
- Islamization of local population or radicalization of Muslim societies,
- Unjust and arbitrary acts of local managements in economic issues,
- Nationalist movements or struggle for independence.[15]

Within this context, in an interview, Prof. Dr. Vladimir Vladimirovich Degoev, the Director of Caucasian Studies Center at MGIMO University explained the volatility of Northern Caucasia as follows; “In a patriarchal society, society’s own rules operate. Even only blood revenge law might give

[15] Il'yasov, Marat. Nestabıl'nost' na Severnom Kavkaze: Prıchıny, Faktory ı Vozmozhnyye Posledstvıya, Regional Dıalouge, March 3, 2013, http://regional-dialogue. com/ ru/ нестабильность -на-северном-кавказе-п/, (accessed on November 21, 2020)

long term damage on the relationships between neighbor countries. Caucasia is something like that…"

While some of the above mentioned issues inherited from Russian Empire, most of them were inherited from Soviet Union to Russian Federation. Soviet administrators changed the administrative management, borders and demography of the Northern Caucasia without taking the ethnic, cultural, religious and linguistic dynamics of the region into consideration. Changes in Northern Caucasia disturbed the local nations, caused injustice and a lot of demands and conflicts. After the dissolution of Soviet Union, accumulated demands and claims were updated, politicized and resulted with armed conflicts. People in the region are in conflict with each other especially for agricultural lands, forests, meadows and wetlands. These disputes transformed into power conflicts by the time.

Border Conflict between Chechnya Autonomous Republic and Ingushetia Autonomous Republic



Source: http://springtimeofnations.blogspot.com/2012/09/chechen-ingush-and-armenian-azeri.html (Accessed on 03 November 2020).

Chechnya Republic is located in the middle of the northern shoulder of Great Caucasia, next to Chechnya Plain and Terek-Kum Plain. While the length of the region from north to east is 170 km, the length from west to east is 110 km.

There is not an official border between Chechnya Republic and Ingushetia Republic and therefore, there are inconsistencies in determining the borders of both Chechnya Republic (16.1 thousand km2) and Ingushetia Republic. Although the Republic is a part of Northern Caucasia Region, its neighbors are Georgian Republic in south, Dagestan Republic which is within in Russian Federation in south east, east and north east, Stavropol Kray and Northern Ossetia-Alania Republic in north-west and Ingushetia Republic in the west. The climate is continental in general but climate condition characteristics in Chechnya Republic are very different, although the country has a small land. These are step and forest views, hollows with subalpine meadows in Caucasia shoulders and high mountains where snow never melts. Temperature conditions of Chechnya Republic are very diverse. All transitional climate types from dry climate of Tersko-Kum semi-desert to cold humid climate of Lateral Ridge can be seen here. Chechnya Republic consists of 17 municipal regions and 2 urban areas (Grozny, Argun). There are two urban settlements (Urus-Martan, Shali), 217 rural settlements and 142 settlements in the Republic.[16]

Ingushetia Autonomous Republic is one of the autonomous republics established on 4 June 1992 in Russian Federation. It is located on the northern shoulders of Great Caucasia Mountains.

Ingushetia Republic has borders with Northern Ossetia and Chechnya Republic. In the south, it has borders with Georgia. Its capital is Magas. There are 4 districts and 5 cities in the Republic. The climate is continental. Sunzha is the main river. Assa, Fortanga, Armkhi, Guloykhi, Faztonka and Chemulga are the other rivers in the area. The total area of the river basis is 3073 km^2.[17] The population of Ingushetia Republic is 492 thousand and this corresponds to 0.3% of the population of the Russian Federation. The population density is very high—more than 127 persons per km^2. Most of the inhabitants live in rural areas. The population consists of mostly Ingush, Chechens and Russians. Most of the people living in Ingushetia are Muslims and Christians. Population increase does not only stem from natural increase but also from the immigration from neighboring Chechnya and Northern Ossetia. According to the National Immigration of Ministry of Russia, there are about 165 thousand displaced people and refugees in Ingushetia. Problems related to the services given to and employment of the immigrants are being solved slowly. Problems are solved slowly since the support given to the Region is not reflected to the public. Labor force consists of 208 thousand people. Active population is 118.8 thousand people.[18]

Ingushetia and Chechnya, whose geographies and destinies are not very different from each other, were combined under the same administrative

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16 Respublika, Glava Chechenskoy Respubliki, http://chechnya.gov.ru/respublika/, (Accessed on November 22, 2020).

17 O Respubliki, Sotsial'no-ekonomicheskiye Kharakteristiki, Respublıka Ingushetıya, https:// www. ingushetia.ru/about/, (Accessed on November 22, 2020).

18 Naseleniye Respubliki Ingushetiya, http:// www.statdata.ru/ naselenie/ respubliki-ingushetiya, (Accessed on November 18, 2020).

structure during the Soviet Union period. Chechens and Ingush, who existed independently in 1934, were transformed into a single autonomous republic in United Republics of Soviet Socialists in 1936. Grozny was the capital at that time. In 1944, Chechen-Ingush Autonomous Soviet Socialist Republic was abrogated and the people of the area were exiled since they supported Nazis. Ingush and Chechens, who had different administrative structures, were merged again in 1957. In 1992, Chechnya and Ingushetia Autonomous Republics were divided into separate administrative structures.[19] The border between the Chechnya Autonomous Republic and Ingushetia Autonomous Republic, which were combined under a single administrative structure in the first years of URSS but separated later by Moscow, was not determined clearly. After the dissolution of Soviet Union, eastern borders of the Northern Caucasia were attempted to be determined. For example, borders of the areas where Chechen and Ingush people live were attempted to be drawn for the first time in 1993. After that Dudayev, Chechen leader, who is not recognized legally, and Ruslan Aushev, the first president of Ingushetia, executed an agreement which shows the major part of Sunzhensky area, except Sernovodsk and Assinovskaya villages, in Ingushetia. On the other hand, this document was declared as illegitimate, later. The second attempt to determine the borders of two autonomous republics were made on 10 March 2003. Akhmat Kadirov, Chechen administrative leader assigned by Russian Federation, and Murat Zyazikov, President of Ingushetia, executed a protocol declaring that Sernovodsk and Assinovskaya villages in Sunzhensky area are a part of Chechnya Republic and the remaining part of Sunzhensky area was given to the Ingushetia administration. The protocol executed did not solve the problem completely. During this process, Akhmat Kadirov was assassinated and his son Ramzan Kadirov was assigned to his position. In his explanations about the border conflict of two Republics, Ramzan Kadirov made the relations worse with his land claims. The third attempt to solve the border conflicts was made in 2008. In 2008, Russian Federation instructed the administrators of both Republics to determine territories and the borders of their municipalities. The borders were determined when a law on "the Measures about Local Self-governance Organization of Ingushetia Republic and Chechnya Republic" was acted. Sunzhensky city was left within the borders of Ingushetia. In 2012, Ramzan Kadirov said that the borders of this region should be revised again. In a government meeting, Ramzan Kadirov, the leader of Chechnya Autonomous Republic, made the following explanations about the border conflict;

> *"It is time to determine the border line in compliance with law. We know our territory and we are not going to leave it out of our administrative borders under any conditions. On the other hand, we will not claim any*

[19] Ob"yedineniye Chechni i Ingushetii pomozhet stabilizatsii obstanovki v regione, schitayet spiker Chechenskogo Parlamenta Dukvakha Abdurakhmanov, Pravozashchita, September 5, 2012, http:// old.memo.ru/d/134567.html, (Accessed on 12 December 2020).

foreign territory. We have archive documents showing that these areas (Goragorskoye settlement and a part of Malgobek territory) are a part of our Republic. Ingushetia does not have these kind of documents, they did not and will not have them at all. Ingushetia territory was included to us only in 1934."20

The map reflecting the border claims of Chechnya Autonomous Report is given below.



Source: https://www.kommersant.ru/doc/2015582 (Accessed on 11 December 2020).

This revision demand was resulted with official meetings and attempts before 2018. On 26 September 2018, the agreement determining the borders of Ingushetia Republic was executed in Magas, the capital of Ingushetia Republic, by Yunus-Bek Yevkurov, the President of Ingushetia Republic, Ramzan Kadirov,

[20] Ramzan Kadyrov khochet vosstanovit'sya v granitsakh 1934 goda, Gazeta "Kommersant", September 5, 2012, https://www.kommersant.ru/doc/2015582, (accessed on December 08, 2020).

the President of Chechnya Republic, and Aleksandr Matovnikov, Full Authorized Representative of the President of Russian Federation on Northern Caucasia Federal Region. On the basis of this Agreement, about 26,800 hectares of mountainous and forest land, which belonged to Ingushetia, was given to Chechnya Autonomous Republic.[21] According to this Agreement, 1000 hectares land claimed by Ingushetia was given to Ingushetia. In the following map, the borders after the Agreement were shown by red lines. Blue lines show the borders before the agreement.



Source: https://www.dw.com/ru/землю-отдали-чечне-люди-об-этом-не-забыли-что-изменилось -в-ингушетии/a-55040595 (Accessed on 19 December 2020).

Pursuant to the provisions of Constitution of Ingushetia, a decision on the transfer of the lands of Ingushetia Autonomous Republic to any other republic cannot be taken by the parliament or the leader of Ingushetia Autonomous Republic. Article 103 of Ingushetia Autonomous Republic is about border changes and land transfer and read out as follows;

"The borders of a territory where local self-governance is applied can be changed only by taking the opinion of the people living in the relevant territory into consideration."[22]

Besides these, pursuant to the provisions of the Constitution of the Russian Republic, which is also applied in Ingushetia Autonomous Republic, a

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21 Territorial'nyye spory mezhdu Ingushetiyey i Chechney, Kavkazskiy Uzel, September 28, 2018, https:// www. kavkaz-uzel.eu/articles/223104/, (accessed on December 08, 2020).

22 Konstitutsiya Respubliki Ingushetiya, Respubliki Ingushetiya, Article 103, https:// ingushetia. ru/ institute/constitution.php (Accessed on December 12, 2020).

referendum should be made for any border changes. Within this context, Constitutional Court of the Russian Federation legalized the Agreement on Border Determination. Protests started for border security and invalidity of the agreement continued with the addition of different demands. Some of these demands are as follows: increasing the wealth of the public, improvement of human rights, meeting legal and administrative demands and elimination of injustice. Criminal procedures were started due to the increase of the protests. While some protestors were fined, others were arrested. The opposition decided to continue their objections in legal platforms and ensured the protestors to turn back their homes.

In winter 2018-2019, a "recession" period occurred in Ingushetia. On 28 February 2019, National Assembly of Ingushetia Republic approved the draft abrogating the constitutional article requiring a referendum for the issues like changes on the status of Ingushetia Republic, land transfer or border changes.

Border Conflicts between Chechnya Autonomous Republic and Dagestan Autonomous Republic



Source: https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Dagestan.png (Accessed on 29 December 2020)

Dagestan Republic is the most southern territory of the Russian Federation and it has an advantageous geostrategic position and access to international sea routes. Dagestan Autonomous Republic has borders with five states: land borders with Azerbaijan and Georgia; and sea borders with Kazakhstan, Turkmenistan and Iran in the Caspian Sea. Dagestan has a 540 km long coastal line in the Caspian Sea. With its population of 3,110 million, Dagestan is the most crowded republic in Northern Caucasia. 54.9% of the population lives in rural areas. According to 2010 consensus data; Avars (29.4%), Dargin (% 17), Kumuks (% 14.9), Lezgis (13.3%), Laks (% 5,6), Azeri (% 4.5), Tabasarans (% 4.1), Russians (% 3.6), Chechens (% 3.2), Nogays (% 1.4), Rutuls (% 1), Aguls (% 1) Tsakhurs (% 0.3) live in the Republic. Majority of the population lives in the northern mountainous plains. The area of Dagestan Republic is 50.3 thousand km2 and it is the second largest autonomous republic. Its capital is Makhachkala. There are 51 municipalities, 41 districts and 10 cities in the Republic. The biggest cities are Makhachkala, Khasavyurt, Derbent and Kaspiysk. There are about 1800 rivers in Dagestan. The biggest rivers are Terek, Sulak and Samur. Rivers are used for hydroelectric energy production, irrigation and fresh water supply. Hydroelectric potential of the Republic is 55.2 billion kW / h and this corresponds to about 40% of the potential of the rivers in Northern Caucasia.[23]

Geographic characteristics of Dagestan Republic are given above in order to see the reasons and factors of border conflicts as a whole. Within this context, the border conflict between Chechnya Autonomous Republic and Dagestan Autonomous Republic should be taken into consideration as a whole with all details. We have to emphasize here that border conflicts between Dagestan and Chechnya border were lighter than those between Ingushetia and Chechnya. The main reason for this is Dagestan and Chechnya Republics were not combined under the same administrative structure during Soviet Union period and their borders were defined more clearly.

Examining the historical background of the border conflicts between two republics shall be very useful to understand the border conflicts we encountered today. Before 1924, Kenkhi, Chadiri and Buti, which are Avar villages, belonged to Dagestan. The villages were included to Chechen-Ingush Autonomous Republic between 1924 and 1944. When Chechen-Ingush Autonomous Republic was divided as separate administrations in 1944, these villages were given to Dagestan Autonomous Republic again. In 1957 Chechen-Ingush Autonomous Soviet Republic combined a single administrative structure and Kenkhi, Chadiri and Buti villages were included within its borders again. Today these villages belong to Chechnya Autonomous Republic. Other disputed territories are Tsumadinsky, Botlikhsky and Gumbetovsky. These areas are significant for husbandry. Husbandry is very significant for the

[23] Kratkaya spravka, Glava Respubliki Dagestan, http://glava.e-dag.ru/home/respublika/2013-03-24-22-29-26, (Accessed on December 09, 2020).

residents of the territory. There are very good meadows suitable for animals in summer months. Furthermore Kezenoy-am Lake in Botlikh area is also significant for the economy and husbandry in the region. Today, these areas are within the borders of Dagestan.

Two autonomous republics were established commissions to clarify their borders. These commissions consist of the authorities, historians, residents and map engineers from both republics. Kamil Davdiev, the Vice President of the National Assembly of Dagestan, said the followings about the legal and supportive dimensions of these works;

> *"Works on clarifying the borders of Dagestan Republic with his neighbors are going on in compliance with the instructions of the President of Russian Federation and on the basis of the Statutory Decree issued by the government of Russian Federation."*[24]

Some of the works performed by the commission are as follows: Inclusion of Borozdinovskaya village in Shelkovsky areas of Chechnya Autonomous Republic by 2005. 95% of the population of th village was Avars before June 2005. After the intervention of the Russian Federation soldiers in 2005 summer, the demographics of the area were changed. After that discussions on leaving this area to Dagestan were continued. Another border conflict dealt by the commission is Kızlyar territory and Kızlyar city. The territory within the borders of Dagestan Autonomous Republic is 1.5 km away from Chechnya Autonomous Republic border.

It seems very difficult to apply any decision taken in the Chechnya Autonomous Republic and Dagestan Autonomous Republic border determination works. Disputes between the commissions become politicized. Commission works go slowly and interrupted frequently. On 6 July 2020, Magomed Daudov explained this issue as follows;

> *"We advise the authorities of the neighbor Dagestan Republic to continue the works of the mutual commission on clarification of the borders. According to the Chechen authorities, coordinates of the border lines have to be defined. This results with border conflicts between the residents of the neighbor areas. Commissions should resume working in order to clarify the border between Chechnya and Dagestan. We are afraid of negative consequences, including reflections of ethnic hate, due to the ambiguity of the administrative borders."*[25]

After this declaration of Magomed Daudov, president of Chechen parliament, the Dagestan Parliament made the following declaration;

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[24] Kamil Davdiyev: «Odnostoronnego resheniya po granitse byt' ne mozhet, tol'ko s uchetom mneniy obeikh storon», Respublıkanskoye Informatsıonnoye Agentstvo, March 29, 2019, https:// riadagestan.ru/news/society/ kamil_davdiev_odnostoronnego_ resheniya_ po_granitse_ byt_ ne_ mozhet_ tolko_ s_ uchetom_ mneniy_ obeikh_storon/, (Accessed on December 16, 2020).

[25] Nikolay Krasnov, Granitsy Bratstva Respublik, Gazeta "Kommersant", June 5, 2012, https:// www.kommersant.ru/doc/4366957, (Accessed on December 16, 2020).

> *"Nobody can make a unilateral modification on the administrative borders of any incorporator unit of the Russian Federation without participation of local people, without discussions by the border municipalities and without submitting the issue to the parliaments of the neighbor incorporator units. It is impossible to talk about taking a decision on any part of border territories unless the documents are approved by the parliaments of both neighbor territories.*[26]

Socioeconomic situations of both republics are harmed due to ambiguous borders. The nations of the area have not taken on each other yet but this does not mean that this will not happen in the future. Although solving this problem with commissions and at leaders' level seems as the best alternative it is very difficult to find a solution in the short term.

Border Conflicts between Northern Ossetia-Alania Autonomous Republic and Ingushetia Autonomous Republic

Northern Ossetia-Alania Autonomous Republic is a part of the Northern Caucasia Federal Region of Russian Federation. Northern Ossetia-Alania Republic covers a land of eight thousand km2. The capital is Vladikavkaz. Northern Ossetia-Alania Autonomous Republic has borders with Southern Ossetia-Alania Autonomous Republic and Georgia in the south, Kabardey-Balkar Autonomous Republic in the North and Northwest, Chechnya Autonomous Republic in the northeast, Stavropol Kray in the north and Ingushetia Autonomous Republic in the east. It is 2000 km far away from Moscow and 200 km away from Pyatigorsk, which is the administrative center of Northern Caucasia Federal Region.[27] According to Northern Caucasia Federal Region Statistics Institution, as of 1 January 2020, population of Northern Ossetia-Alania Autonomous Republic is 696,837. As of 1 January 2015, the population of Northern Ossetia-Alania Autonomous Republic was 705,270.[28] Northern Ossetia-Alania is one of the multinational territories of Russia. Ossets are dominant ethnic group in Ossetia and they correspond 65.1% of the whole population, second largest group is Russians (20.8%) and they are followed by Ingush (4%).[29]

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26 Gadzhimurad Sagitov and Akhmed Magomedov, Glavnaya / Politika / «Otkadastrim po-tikhomu», March 30, 2019, https://ndelo.ru/politika/otkadastrim-po-tihomu, (Accessed on December 18, 2020).

27 Respublıka Severnaya Osetıya - Alanıya / Respublıka / Obshchıye Svedenıya, Respublika Severnaya Osetiya – Alaniya, Http://Www.Alania.Gov.Ru/Republic/İnfo, (Accessed On December 20, 2020).

28 O Severo-Kavkazstate, Upravleniye Federal'noy Sluzhby Gosudarstvennoy Statistiki Po Severo-Kavkazskomu Federal'nomu Okrugu, Https://Stavstat.Gks.Ru/About, , (Accessed On December 20, 2020).

29 Perepis' Naseleniya RF 2010 G.: Respublika Severnaya Osetiya – Alaniya, Kavkazskiy Uzel, February 28, 2013, Https://Www.Kavkaz-Uzel.Eu/Articles/220747/, (Accessed On December 20, 2020).

The border conflict between Northern Ossetia-Alania Autonomous Republic and Ingushetia Autonomous Republic goes back to Tsars period. It is required to see the historical background in order to understand the current status of border conflict. In her book entitled *Ethnic Composition of Northern Caucasia Population at the beginnings of 18th – 20th Centuries* Natalia Volkova Georgievna wrote that two nations lived together since 16th century. It is understood from the Russian sources from 16th to 18th century that Vainakh population lived in Lars territory on the left bank of Terek at that time and they were replaced by Ossets later. According to Klaproth, who visited this territory at the beginning of 19th century, ''Ossets of Solante paid taxes to Ingush in order to use the land where Lars, Chmi and Baltash villages are located, for a long time.''[30]



Source: https://zen.yandex.ru/media/id/5c2c9b3b1db07f00abad37fa/osetinoingushskii-konflikt-5ce6e0abda618900b37d2104 (Accessed on 29 December 2020).

Prigorodny area has been a part of Ingush Autonomous Republic since 1922. When Chechen-Ingush Autonomous Soviet Republic was combined under the same administrative structure on 15 January 1936, Prigorodny Area was included within these administrative borders. In 1944, Soviet Union demolished Chechen-Ingush Autonomous Soviet Republic and divided it into separate administrative structures. After the exile of Chechen and Ingush

[30] Natalia Volkova Georgievna, Etnicheskiy sostav naseleniya Severnogo Kavkaza v XVIII — nachale XX veka, . — Izdatel'stvo Nauka, Moscow, 1974, pp.125-148.

people to Kazakhstan and Siberia, Prigorodny Area was included into Northern Ossetia Autonomous Soviet Socialist Republic and Ossets were settled to this area. On 24 October 1956, Soviet Union Communist Party Central Commission Office took a decision to combine the national autonomy of Chechen and Ingush nations but Prigorodny Area was left as a part of Northern Ossetia. As an indemnification, three territories in Stavrapol—Naursky, Shelkovsky and Kargalinsky—were included in Chechen-Ingush Soviet Socialist Republic. When the Chechen-Ingush Soviet Socialist Republic was divided into separate administrative structures in June 1992, Ingush demanded the land where their ancestors lived. At the beginning of 1992, public militia and republic guard unions were formed in Northern Ossetia. On 12.06.1992, Russian Federation Supreme Council took a decision and declared state of emergency in Vladikavkaz, Alagirsky, Mozdoksky, Pravoberezhny and Prigorodny districts in order to stabilize the situation, On the basis of this decision, 12.460 people were transferred to Northern Ossetia.[31] In October 1992, Ingushetia decided to form self defense units in the Ingush villages of Prigorodny area in Northern Ossetia. Armed clashes occurred in some villages of Prigorodny area and in the shoulders of Vladikavkaz. On 31 October, first units of Russian army entered to Vladikavkaz. 3 thousand dwellings were damaged as a result of the armed clashes. On 15 February 1995, The President of Russian Federation signed a Statutory Decree on "Measures to Eliminate the Consequences of Ossetia-Ingushetia Clashes in October- November 1992"[32] and significant support was given to the victims. In a mutual meeting held in December 2009 by Ingushetia Autonomous Republic and Northern Ossetia Autonomous Republic, a Common Action Plan was executed in order improve good neighboring relations. In his speech given in this meeting the Prime Minister of Northern Ossetia-Alania Autonomous Republic was talked about mutual relations and defined the term “clash” as follows:

> *The term "conflict" is an infamous page in our common history. Time has passed, a new generation is coming and we believe that Osset and Ingush people have to live like good neighbors. None of us is going to build a Chinese wall or a Berlin Wall. The President of Ingushetia and I, try to act as a model and try to prove that any kind of problems can be solved by mutual corporation. Taimuraz Mamsurov, we have to exclude not only the clashes but also the distrust in our relations".*[33]

Decision numbered 41 of Ingush Nation Extraordinary Congress and National Assembly presents the armed clashes in 1992 as follows;

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31 Osetino-ingushskiy konflikt, Geroi Otechestva, http://героипфо.рф/?id=3825, (Accessed On December 20, 2020).

32 O merakh po likvidatsii posledstviy Osetino-Ingushskogo konflikta oktyabrya-noyabrya 1992 goda (s izmeneniyami na 12 aprelya 1999 goda) elektronnyy fond, http://docs.cntd. ru/ document /9010622, (Accessed On December 20, 2020).

33 Mirnyy dom, rossiyskaya gazeta, December 24, 2009, https://rg.ru/2009/12/24/reg-kuban/dogovor.html, (Accessed On December 20, 2020).

> *"Political and Legal Evaluation of October-November 1992 Event occurred in Prigorodny Territory and Vladikavkaz in Northern Ossetia Republic" These documents present the clashes as "Deporting Ingush population from Northern Ossetia by force, ethnic cleaning of Prigorodny Territory and Vladikavkaz city in Northern Ossetia "*[34]

Article 11 of the Constitution of Ingushetia is still read out as follows: "Taking the lands occupied from Ingushetia illegally back using political tools and protecting the territorial integrity of Ingushetia Republic is the most significant task of the state"[35] .

Official evaluation of 1992 events by Ossets reflected to the decisions taken at 18th Session of USSR Supreme Council URSS and the 2nd Congress of Ossetia Nation as follows: "carefully planned, prepared, bitchery attack of Ingush bandit formations supported by the majority of Ingush population in Northern Ossetia against sovereign Northern Ossetia Soviet Socialist Republic ".[36]

Conclusion

It is known that the first administrators of the Soviet Union period were not experienced on state management. Within this context, they faced administrative problems in several areas in the first foundation years of USSR. One of these problems is the border conflicts within the country. Foundations of most of the border conflicts we faced today laid on those days. People with different ethnic origins used to live in Caucasia. In the first period of Soviet Union, people were taken under the same administrative structure without taking the conditions like religion, language, race or ancestor territories into consideration. Moscow did not distribute its management power equally to ethnical origins gathered under the same administrative structure. This created social unrest and resulted with short term clashes. Clashes become more tangible and sensible within the process during which combined administrative structure was divided. When the administrative structures divided, "power and security" concepts made the solution of border problems of autonomous republics more difficult. For example, Soviet Administration exiled Ingush and Chechen people to Kazakhstan claiming that the people of that area helped Nazis. Ossets and Russians were settled to the locations evacuated. Chechen and Ingush people who turned from Kazakhstan saw strangers in their own land and the solution of the problem became more complex. Although border conflicts in Northern Caucasia did not start a war before the dissolution of Soviet Union, they caused small sized armed conflicts. When the factors like pressure from the management, land concept in communism and wealth level

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34 Osetino-ingushskiy konflikt 1992 goda, Kavkazskiy Uzel, October 29, 2019, https://www.kavkaz-uzel.eu/articles/341775/, (Accessed On December 23, 2020).

35 Konstitutsiya Respubliki Ingushetiya, Respubliki Ingushetiya, Article 11, https://ingushetia.ru/institute/constitution.php, (Accessed on December 23, 2020).

36 Osetino-ingushskiy konflikt 1992 goda, Kavkazskiy Uzel, October 29, 2019, https://www.kavkaz-uzel.eu/articles/341775/, (Accessed On December 23, 2020).

of public are taken into consideration, we can understand how the border problems were overcome easily. On the other hand, lack of authority, change of power balances, security and economic problems encountered within the first years of the Russian Federation resulted with an increase in the frozen border conflicts. Especially the full independence attempts of Chechnya Autonomous Republic at that time made the border conflicts deeper in the region. We can see that no alternative policies are developed by the Moscow management.

Equations in Northern Caucasia started to be changed with Vladimir Putin management. Vladimir Putin has a significant role in 2nd Chechnya war and employed alternative and efficient policies like forming local opposition against the separatists in Northern Caucasia or increasing pressure. Russia dominated the region with these policies. Furthermore, we can see that administrators assigned by Moscow to the region are more experienced. Financial support is given to the autonomous republics in order to stabilize the region. High unemployment rate and poor economic situation of public show that the financial support given does not reach to public against the allocation of significant support funds.

Today, the Russian Federation cannot determine the borders in Northern Caucasia clearly. Although the administrative structure is better than the Soviet Union and the first periods of the Russian Federation, inability to determine the borders shows that the alternative policies developed by Moscow are insufficient and inefficient. We can understand that solving the problem is very difficult as long as political elites and local rich people, who transform the continuity of border chaos into profits, exist. Furthermore, border conflicts between the autonomous republics of Russian Federation are also perceived as an effort to gain a geopolitical significance in case of dissolution of the Russian Federation.

It is impossible to solve the border problems considering the rights of local people rather than the political benefits. Opinion of public have to be taken into consideration to solve the issue. Besides the historians; notables, associations and public should be contributed in the solution of the problem. Furthermore, land reform that have been tried to be made should be completed. A monitoring system and an investment system should be established in order to ensure that the financial support given to the region reach the addressees. Associations should be established and organizations should be made in order to fraternize the nations in the region with each other and perceive the ethnic, cultural, linguistic and religious differences as a wealth. Eliminating those who use the border conflicts for their own benefits shall be a significant step on the way to the solution of the problem.

The administrators of the region should see that they are a part of the problem not the solution. It is impossible to solve neither socioeconomic nor border problems in an environment where a minor part of the local people are represented rather than the whole region.

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The Fundamental Prospects and Tests before the Energy Security Parameters within the Southern Caucasus since 1990s

Sina KISACIK*

Introduction

The Southern Caucasia region which was controlled by Soviet Union until the end of 1991 is composed of Azerbaijan, Georgia and Armenia. It also includes such neighbouring states to this geography as Russia, Iran and Turkey. Azerbaijan, Georgia and Armenia have gained their independences with the official dissolution of Soviet Union at the end of 1991. Then this region has turned out to be one of the world's most important hotspots. Azerbaijan's possession of huge oil and natural reserves and the question of drilling and transporting to world markets have been by far the single most central issue in terms of Southern Caucasia's energy parameters since 1990s. When considered from the transference aspect, such transit states as Turkey and Georgia have come into the forefront.

Within this context, it should be mentioned that from the mid-1990s to up until now, there has been experiencing a wide range competition between Russia and Euro-Atlantic Bloc on the transportation of Southern Caucasus's oil and natural gas resources to world markets via the development of several projects. However, it should be kept in mind that this is not an easy task to accomplish. Such regional confrontations as Karabakh Issue between Azerbaijan and Armenia, Russia-Georgia dispute on Abkhazia and South Ossetia as well as the legal status of Caspian Sea have been preventing the full use of regional capacity in terms of Eurasian energy security. The results of the latest Karabakh War and the developments regarding the resolution of the legal status on Caspian Sea will be noteworthy determinants on this region's contribution to the energy security of Eurasia. Also within this framework, the initiatives on this region within the context of nuclear energy such as the construction of Turkey's first nuclear power plant by Russia in Mersin and the contested condition of Metsamor Nuclear Power Plant in Armenia will constitute another important aspect of energy security parameters in the Southern Caucasia within the 21st century that ought to be closely followed.

By taking into consideration the aforementioned context, this research paper will examine the central opportunities and challenges within the milieu of Southern Caucasian energy security parameters in the 21st century. This will be realized through focusing on noteworthy oil and natural pipelines as well as

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the two critically nuclear power plants within the Southern Caucasia region. Therefore, this research will firstly discuss the noticeable oil pipeline projects in terms of Southern Caucasus energy security. Secondly, this research will elaborate on the noteworthy natural gas pipelines coming into the agenda within the energy security parameters of Southern Caucasia. Thirdly, this research will talk on nuclear power plant aspect by examining two case studies in Turkey and Armenia. Lastly, some personal analyses and projections on the researched topic will be set forth in the Conclusion part.

Dimension 1: Significant Oil Pipelines in the Energy Security Parameters of the Southern Caucasus

Baku's 7 billion barrels of recoverable oil and 1.3 trillion cubic meters (tcm) of gas reserves stand noteworthy for both itself and for the global energy supply. Other South Caucasus countries aside from Azerbaijan, explicitly Georgia and Armenia, stay correspondingly vital for the transference of these resources to world markets owing to their standing. Within this context, Moscow has undertaken to preclude the Western energy companies' concentrated interests in Baku's hydrocarbon reserves. "The $8 Billion – Production Sharing Agreement of Azerbaijan Oil Resources" was made on September 20, 1994 between SOCAR and transnational energy companies. Additionally, the establishment of the Azerbaijan International Oil Company (AIOC) concerning the oil exploration, production, and sharing in Azeri-Çırak-Güneşli (ACG) fields within the Caspian Sea have acted as central parts in the implementation of the Baku-Tbilisi-Ceyhan (BTC) project. Washington and Ankara, intended for resource divergence, reducing the reliance on Moscow and subsidizing to the independence of Azerbaijan, have introduced the embracing of the Baku-Supsa line accompanied by a Moscow-recommended pipeline. The intergovernmental framework contract granting a formal position to BTC was realized between the Presidents of Azerbaijan, Georgia, and Turkey during the OSCE Summit on November 19, 1999, under the sponsorships of the then-U.S. President Bill Clinton. The ground-breaking ceremony of BTC befell on September 26, 2002. On account of this, Azerbaijan's political and economic independence have more been amalgamated. By this way, Ankara and Tbilisi have more augmented their strategic impacts.[1] This pipeline stands run by British Petroleum in the name of BTC Co. Company in Azerbaijan and Georgia and similarly BOTAŞ International Limited Company in Turkey. Its total length stands 1768 kilometers wherein 1078 km of it stays in Turkey, 443 km in Azerbaijan and the rest 249 km remains in the Georgian borders. This pipeline's

[1] Sina Kısacık, "Chapter 14: Understanding the 21st Century's Specific Eurasian Regional Security and Energy Security Parameters in the Turkish-American Relationship: A Case Study on South Caucasus and Central Asia", in Hüseyin Işıksal and Ozan Örmeci (eds), Historical Examinations and Current Issues in Turkish-American Relations, Berlin, Peter Lang, 2020, pp.365-366.

transportation capacity represents 1.2 million barrels per day.[2] As of September 7, 2020, as said by the local media in connection with Botas, the operative of the Turkish section of the pipeline, roughly 146.7 million barrels of oil has conveyed from the Ceyhan oil terminal, through Baku-Tbilisi-Ceyhan pipeline[3], throughout the period of January-August 2020. As stated, 192 tankers by means of oil conveyed by Baku-Tbilisi-Ceyhan pipeline were transported from Heydar Aliyev Terminal in Ceyhan. A total of 4.5 billion barrels of oil have been transported from the Ceyhan terminal to the world markets ever since the starting of Baku-Tbilisi-Ceyhan in June 4, 2006. Furthermore, 4,573 tankers filled with oil conveyed passing through pipeline have been conveyed from Ceyhan terminal.[4]

It should firstly be stated that both Turkey and Georgia have collaborated on the transfer of Caspian Region's energy resources to the international markets. When Ankara has supported Tbilisi favouring in terms of Baku-Supsa Line for the route of early oil drilled from the Azerbaijan, Tbilisi has sponsored the BTC Route as a main export pipeline. When we come to the 2004, Georgia would experience a Rose Revolution ending up with the regime change and coming into the power of pro Euro-Atlantic Mikhail Saakaşvili. During his election campaign and later on, he was trying to follow anti-Russian policies and pursue hard line politics in terms of Acaristan and South Ossetia. He was also prioritizing his country's territorial integrity as well as betterment of country's administration. As a part of this agenda, Saakaşvili attached special importance on Turkey. One of the diplomatic manoeuvres of Saakaşvili after his election was the presentation of guarantees regarding BTC Pipeline to Turkish decision-makers.[5]

Within the context of territorial integrity of Georgia, despite the opposition by primarily Russia and the other states toward the decision of Kosovo's independence decision and the recognition of this decision by U.S.-led Western world have caused a hard transformation of Russia on Abkhazia and South

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2 Selim Kurt, "Karadeniz'in Değişen Jeopolitik Gündemi: Enerjinin Yükselişi", in Göktürk Tüysüzoğlu and Selim Kurt (eds), Uluslararası Politikada Karadeniz, Ankara, Detay Yayıncılık, 2019, pp.174-176.

3 The shareholding structure of Baku-Tbilisi-Ceyhan Crude Oil Pipeline is listed as; BP (30.1 percent); AzBTC (25 percent); MOL (8.9 percent); Equinor (8.71 percent); TPAO (6.53 percent); Eni (5 per cent); Total (5 percent), ITOCHU (3.4 percent); INPEX (2.5 percent), ExxonMobil (2.5 percent) and ONGC (BTC) Limited (2.36 percent). "146.7m barrels of oil transported from Ceyhan terminal in 2020", *Hellenic Shipping News,* September 07, 2020, https://www. hellenicshippingnews.com/146-7m-barrels-of-oil-transported-from-ceyhan-terminal-in-2020/ (accessed on December 14, 2020), BP Azerbaijan, "Home / Who we are/Operations and projects/Pipelines/Baku-Tbilisi-Ceyhan Pipeline", https://www.bp.com/en_az/ azerbaijan /home /who-we-are/ operationsprojects/pipelines/btc.html (accessed on December 14, 2020).

4 "https://www.hellenicshippingnews.com/146-7m-barrels-of-oil-transported-from ceyhan-terminal-in-2020/

5 Selim Kurt, "Türkiye-Gürcistan İlişkileri", in Göktürk Tüysüzoğlu and Arda Özkan (eds), Soğuk Savaş Sonrası Türkiye'nin Kafkasya ve Orta Asya Siyaseti, Ankara, Detay Yayıncılık, 2018, pp.111-113.

Ossetia issues. Later on the announcement on the support of Georgia's membership in NATO's Bucharest Summit held on April 2-4, 2008, has resulted in the sharpening of Russian approach. Moreover, the rapid leaving of Russia's from its military bases in Georgia wherein the former had been reluctant on this issue for a long time would mean the approaching of an expected end in terms of Russia. Therefore, in April 2008, there would start to be heard conflict news from the Georgia-South Ossetia border and together with the sending of Russian troops to this region, the signals of approaching to a war would even be clearer. Following this development, the Russian-Georgian relations were tense day by day and as a result of Russian's troops sending to this region at the beginning of August 2008, Georgia was moving against South Ossetia. Counter to this, Russia with the reasoning of the lives of Russian-originated citizens in this region and the attacking towards the Russian soldiers stationed in this region, has harshly responded to the Georgian attacks. South Ossetia, Russia and also Abkhazia involved in these confrontations experienced between August 7 and 16, 2008. Owing to the Russian bombing of Georgia's important cities and harbours with its land, naval and air forces, Tbilisi was obliged to withdraw all its troops from Abkhazia and South Ossetia. But again, Moscow would continue its invasion in the territories of Georgia until the signing of Sarkozy Plan presented by the mediation of France, the then term president of EU, on August 16, 2008. At the end of the war in which hundreds of soldiers and civilians were dead from both sides, even Moscow has withdrawn its soldiers from Georgia under the Sarkozy Plan; it has been continuing its military presences in Abkhazia and South Ossetia where these two entities are recognized just by Russia as independent states since August 26, 2008. Thanks to this decision, the situation in Caucasia has turned out to be an internationally deadlock problem. Also the political map of Caucasia has changed and the territorial integrity of Georgia has become a contested issue.[6]

This war has not only affected Georgia but also has directly impacted on its relations with Turkey as a neighbouring country and a strategic partner of Georgia. Initially, the destruction occurring in the Georgian infrastructure has caused the halting of Turkey's trade with Central Asia and Russia via Caucasia. When the flow from BTC was cut off for a while, the stream from BTE Natural Gas Pipeline was stopped because of security. The war has changed the existing balances within the region and as a result of it, the cooperation with Russia, the territorial integrity of Georgia, how can it be approached to Abkhazia Question, the relations with Azerbaijan and the fate of Karabakh Issue and in line with this, Turkish-Armenian relations have been the subjects coming into the regional agenda that have to be re-examined. The collapse of the Russian-Georgian relations and later on irreconcilable atmosphere have affected Turkey's Black Sea centered policies as well as have negatively impacted on

6 Kurt, "Türkiye-Gürcistan İlişkileri", pp.118-119; Sina Kısacık, "Soğuk Savaş Sonrası Dönemde Karadeniz Havzası'ndaki Bölgeselleşme Girişimleri: Başarılarla mı, Hayal Kırıklıklarıyla mı Dolu?" , in Göktürk Tüysüzoğlu and Selim Kurt (eds), Uluslararası Politikada Karadeniz, Ankara, Detay Yayıncılık, 2019, pp.336-342.

such regional security initiatives as "BLACKSEAFOR & Black Sea Harmony[7]" and similarly over such economic and political projects namely BTC / BTE Pipelines and Baku-Tbilisi-Kars Railway.[8] Within this context, it has re-emerged that how the protection of territorial integrity and stability of Georgia being as the greatest objective of Turkey since Georgia's independence as well as Georgia's becoming a self-sufficient state are so important. Moreover this war has clearly shown to all of the relating parties (USA, EU and Turkey) that all these issues will not be achieved by excluding Russia.[9]

Baku-Novorossiysk oil pipeline within northern direction is 1,330 km long. Diameter of the pipeline stays 530 mm. SOCAR remains the operative of Azerbaijani part of the pipeline which stands 231 km long. Filling the pipeline with oil has begun in October 1996. Full output capacity of the pipeline stays 105 thousand barrels a day.[10] The Baku-Novorossiysk pipeline has been existent ever since 1983. The pipeline was for transferring crude oil to Baku from Grozny for dispensation. Ever since 1997, this pipeline has been for conveying oil in the reverse route from Azerbaijan to the Russian port of Novorossiysk on the Black Sea. Some renovation work would be performed over this pipeline. It was successively benefiting for the transference of oil by ACG and SOCAR up until 2008. Furthermore, starting in 2001, oil digged out from onshore reserves run by SOCAR, in collaboration with its foreign partners, has similarly been conveyed alongside this pipeline. The transportation volume of this pipeline is situated 100,000 barrels per day (13,500 tons/day). The Baku-Novorossiysk Pipeline has started shipping oil dig out by SOCAR and SOCAR's onshore enterprises once the BTC pipeline's unveiling to complete production volume. It stands presently run cooperatively between Azerbaijan and its foreign partners, AK Transneft OJSC of Russia, and SOCAR in Azerbaijan. The Baku-Novorossiysk oil pipeline ensures 3 pumping stations (Sangachal, Sumgayit and Siyazan).[11]

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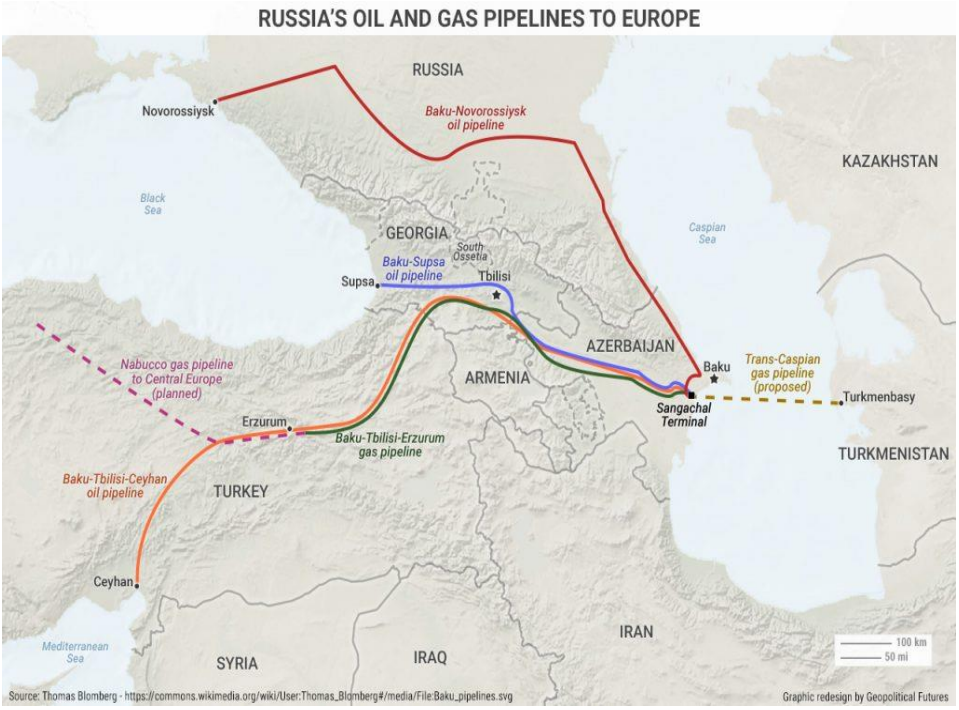
7 Kısacık, "Soğuk Savaş Sonrası Dönemde Karadeniz Havzası'ndaki Bölgeselleşme Girişimleri: Başarılarla mı, Hayal Kırıklıklarıyla mı Dolu?" pp.315-321.

8 Sina Kısacık, "21. Yüzyilda Çin Halk Cumhuriyeti'nin Karadeniz Bölgesi Stratejisinin Temel Sacayaklarını Anlamlandırmak", in Göktürk Tüysüzoğlu and Selim Kurt (eds), Uluslararası Politikada Karadeniz, Ankara, Detay Yayıncılık, 2019, pp.277-293.

9 Kurt, "Türkiye-Gürcistan İlişkileri", p.119.

10 State Oil Company of Azerbaijan Republic (SOCAR), "Transportation: Baku-Novorossiysk Oil Pipeline", http:// www.socar.az/socar/en/activities/transportation/baku-novorossiysk- oil- pipeline (accessed on November 27, 2020).

11 The Ministry of Energy of Republic of Azerbaijan, "Main Page / Oil / The Transportation of Oil: The Baku-Novorossiysk Pipeline", November 05, 2019, https://minenergy.gov.az/en/neft/baki-novorossiysk-neft-kemeri (accessed on November 27, 2020).



Source: https://geopoliticalfutures.com/russia-opportunity-us-sanctions/, (Accessed on 27 November 2020).

As of July 17, 2020, The State Oil Company of Azerbaijan has declared its plans to start again oil export through the Baku-Novorossiysk oil pipeline. SOCAR spokesman Ibrahim Ahmedov has stated that restoration work on the Azerbaijani section of the pipeline was finalized, and at that time it did take some time to settle on pumping measures and define shipping capacities. Simultaneously, Ahmedov was not discussing the shipping capacities delivered for by SOCAR for carrying alongside the "northern" route. As reported, ever since January 2020, SOCAR did not carry oil via the Baku-Novorossiysk pipeline. The company would send its oil capacities for shipping, mostly by the BTC. The Central Dispatch Department of the Fuel and Energy Complex of the Russian Federation would declare that in January the transit of Azerbaijani oil via Russia did occur 29.5 thousand tons. As stated by the Ministry of Energy of Azerbaijan, SOCAR conveyed 824.4 thousand tons of oil would be transported by the Baku-Novorossiysk pipeline in 2019, comparatively 36.5% lesser than in 2018.[12] On 19 October 2020, it has been alleged by Azerbaijan to have disenchanted an Armenian attack on the Baku-Novorossiysk crude export pipeline. The country's general prosecutor's office has addressed that Azerbaijani air defence forces "counterweighted" Armenian rockets fired in the route of the Khizi

[12] Ilham Shaban "Azerbaijan to Resume Oil Export through Russia Today", *Caspian Barrel,* July 18, 2020, http://caspianbarrel.org/en/2020/07/azerbaijan-to-resume-oil-export-through-russia-today/ (accessed on November 27, 2020).

region to the north of Baku. It has been mentioned that "Some parts of the missiles fell at a distance of 250m from the strategic Baku-Novorossiysk oil pipeline passing through the village Sitalchay." This information may perhaps not be confirmed. Azerbaijan has discoursed that "*it was an attempt "to deliberately destroy a large number of infrastructure facilities, creating a dangerous environment for crude oil and export condensate pipelines, the destruction of which could cause significant material damage".* Armenia has repudiated pointing pipelines[13] in the course of the reintroduced skirmish above the Karabakh region, which commenced on 27 September 2020.[14] Before this event, Azerbaijan President Ilham Aliyev has warned Armenia as *"Armenia is trying to attack and take control of our pipelines. If Armenia tries to take control of the pipelines there, I can say that the outcome will be severe for them."*[15]

Here an analysis made by Mehmet Öğütçü, a world-recognized expert on international energy affairs, will be shared for better understanding Armenian attack on the Tovuz province of Azerbaijan. According to Öğütçü, Armenia's attack to Tovuz region of Azerbaijan bordering between them has been a very meaningful one. The border clashes have not occurred around Nagorno-Karabakh just as happening every year. Öğütçü mentions that the border clashes have occurred very close to a place where the physical infrastructure of the joint energy and transportation projects of Turkey and Azerbaijan are passing through the region. Öğütçü discourses that the Turkish-Azerbaijani joint projects of Baku-Tbilisi-Kars Railway, BTC and Southern Caucasia pipeline as the beginning of TANAP have been passing from the Tovuz region wherein the clashes occur. In this manner, for Öğütçü, if these strategic points could be controlled by Yerevan, the only land way connecting Turkey and Azerbaijan as well as these two countries' joint energy and transportation projects could suddenly be attacked by Armenia. Therefore, Öğütçü mentions that it has again been seen that the OSCE-Minsk Process is a useless one. Within this context, according to Öğütçü, these clashes should not be read as just a simple Azerbaijani-Armenian border clash. In line with this, it should too be seen as a reflection of new geopolitical projections where Ankara has been willingly or forcefully involving. Öğütçü underlines that it is not a surprising that Turkey as a challenger country in a wider region ranging from Red Sea, Gulf, Mediterranean, Syria, Iraq to Black Sea and Central Asia will not be hesitantly hit from its "Achilles' Heels" by the such countries principally Russia, Iran, Saudi

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13 Marianna Karapetyan, "Defense Ministry denies Azerbaijan's statement on targeting Baku-Novorossiysk oil pipeline", *Public Radio of Armenia,* October 19, 2020, https:// en.armradio.am / 2020/ 10/ 19/ defense- ministry-denies-azerbaijans-statement- on-targeting-baku-novorossiysk-oil-pipeline/ (accessed on November 27, 2020).

14 John Gawthrop, "Azerbaijan claims new pipeline attack thwarted", *Argus Media,* October 19, 2020, https://www.argusmedia.com/en/news/2151383-azerbaijan-claims-new-pipeline-attack-thwarted (accessed on November 27, 2020).

15 "Aliyev warns of consequences if Armenia targets oil, gas pipelines", *Daily Sabah,* October 14, 2020, https:// www. dailysabah. com/ politics/ diplomacy/ aliyev- warns-of-consequences- if-armenia-targets-oil-gas-pipelines, (accessed on November 27, 2020).

Arabia, Egypt, Israel, France, Greece and United Arab Emirates wherein it has been experiencing deep conflicts of interests with them.[16]

Moreover, Öğütçü stresses that the eruption of Azerbaijani-Armenian border conflicts where these critically strategic conflicts may reach in terms of connection of energy and transportation from Central Asia to China has not just been organized by Armenia. To exemplify this, Öğütçü mentions that current Armenian Prime Minister Nikol Paşinyan was discussing the further deterioration of the situation in his country due to COVID-19 Pandemi and his country's health institutions were incapable of dealing with COVID-19 cases and therefore was requesting foreign aid. For Öğütçü, it is a very well-known reality that the Armenian economy has been passing from a very hard process. There exists 17.7% unemployment and 30% poverty in the country. The economy in the 3 million-populated country is being backed up Russia, Iran and diaspora Armenians.[17] To Öğütçü, it represents an irrational movement for Armenia to make war with Azerbaijan wherein the latter is much more economically and militarily powerful than the former. Even it can be deliberated that there exists a low probability of the transformation of these conflicts into the larger scale of a war in which Russia, Iran, Georgia and Turkey might involve. Finally, Öğütçü highlights that it is not an over-conspiracy that the eruption and then expansion of this conflict should be understood as an effort to punish Turkey's initiatives that have been damaging the other countries' interests in different fronts via a chess player's movement.[18] Some of the important remarks of Cavid Veliyev will be given here to better comprehend how this attack is assessed by Azerbaijan:

> *"The conflict took place in the Tovuz region, an energy route, close to the Azerbaijan-Georgia-Turkey corridor. Instability in this region has the potential to directly affect the Baku-Tbilisi-Ceyhan crude oil pipeline, the Southern Gas Natural Gas Pipeline, and the Baku-Tbilisi-Kars railway. This strip opens up Turkey to Central Asia and it also gives way to the energy and transportation lines that carry Caspian oil and natural gas to Turkey and then to all over the world. These projects that exclude Armenia are the ones that unite Azerbaijan-Georgia-Turkey and ensures opening up of the South Caucasus to the world. In a way, these routes are the lifeline to the economy of Azerbaijan. For this reason, it is believed that the reasons behind the Armenian attack could have been to hurt the*

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16 Mehmet Öğütçü, *Yeni Dünyanın Gizli Şifreleri: Gerçekçi Bir 2030 Vizyonu – Siyaset, Ekonomi, Enerji, Jeopolitika, İnsan Sermayesi, Teknoloji, Liderlik, Gençler ve Değerler*, 1st ed., İstanbul: Destek Yayınları, 2020, p.153.

17 Gülsüm Gizem Özyol, "Armenia: Bound to Putin, Dependent on Macron", *The Diplomatic Observer*, No:153, November 2020, pp.16-17.

18 Öğütçü, *ibid.,* pp.153-154.

Azerbaijani economy. In short, it can be said that the goal of Armenia was to damage the projects that unite Turkey and Azerbaijan..."[19]

In accordance with this, at the end of September 2020, Armenia would organize an attack against Azerbaijan within the conflicted zones. But Azerbaijan has powerfully responded to this attack and has won the war continuing 44 days with a great superiority.[20] On November 10, 2020, with the mediation of Russia, Azerbaijan and Armenia have agreed to conclude this war via a ceasefire agreement ending up with the returning of all territories invaded in the Karabakh region twenty-eight years ago by Armenia to Azerbaijan.[21] After this agreement, there has existed an important development on the energy security within the context of Southern Caucasus. As of December 15, 2020, a Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) between Turkey's Energy and Natural Resources Minister Fatih Dönmez and Azerbaijan's Energy Minister Parviz Shahbazov was signed for supplying natural gas from Turkey to the Nakhchivan Autonomous Republic. According to this memorandum, the fresh 85-kilometer-long gas pipeline will be running from Iğdır in Turkey's eastern Anatolia to Sederek in western Azerbaijan, holding a yearly capacity of 500 million cubic meters (mcm) and 1.5 mcm per diem. The project will be implemented via the collaboration of Turkish BOTAS and Azerbaijani SOCAR.[22] Both countries' energy ministers have put forward the prominence of this issue as;

*"**Fatih Dönmez**: With this pipeline, we will be able to meet the current total gas demand of Nakhchivan. With a population of 500,000 and natural gas consumption of 500 mcm. Nakhchivan would be supplied with as much reliable natural gas as before the Karabakh occupation.*

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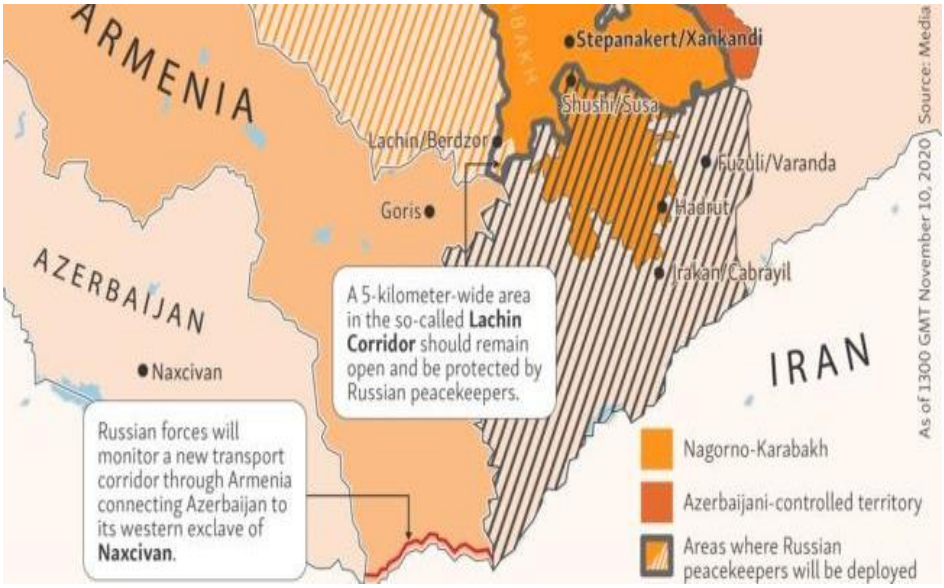
19 Cavid Veliyev, "Armenian threat to Turkey-Azerbaijan energy corridor", *Anatolian Agency (AA),* July 22, 2020, https://www.aa.com.tr/en/analysis/-armenian-threat-to-turkey-azerbaijan-energy-corridor/1918286, (accessed on December 9, 2020).

20 Emin Ali Şıhaliyev, "The Armenia-Azerbaijan War: Truths, Threats and Analyses", *The Diplomatic Observer,* No:153, November 2020, pp.10-15, Göktuğ Sönmez, "Azerbaijan's Karabakh Operation, Its Background and Regional Repercussions, *The Diplomatic Observer,* No:153, November 2020, pp.18-22.

21 "Armenia, Azerbaijan, Russia sign deal to end Nagorno-Karabakh conflict", *China Global Television Network (CGTN),* November 10, 2020, https://news.cgtn.com/news/2020-11-10/Armenian-PM-says-has-signed-painful-deal-to-end-Karabakh-war-VimpRoeNTW/index.html (accessed on December 09, 2020), Mushvig Mehdiyev, "Armenia Lost Karabakh War, While Azerbaijan Claimed Military and Political Victory: Analysts", *Caspian News,* November 14, 2020, https://caspiannews.com/news-detail/armenia-lost-karabakh-war-while-azerbaijan-claimed-military-and-political-victory-analysts-2020-11-12-44/ (accessed on December 09, 2020).

22 "Turkey, Azerbaijan sign MoU to supply gas to Nakhchivan", *Hürriyet Daily News,* December 16, 2020, https://www.hurriyetdailynews.com/turkey-azerbaijan-sign-mou-to-supply-gas-to-nakhchivan-160886 (accessed on December 18, 2020), "Turkey, Azerbaijan ink deal to secure Nakhchivan's natural gas supply", *Daily Sabah,* December 15, 2020, https://www.dailysabah.com/business/energy/turkey-azerbaijan-ink-deal-to-secure-nakhchivans-natural-gas-supply (accessed on December 18, 2020).

Parviz Shahbazov: *The new MoU would play a crucial role in developing and expanding the already-strong relationship between the two countries. Natural gas is already being supplied to Nakhchivan through Iran. However, now thanks to the new pipeline, Azerbaijan's gas will be directly transmitted to the region."*[23]



Source: https://www.euractiv.com/section/armenia/opinion/nagorno-karabakh-peace-deal-between-armenia-and-azerbaijan-is-a-strategic-disaster-for-iran/, (Accessed on 9 December 2020).

The Baku-Supsa Pipeline (Western Route Export Pipeline -WREP) transports crude oil from offshore oil fields from within the Azerbaijani coastal territories in the Caspian Sea to world markets through Georgia. The crude oil is shipped via tankers, loaded at the Supsa terminal in Georgia, which then makes its way through the Bosphorus to European markets. The restoration of the Baku-Supsa Pipeline began in 1994 and was completed in 1998. The official inauguration ceremony of the pipeline took place in April 1999. WREP was originally constructed during the Soviet era. During its reconstruction, portions of the pipeline, as well as related technical equipment, were completely replaced. It was planned to transport the first oil extracted from the Azeri, Chirag and Guneshli fields to the Supsa port on the Black Sea coast of Georgia. BP currently operates the pipeline. The length of the pipeline is 833 km, of which 456 km is in Azerbaijani territory. The transmission capacity of the pipeline is 150,000 barrels per day.[24]

An important issue that has to be mentioned in terms of energy security parameters in Southern Caucasia region has been the Caspian Sea's legal status.

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[23] https://www.hurriyetdailynews.com/turkey-azerbaijan-sign-mou-to-supply-gas-to-nakhchivan-160886.

[24] https://minenergy.gov.az/en/neft/baki-novorossiysk-neft-kemeri.

Up until the dissolution of Soviet Union at the very beginning of 1990s, the geography was controlled by Soviet Union and Iran. The status of this region had been determined with the several agreements among Moscow and Teheran. However, after the disintegration of the Soviet Union, 15 states would gain their independences. Among these 15 states, three of them specifically Azerbaijan, Turkmenistan and Kazakhstan have come into the forefront within the context of determination of the legal status of Caspian Sea. From the mid-1990 to 2018, there have occurred many negotiations among Russia, Iran, Azerbaijan, Turkmenistan and Kazakhstan, also known as Caspian Five, on the definition plus sharing of Caspian Sea. The parties have not been easily agreed due to their different approaches regarding this issue.[25] As of August 12, 2018, Russia, Iran, Azerbaijan, Kazakhstan and Turkmenistan - all adjoining the Caspian Sea - have settled technically on how to share it. Their leaders contracted the "Convention on the Legal Status of the Caspian Sea[26]" in the Kazakh city of Aktau. It institutes a procedure for separating its resources and averts other powers from creating a military occurrence there.[27]

Here it will be useful to share some analyses on how his convention might affect the energy security parameters of Southern Caucasus in the 21st century. According to an analysis published at ISSS in November 2018, it has been highlighted that if this convention is executed in sincerity (bona fides), the treaty may well enable significant energy projects, containing the long-debated Trans-Caspian gas pipeline (TCP), which might transport roughly 30 billion cubic metres (bcm) of Turkmen gas yearly through the Caspian seabed to Azerbaijan plus later on into Europe's gas pipeline systems. The EU stands searching for reinforcing its energy security by decreasing its dependence toward Russia. Russia's gas exports to Europe would happen by 8.1% in 2018 to a record 194 bcm and presently make up about 37% of the EU's gas imports. The Caspian region has extensively been publicized as a prospective source of non-Russian gas supplies for the EU; nevertheless, its gas has remained deliberate to enter into market due to the absence of infrastructure for transferring it. The Southern Gas Corridor (SGC) from the Caspian via Turkey to Europe has been developing for some time, and the freshly opened Trans-Anatolian Natural Gas Pipeline (TANAP) remains scheduled for transporting simply 10 bcm to Europe from Azerbaijan. This volume signifies a

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25 Sohbet Karbuz, "The Legal Status of the Caspian Sea: Implications on Caspian Resources Development and Transport", *Energy Policy Turkey* Vol.2:2, 2016, https://dergipark.org.tr/ tr / download/article-file/344859, pp.62-69 (accessed on December 05, 2020), Yolbars A. Kepbanov, "The New Legal Status Of The Caspian Sea Is The Basis Of Regional Co-Operation And Stability", *Perceptions Journal Of International Affairs,* Vol. II: 4, December 1997-February 1998, https://dergipark.org.tr/tr/download/article-file/817187 (accessed on December 05, 2020).

26 Regarding the articles of this convention please see President of Russia, "Convention on the Legal Status of the Caspian Sea", August 12, 2018, http:// en.kremlin.ru/ supplement/ 5328 (accessed on December 4, 2020).

27 "Caspian Sea: Five countries sign deal to end dispute", *BBC,* August 12, 2018, https://www.bbc.com/news/world-45162282 (accessed on December 04, 2020).

comparatively insignificant capacity for dropping Europe's reliance on Russian gas, however if Turkmenistan similarly delivers gas to this pipeline through the TCP, the capacity of exports may possibly increase to 40 bcm per annum, considerably reinforcing Europe's pipeline gas divergence.[28]

Another analysis on this issue has been made by Ashley Sherman, Principal Research Analyst on Caspian & Europe Upstream at Wood Mackenzie. He has pointed out that;

> *"At face value, the convention cleared a major obstacle to eternal ambitions for a Trans-Caspian Gas Pipeline (TCGP), by removing the requirement for subsea pipelines to be approved by all five littoral states. But there hasn't been much progress in the past 12 months, and, in our view, fundamental commercial and strategic challenges will be here to stay. The TCGP concept – and high-level strategic support from the US and EU – hasn't changed. But its promoters have, with Georgia's transit ambitions increasingly coming to the fore. State-owned Georgian Oil and Gas Corporation holds a 10% stake in the TCGP's promoter company. But moving beyond the current preliminary studies will be a struggle."*[29]

Sherman has also highlighted the following facts on this issue;

> *"The convention is positive for Serdar/Kapaz, which contains several hundred million barrels of resources. But the required political solution is a long way off. Although the convention established a framework for future bilateral talks, border delineation and territorial ownership are yet to be clarified. Improved regional relationships were a consistent theme in 2018, and various ad-hoc agreements have been signed in the last year. But too much can be read into strategic deals – not least Gazprom's resumption of gas purchases from Turkmenistan. The deal will see Turkmenistan supply 5.5 bcm/year to Gazprom until June 2024 and is much needed for the former's export-reliant economy. While it is the definitive sign of a revived relationship between the two entities, the contracted volumes are relatively minor compared to gas trade in the 2000s."*[30]

Prathamesh Karle has underscored that the most significant consequence of the convention, in a nutshell, stands "Caspian for the Caspians". All the features concerning the use of the water-body, whichever as a transit intermediate or from the viewpoint of using its energy reserves, stay exclusively under the purview of the five littoral states. The shared practice of the surface, seabed and

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[28] "The Caspian Sea Treaty", *The International Institute for International Studies (IISS): Home / Publications / Strategic Comments / The Caspian Sea Treaty,* Volume: 24, Comment: 33, November 2018, https:// www.iiss.org/publications/strategic-comments/ 2018/ the-caspian-sea-treaty (accessed on December 04, 2020).

[29] Ashley Sherman, "Revisiting the landmark Caspian Sea agreement", *Wood Mackenzie,* September 6, 2019, https://www.woodmac.com/news/opinion/revisiting-the-landmark- caspian-sea-agreement/ (accessed on December 04, 2020).

[30] https://www.woodmac.com/news/opinion/revisiting-the-landmark-caspian-sea-agreement/.

subsoil resources those cascades outer the territorial waters of each member states stands a considerable settlement that ensures broader repercussions for the region along with for those attentive to capitalize in the resource-rich region. Each littoral state grips the veto above use of any energy resource within the joint space zones.[31] Azad Garibov has stressed that however explanation of numerous significant arguments by the Convention be worthy much credit, it stays still doubtful to what extend it can remain named a chief step forward concerning the final determination of the legal status regarding the disagreements about the Caspian Sea, as several observers acknowledged it to stand one. Garibov has underlined that subsequently the partition of the northern Caspian Sea by the relevant coastal states, the southern Caspian Sea has become the key zone of inter-state clashes. Garibov has discussed that the fundamental topic for resolving those differences—the concluding demarcation of seabed borders which will resultantly decide the question of undecided grounds—stays not contained within the text of the Convention and need be determined separately from the CLSCS with two-sided (and feasibly trilateral) settlements of Azerbaijan, Iran and Turkmenistan. Garibov has lastly underlined that furthermore, whereas Russia and Iran have officially acknowledged the right to construct underwater pipelines consensually by to some extent of the two coastal states—a point long conflicted by Moscow and Tehran nonetheless sponsored by Baku and Ashgabat—there stand definite ambiguities within the text of the Convention that possibly will hypothetically be benefited counter to such ventures.[32] As of October 1, 2019, Russian President has taken on a law about the approval of an agreement concerning the legitimate status of the Caspian Sea.[33]

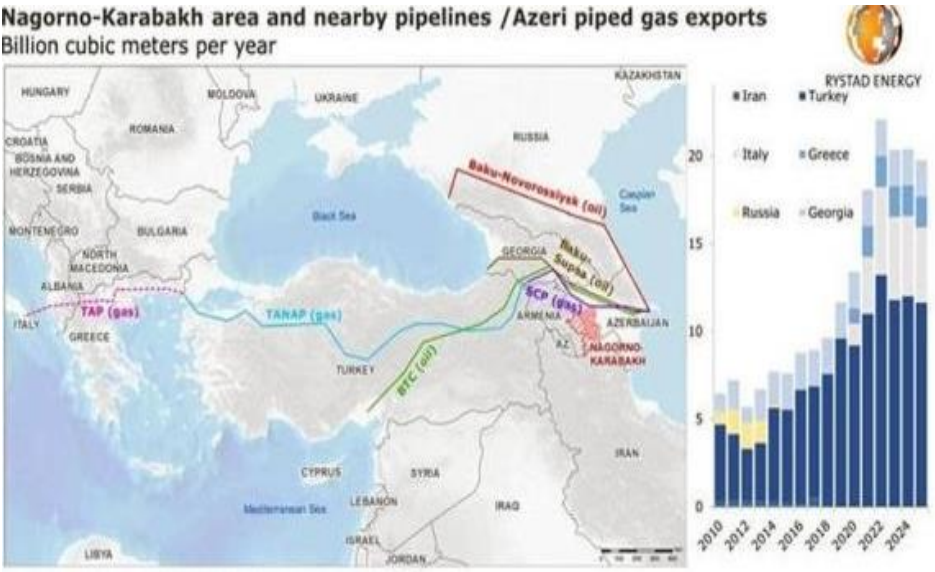
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31 Prathamesh Karle, "Caspian agreement: Many issues still to be settled", *Observer Research Foundation (ORF): Expert Speak / Raisina Debates,* October 15, 2018, https://www.orfonline.org/expert-speak/caspian-agreement-many-issues-still-to-be-settled-44871/ (accessed on December 04, 2020).

32 Azad Garibov, "Key Disputes Remain Unsettled In The Caspian Sea Despite The Signing Of The Convention On Legal Status", *The Institut für Europäische Politik (IEP) / The Centre international de formation européenne (CIFE) PhD Support Programme The EU, Central Asia and the Caucasus in the International System, Volkswagen Stiftung*,No 8, June 2019, https://www .cife.eu/Ressources /FCK/EUCACIS %20inBrief%20Garibov.pdf, p.6 (accessed on December 04, 2020).

33 Dmitri Chirciu, "Russia ratifies deal on legal status of Caspian Sea", *Anatolian Agency (AA): World / Europe*, October 01, 2019, https://www.aa.com.tr/en/europe/russia-ratifies-deal-on-legal-status-of-caspian-sea/1599102 (accessed on December 04, 2020).

Dimension 2: Important Natural Gas Pipeline Projects in the Energy Security Parameters of the Southern Caucasus



Source: https://alkhaleejtoday.co/business/5100190/Fragile-oil-and-gas-interests-at-stake-for-Azerbaijan-Russia-and-Turkey-in-Nagorno-Karabakh.html, (Accessed on 27 November 2020).

The Black Sea functions as a strategic corridor wherein the energy reserves of Russia and the Caspian Basin stand conveyed into the world markets. Alternatively, in terms of energy, struggle and collaboration stay entangled in contrast to the rigidities amongst the Euro-Atlantic Bloc and Russia regarding security issues. Energy collaboration stays apparent within the transference routes of oil and natural gas drilled from the Caspian Basin whereas the Black Sea increases prominence within that milieu. Accompanied by the improvements in the deep drilling technologies, the Black Sea's standing into a sea that the oil and natural gas stand digged out have been the case for Russian-Western energy collaboration. Correspondingly, this alliance has been realized owing to the nonexistence of struggles in the Black Sea region within the framework of dividing exclusive economic zones (EEZ).[34] For instance, the American ExxonMobil and the Russian Rosneft stay collaborating within the Black Sea for their drilling activities.[35] Besides, Russia has settled with the

[34] Sina Kısacık, "Türkiye'nin Karadeniz'deki Doğalgaz Keşfi: İç Politika Malzemesi mi, Avrasya Enerji Jeopolitiğinde Kartları Yeniden Dağitabilecek Önemli Bir Gelişme mi?" , *Uluslararası Politika Akademisi,* August 27, 2020, http://politikaakademisi. org/ 2020 / 08/27/turkiye-karadeniz-kesif/ (accessed on January 01, 2021).

[35] "Rosneft strengthens Black Sea ties with ExxonMobil", *Offshore Magazine,* January 27, 2011, https:// www.offshore- mag.com/ business-briefs/ company-news/ article /16775084/ rosneft-strengthens-black-sea-ties-with-exxonmobil (accessed on January 01, 2021), Carolyn Davis, "Russian Sanctions Lead ExxonMobil to End Rosneft

Italian ENI for natural gas search in its EEZ.[36] The Black Sea geography characterizes a transit basin sandwiched between the energy-rich Caspian states and Europe that remains presently deeply needy on foreign energy suppliers. 10% of the world's oil resources (200 billion barrels) and 10% of the world's natural gas resources (550 trillion cubic feet) are situated at the Caspian Region. Right now, a significant portion of the natural gas needs of both Turkey and Europe remains realized by pipelines that begin in Russia and cross the Black Sea Basin but also through tankers that pass the Black Sea. Russia exports natural gas to Turkey via the Blue Stream Pipeline, passing under the Black Sea and also with a line reaching into Thrace via the Ukraine-Bulgaria route. An important portion of the contemporary natural gas pipelines from Russia those are located at the eastward-westward direction goes into the Europe from the territories of Ukraine.[37]

This fact needs to be accentuated for the energy race in the Black Sea for the reason that the Russia, possessing the biggest natural gas resources in the world (nearly 48 trillion cubic meters) and has been implementing a more dominant foreign course of action with the Putin Administration, remains considerably the most central actor. Moscow searches for transferring the energy-rich reserves of Baku, Ashgabat and Nur-Sultan's to Europe over its territories and has been endeavouring to turn out to be a monopoly. It ought to be underlined that the Kremlin has been conflicting with the alternate shipping projects for the Caspian Basin resources into Europe by the expansion of diverse routes. Accordingly, Moscow has made efforts regarding the prevention of the completion of these initiatives. One other related dynamic remained the 2008 Russian-Georgian War and Moscow's initiatives to stop the Nabucco Natural Gas Pipeline Project. For instance, Russia has put forth substantial force over Turkmenistan and Kazakhstan to compel them to refrain from joining in the Nabucco project, thus enabling Azerbaijan as the single country that might give gas to this project within the Caspian Basin. Thus, the eastern subdivision of the Nabucco pipeline was annulled and the choice of the Trans-Adriatic Natural Gas Pipeline Project (TAP) by the Shah Sea Consortium in 2013 would end up in an impasse over the western segment of the project. Subsequently, the development of the TANAP along with the TCP, has substituted the Nabucco

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Partnership", *Natural Gas Intelligence,* March 2, 2018, https://www. naturalgasintel .com/russian-sanctions-lead-exxonmobil-to-end-rosneft-partnership/ (accessed on January 01, 2021).

36 "Eni and Rosneft sign contracts for assets in Black Sea and Barents Sea", *Europetrole,* June 22, 2012, https://www.euro-petrole.com/eni-and-rosneft-sign-contracts-for-assets-in-black-sea-and-barents-sea-n-i-6368 (accessed on January 01, 2021), Denis Pinchuk, "Exclusive: Rosneft, Eni fail to discover oil at Black Sea well – source", *Reuters,* March 21, 2018, https://www.reuters.com/article/us-rosneft-oil-eni-exclusive-idUSKBN1GX0ZU (accessed on January 01, 2021).

37 Sina Kısacık, "Understanding The Sui Generis Energy Security Parameters of the Black Sea and Their Possible Impact on the Aegean Sea in the 21st Century", in Hasret Çomak, Burak Şakir Şeker and Dimitrios Ioannidis (eds), *Ege Jeopolitiği Cilt 2,* Ankara, Nobel Akademik Yayıncılık, 2020, pp. 1229-1230.

Project, a central initiative that possibly will facilitate the transference of natural gas from the Caspian Basin and the Middle East countries into Europe.[38]

In this context, the USA ensures correspondingly a strategic interest in terms of the improvement of the Caspian Region's hydrocarbon resources other than the conveyance of these resources to the Western markets circumventing the Russian and the Iranian territories. The foremost transfer direction for these resources of the Caspian natural gas supply to Europe and the Mediterranean stays via outgoing countries like Azerbaijan, Georgia, and Turkey. This way which remains similarly recognized as the Southern Corridor holds two focal pipeline systems. The first one epitomizes the BTC that can transport 1 million barrels of oil per day to the Ceyhan Port on the Mediterranean coast of Turkey and the South Caucasus Pipeline that is able to transfer 8.8 billion cubic meters (bcm) of natural gas per annum to the Turkish pipeline network in the Erzurum province.[39] Another significant pipeline scheme has been the extension of the South Caucasus Pipeline transporting natural gas from Turkey to Greece which began in November of 2007. This extension line stands functioning at present and remains named the Turkey-Greece Interconnector. The 296 km-long and 32 in-diameter TG pipeline is capable of transporting 11.5 bcm of natural gas annually which stays scattered correspondingly between Rome and Athens. The circumvent link of the Interconnector of Greece-Bulgaria will be composed of 160km and will transport natural gas from the SGC to Bulgaria and the Balkans. Its whole volume has been planned as the Turkey-Greece section: 11.5 bcm annually, Greece-Italy section: 25 bcm (10 bcm for 207km and 15 bcm for 600km) by year. Greece-Bulgaria section: 3 to 5 bcm yearly.[40]

Within this background, a significant constituent of the energy security in the Eurasian Region, comprising the Aegean and Southern Caucasus, stays the TANAP between Turkey and Azerbaijan which looks for meeting the natural gas needs of Europe and Turkey along with upturning the natural gas variety in the region. By the TANAP, safeguarded via the Memorandum of Understanding contracted on December 26, 2011, and likewise via the countersigning of Ilham Aliyev and Recep Tayyip Erdoğan on June 26, 2012, it stands estimated that a vital input will be realized to the natural gas supply of Turkey and Europe via the Shah Sea II Field and other extra resources. This not only backs the security of the supply of Turkey and Europe, but it similarly assists the transference of the natural gas resources of Baku into the new markets. TANAP has been planned for the exportation and shipping of Azerbaijan's natural gas resources by beginning from this country and crossing via Georgia, Turkey. Approximately 6 bcm of Shah Sea II Consortium's 16 bcm of natural gas will be held in reserve for Turkey and the remaining10 bcm of this capacity stands projected to be distributed into Europe through the Trans-Adriatic Natural Gas Pipeline (TAP). Building of the Turkish section of the project begun in March

38 Kısacık, *ibid.,* pp.1230-1231.

39 Kısacık, "Understanding The Sui Generis Energy Security Parameters of the Black Sea and Their Possible Impact on the Aegean Sea in the 21st Century", p.1231.

40 Kısacık, *ibid.,* pp.1231-1232.

2015 and was finished in 2018. The objective remains 16 bcm-yearly capacity in 2020 which will grasp 23 billion bcm and 31 bcm annually by 2026.[41]

The initiation of TANAP's European link, the essential part of the SGC would happen on November 29, 2019 in the measurement point in Edirne Ipsala, Turkey. Through this pipeline, Turkey and Georgia have again been linked to each other and thus the energy relationship between the two countries have accessed into the upper level.[42] Within the basis of profitable practices, TANAP has transferred 3.3 bcm of natural gas to BOTAŞ up to November 18, 2019 and stays expected to supply 4 bcm to Turkey between June 2019 and June 2020. Turkey will get 6 bcm annually beginning by the end of June 2020. Azerbaijani gas will be conveyed to European markets from 2020 and hold 16 bcm delivery volume, 10 bcm of it will be transported to Europe from 2020. As of December 31, 2020, the Shah Deniz consortium headed by British oil colossal BP has declared that natural gas from the Shah Deniz field had reached through the recently finished SGC. For the consortium, supplies to Europe via the TAP mean the complete incorporation of the intact SGC gas value chain, extending 3,500 kilometres from Azerbaijan to Europe. According to SOCAR, for the first time in history, Azerbaijan's natural gas has accessed the European market via a non-stop pipeline link. The Azerbaijani gas has by now attained to Italy. Gary Jones, the head of BP in Azerbaijan, Georgia and Turkey, has defined this development as a "historic landmark" and called the fresh direction a "straight, benign and trustworthy energy linkage."[43] In line with this SOCAR's President Rovnag Abdullayev has underlined that:

> *"The first phase to connect the field with Europe began in 1999, at a time when some were sceptical about the project. Now the mission is accomplished. Azerbaijan's natural gas has arrived in Europe. Coming from a new source through an alternative route, it will contribute to European energy security."*[44]

Dimension 3: Nuclear Power Plant Issue in the Southern Caucasia

Last important issue that ought to be mentioned in terms of the energy security parameters of the Southern Caucasus stands the nuclear power plants. Since the first decade of 2000s, there have been debating on the building of a nuclear power plant in Turkey by Russia. As of 2008, there organized a procurement of building a nuclear power plant in Turkey. This procurement ended up with the winning of Russian Rosatom wherein this company was the sole participant of this procurement. Russia has won this procurement by

41 Kısacık, *ibid.,* p.1233.

42 Kurt, "Türkiye-Gürcistan İlişkileri", p.126.

43 "Azerbaijan Makes First Direct Gas Deliveries to Europe", *Barron's (Dow Jones & Company),* December 31, 2020, https://www.barrons.com/articles/azerbaijan-makes-first-gas-deliveries-to-europe-01609421708?tesla=y (accessed on January 01, 2021).

44 *Ibid.*

committing to provide 7 billion U.S. Dollars of 20 Billion-U.S. Dollar Project. But this procurement was brought into the court by Turkish Chamber of Engineers and Architects due to the allocation of nuclear plant's place and also for per unit sale price of active electricity energy. Here if the Turkish government did prefer to deal with this issue on the court, the process could be much longer. In this case, the Turkish government would choose the "from government to government formula" for avoiding the legal process. Then the Turkish government has constantly emphasized that the construction of Turkey's first nuclear power plant in Akkuyu-Mersin is considered as a priority project and later on in parallel with this, it has been accepted as a strategic investment project. In line with this, there would be signed a cooperation framework agreement between Turkey and Russia regarding issue on May 12, 2010. However, between 2010 and 2016, there did experience great confrontations between Ankara and Moscow on how to deal with Syrian Crisis occurring in accordance with the Arab Revolts. Within the context of these disagreements, several unintended events were occurring and later on the most important one did happen on November 24, 2015. On that date, the Russian Su-24 war jet flying over Turkish-Syrian border would violate Turkish border. Despite the continuous warnings by Turkish war jets, one of two Russian jets did continue its violation resulted in the downing of this jet by Turkish Air Forces. Following this incident, the Russian side would harshly react to it and then implement economic embargoes and sanctions including the suspension of Turk Stream Natural Gas Pipeline and Akkuyu Nuclear Power Plant Projects. This high tensionary period between Turkey and Russia was ended up with the sending of an apology letter by President Erdoğan of Turkey to the President Putin of Russia on June 25, 2016 which included the recovery of relations accepted by Moscow. After this, the process on the construction of Akkuyu Nuclear Power Plant has accelerated.[45]

On April 3, 2018, with the participation of high level officials from Turkey and Russia, the groundbreaking ceremony of Akkuyu Nuclear Power Plant was held. Since then, when the statements of officials from both Turkey and Russia are closely examined, it can easily be seen that this project will be completed despite the criticisms coming from other countries with the earthquake and security reasons. As at the end of November 2020, the construction process in ongoing and Rosatom has declared that it has acquired the licence of constructing the third reactor of Akkuyu Nuclear Power Plant.[46] Within this context, it should be discoursed the first reactor is anticipated to be operational in 2023 and other reactors will be fully operational in consecutive years. In other words, the 4.8 GW-Akkuyu Nuclear Power plant will completely be active as of 2026 and it is projected to meet 10% of Turkey's electricity demand. In

[45] Mesut Hakkı Caşın and Sina Kısacık, Avrupa Birliği Enerji Hukuku ve Güvenlik Algılamaları, 1st ed., İstanbul: Çağlayan Kitap & Yayıncılık & Eğitim, 2018, pp.390-396.

[46] "Turkey grants construction permit for Akkuyu unit 3", *World Nuclear News: Regulation & Safety,* November 19, 2020, https://www.world-nuclear-news.org/Articles/Turkey-grants-construction-permit-for-Akkuyu-unit (accessed on December 12, 2020).

parallel with this, all the related technologies including the training of Turkish engineers regarding this issue is / will be provided by Russia.[47]

Metsamor has been termed as one of the world's most unsafe nuclear power plants due to its position in an earthquake area. It assembles only 35km from Armenia's active capital, Yerevan, with cool views of snowy Mount Ararat through the border in Turkey. The facility was built about the equal period as Chernobyl in the 1970s. At the time the Metsamor reactor delivered energy for the rising requirements of a huge Soviet Union, which formerly ensured aspiring strategies to produce 60% of its electricity from nuclear power in 2000. Nonetheless in 1988 everything altered; the 6.8 magnitude Spitak earthquake shattered Armenia, slaying about 25,000 people. The nuclear power plant was quickly closed due to safety alarms over a defective electricity supply to power the plant's systems.[48] The Metsamor nuclear power plant, first propelled in 1976, stands positioned at 16 kilometers off Turkey's eastern border with Armenia, and remains to generate nearly 40% of Armenia's electricity. Nevertheless, Turkey and Azerbaijan reject its survival equally they consider it does not run into international security criterions. Armenia's Metsamor plan has been criticized by Ankara owing to Yerevan's decision for prolonging Metsamor's lifecycle up to 2026.[49] On December 12, 2019, Republican People's Party (CHP), Turkey's key opposition party, has delivered motion to Turkish Grand National Assembly for searching probable damaging special effects of Armenia's Metsamor nuclear power plant to the neighboring countries. Deniz Yavuzyılmaz, lawmaker from north-western Zonguldak province, has detailed the motion as:

> *"We, as CHP, submitted a parliamentary motion to search the destructive effect of Metsamor [nuclear power plant] to our country and the neighboring countries and to take a step to solve the issue by forming an international public opinion. The motion was signed by 40 CHP lawmakers. Metsamor was as dangerous as Chernobyl nuclear power plant. Metsamor works as a time bomb just across the Turkish border."*[50]

As of July 17, 2020, Vagif Dargyakhly, the press spokesperson for the Azerbaijani defense ministry, assumed that if Armenia heightened its fight with Azerbaijan more, Baku may well think through pointing the Armenian nuclear power plant (NPP) at Metsamor. Viktor Kuzovkov, an extensively circulated Russian security affairs expert, has delivered conceivably the most ample

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47 Caşın and Kısacık, *ibid.,* pp.396-411.

48 Daryl Mersom, "The city in the shadow of an ageing nuclear reactor", *BBC,* May 27, 2019, https://www.bbc.com/worklife/article/20190527-the-city-in-the-shadow-of-an-ageing-nuclear-reactor (accessed on December 12, 2020).

49 Emin Avundukluoglu, "Turkey: CHP submits motion on Armenian nuclear plant", *Anatolian Agency (AA): Turkey, World, Environment,* December 12, 2019, https://www.aa.com.tr/en/environment/turkey-chp-submits-motion-on-armenian-nuclear-plant/1671672 (accessed on December 12, 2020).

50 *Ibid.*

examination concerning this subject until now. Kuzovkov has underlined the following issues;

> *"A bombing of an atomic power plant like the one in Armenia might not have serious consequences. But the likelihood that any Azerbaijani attack could lead to the release of radiation is "extremely small". The military equipment Baku has is almost certainly unequal to the task, while the weaponry available to Armenian and Russian forces around Metsamor would presumably be able to repel any such effort. We have the complete right to speak about the superiority of the means available to the defense compared to those available to any attacker. And any effort by Azerbaijan to test that proposition would lead to the involvement of Russia and other Collective Security Treaty Organization members on Armenia's side, negating anything Baku might hope to achieve. Yerevan should recognize that attacking the Kura dam or the oil and gas facilities in Azerbaijan would be a disaster for it not only in terms of international opprobrium but the positions its allies would then adopt…"*[51]

For the head of the Public Services Regulatory Commission (PSRC) Garegin Baghramyan, the Armenian nuclear power facility in Metsamor will remain repaired in 2021, which will continue 140 days. He has shared following details on this issue;

> *"The outage would be longer than the usual 45 days in order to allow for extensive repair and maintenance work to enable extension of the plant's operating life. The work will involve restoration annealing the reactor pressure vessel, modernisation of the emergency core cooling system, and of the reliable power supply system. Modernisation of the nuclear power plant was financed under a preferential credit line of up to $270 million and a grant of $30 million from the Russian government. However, some of the work was delayed and Armenia asked to postpone payments on the loan for a year, until the end of 2021. In June, the government allocated a budget loan of AMD63.2 billion ($130 million), which will be provided in 2020-2022. Rusatom Service (a subsidiary of the Russia's Rosatom) will remain the general contractor for the repairs, and tenders for the replacement of equipment and work will continue to be conducted without any country restrictions. The nuclear power plant generates about a third of the electricity consumed in Armenia. There was no panic at the Armenian NPP in connection with Azerbaijan's threats to launch a missile strike at the station. Measures have been put*

51 Paul Goble, "Armenian Nuclear Power Plant Able to Withstand Attack, Russian Security Expert Claims", *The Jamestown Foundation,* Eurasia Daily Monitor Volume: 17 Issue: 106, July 21, 2020, https://jamestown.org/program/armenian-nuclear-power-plant-able-to-withstand-attack-russian-security-expert-claims/ (accessed on December 12, 2020).

in place to ensure continued power supply should the NPP be closed down."[52]

Conclusion

The Southern Caucasus has been transforming itself into one of most critically noticeable region since the official downfall of Soviet Union in late December 1991. After this incidence, three states namely Azerbaijan, Georgia and Armenia have declared their independences and start to function as individual states in the world scene. However, what makes this region so significant in terms of Eurasian energy security since the mid-1990s is the discovery of huge oil and natural gas resources in Azerbaijan and in parallel with this, the transference of these hydrocarbons to the Western consumer markets via East-West Energy Corridor that specifically targets the Russian-Iranian North-South Energy Corridor. Therefore, when elaborated from this objective, Turkey and Georgia have emerged as strategically central transit countries for the East-West Energy Corridor. U.S. and EU have been prioritizing the transportation of Baku's rich hydrocarbons through the routes developed from Turkey and Georgia in order to lessen Europe's ever increasing import dependence on Russia. Within this context, for the oil transportation, BTC and Baku-Supsa have become operational. In terms of natural gas transference, Baku-Tbilisi-Erzurum (Southern Caucasus) Natural Gas Pipeline and later on SGC have been realized. On the contrary, Moscow has not remained silent and developed Baku-Novorossiysk Oil Pipeline. When considered from natural gas transportation, since 2000s, Russia has been following and pursuing very proactive policies especially toward its previously ruled zone. Here one can exemplify Russian diplomatic moves on the prevention of Nabucco. In that manner, Russian-Georgian August 2008 War can be perceived as Moscow's very powerful warning to both South Caucasian states and outer regional states regarding the limits of their activities in this region. Also, Russian benefiting from all-inclusive power means toward Ukraine since 2004 should also be understood as another strong caution to the states in Southern Caucasia and also to non-regional states to be aware of Moscow's interests within the region.

Here Moscow's diplomatic successes on the determination of legal status of Caspian Sea in 2018 as well as the peace accord concerning the ending of Karabakh Question between Azerbaijan and Armenia in November 2020 should be comprehended as the continuation of Russian hegemonic status within these regions. For Russia, in terms of every kind of initiatives trying to be developed in such regions as the Southern Caucasia, both regional and outer-regional states have to / will be obliged to take into consideration its strategic interests within these regions. For the development of oil and natural gas transportation

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52 "Long outage planned for Armenian nuclear plant in 2021", *Nuclear Engineering International,* November 5, 2020, https://www.neimagazine.com/news/newslong-outage-planned-for-armenian-nuclear-plant-in-2021-8347083 (accessed on December 12, 2020).

projects in Southern Caucasia, Kremlin has been continuing to pursue “silence policy” as long as these projects do not harm its comparative advantage in terms of energy security. But when Moscow does feel the possibility of challenging its interests, it is in capable of using all power tools to preclude them.

When we come to the nuclear plant issue, in this paper, Turkish and Armenian cases have been examined. For Turkish side, the country’s first nuclear power plant in Akkuyu is being constructed by Russia and hopefully when all the reactors will be active as of 2026, it is projected to generate 10% of Turkey’s electricity needs and also results with the nuclear technology culture within the country. Despite the objections on the construction of this facility coming both from in / out Turkey, Moscow and Ankara have been showing a great determinedness on the finalization of this project. This project should also be seen as the level of Turkish-Russian relations in today’s international relations atmosphere wherein this happens between former rivals in the region for centuries. Regarding the Metsamor case, having been constructed in Soviet Era, it is criticized by Turkey, Azerbaijan and other countries owing to possess old technology and its location on an earthquake zone. However, Yerevan is committed to benefit from this nuclear power plant in the forthcoming years with the sponsorship of Moscow.

Based on the abovementioned analyses, it can be finalized that the energy security parameters of the Southern Caucasus region is / will closely be affected by the conjunctural developments in this region as well as the policies to be put forward not only by regional states but also by non-regional states. In the final analysis, it can be recommended to all regional states & outer-regional states for the future terms that when developing strategies toward the region, taking into account the priorities of Russia in this region will continue to stand as the must one.

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The Caucasus's Security Threats and Challanges in the Context of Conflicts

Murat YORULMAZ*

Introduction

The Caucasus region as a bridge between Europe and Asia hold many security problems in itself like the Balkans. The region with its importance as a tunnel role for Eurasian history is a region that was occupied by Tsarist Russian military in the 19th century. After the collapse of Tsarist Russia, although the Caucasus communities gained their independences for a short time, the Red Army declared the Soviet Union (USSR) sovereignty and got the control of the Caucasus communities till the collapse of USSR. The collapse of USSR has provided Caucasus taking part in international system and gaining importance in terms of international policy. The great powers have also drawn attention to the region and been in a rivalry on it. These circumstances have created positive and negative effects on the region states. Russia as a inheritor of USSR has taken Caucasus into consideration as its backyard and has set strategies and policies to kept down the region. Moreover, Russia hasn't abstain to go into combat when it is needed as in South Ossetia War (Russo-Georgian War). After the period of USSR, Russia, at first, struggled for achieving the control North Caucasus. North Caucasus is a door to South Caucasus for Russia because South Caucasus is in a strategic and an important location that has enegry resources and pipelines, different ethnic groups, highway vehicle capability, conflict and cooperation possibilities. But then, the United States has started to engage with the region from the early 1990s in terms of geopolitical priorities and interests in its foreign policy.

As it is known, Caucasus is divided into two parts as Noth & South Caucasus. North Caucasus takes place in Russia's borders and comprises of small autonomous states. South Caucasus comprises of the lands of Azerbaijan, Georgia, Armenia states and of the South Ossetia region. ''Big Game'' declared firstly by Rutyard Kipling has arisen as ''New Big Game'' that means great Powers' rivalry on energy resources in Caspian basin.[1] Zbigniew Brezinski holds Caucasus and Central Asia in ''Big Game'' and identifies these regions as the key regions of World power policies.[2] The main reason of it is the rich energy resources and socio-political instabilities in the Caspian basin. On the other hand, Harfold John mackinder identifies Caspian basin as the

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1 Geoffrey Hamm, ''Revisiting the Great Game in Asia: Rudyard Kipling and popular history'', *International Journal*, 68(2), 2013, pp.395-396.

2 Zbigniew Brezinski, The Grand Chessboard: American Primacy and Its Geostrategic Imperatives, New York: Basic Books, 1998, pp.16-17.

geographical pivot of the World within his ''Hearthland'' theory.[3] It is seen that Causasus is in a wide region geographically from West to East and involves Caspian Sea. Caucasus's geographical structure has provided different settlements in the region. The High Caucasus possesses a double asymmetry: the steep southern slope plunges directly into the Black Sea; by contrast, the ascent from steppe through piedmont to mountains is gradual on the northern slope, with series of mountains spread out largely in Dagestan.[4] In other respects, the valleys are isolated and unavailable. This circumstance and structure provide an isolation opportunity of minorities and their livings. These geographical conditions resulted in a multitude of ethnic groups tucked away in western fastnessness, like the Abkhazians and Ossetians stubbornly resist Georgian rule.[5] In the east part of Caucasus, as it's known, there is only one area named as Nagorno-Karabakh. Caucasus has a complex and dynamic structure counted by the dozens of groups. The main reason of ethnic conflict in the region is states' borders and political conflicts.

The environmental and geographical conditions of Caucasus creates different socio-economic and cultural lifes fort he every part of it. Bazause of Caucasus's central position between Asia and Europe for trading routes, it has a trade center position. The region has historically trade capacity within one of Silk Road's branches, so many civilizations tried to command on the region. Caucasus has still held its trade center position with its corridor role between Asia and Europe. As it's known, New Silk Road referred to China's Belt and Road Initiative has passed by South Caucasus. The other valuable possesion of the region is its rich energy resources. Especially, South Caucasus has rich oil and natural gas reserves. This wealth of South Caucasus increases its geopolitic importance. The rich oil and natural gas reserves cause intraregional conflicts and to reshape social, economic, political and military structure in the region. On the other hand, great powers has been interested in the region in terms of their economic and strategic interests in a rivalry. The pipelines in Caucasus has also provided some advantages to the region. It will be easy to understand the geopolitical and geostrategic importance of Caucasus when crude oil and natural gas reserves in the world and the consumption of countries are analyzed. The Middle East has 64,5% of World's total oil gas reserves; Turkmenistan, Kazakhstan and Azerbaijan have 16%; Russia has 4,8%; USA has 4%; EU has 1,6% and China has 2,4%. USA comsumes 25,5% of World's total oil gas production; EU countries 19,7%; Russia 5,2% and China 4,5%.[6] The South part of Caucasus has the main oil and natural gas reserves in the region. Especially, Baku – the capital of Azerbaijan – is the oldest oil producer area since

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3 Matthew Edwards, ''The New Great Game and The New Great Gamers: Disciples of Kipling and Mackinder'', *Central Asian Survey*, 22(11), 2003, pp.85-86.

4 Gökhan Tekir, *Geopolitics of Russia's Caucasus Policy and its Implications for the World*, Unpublished Master Thesis, Ihsan Dogramaci Bilkent University, Ankara, 2014, p.29.

5 *Ibid.*

6 OPEC, https://www.opec.org/opec_web/en/data_graphs/330.htm (accessed on November 07, 2020).

the USSR period. Baku's 7 billion barrels of recoverable oil and 1.3 trillion cubic meters (tcm) of gas reserves are significant for both itself and for the global energy supply; other South Caucasus countries apart from Azerbaijan, namely Georgia and Armenia, are also important for the transportation of these resources to world markets because of their positioning.[7] After the collapse of USSR, the Caspian basin has gained attention of international oil and gas companies. The oil and gas companies' tendency to the Caspian basin aims to decrease dependency on the Middle East. The Caspian basin has been thought as *El Dorado* of oil production in the world according to international oil companies.[8]

Table 1: Total Proved Oil Reserves in the Caspian Basin (1999, 2009, 2018, 2019).

	At end 1999 Thousands million barrels	At end 2009 Thousands million barrels	At end 2018 Thousands million barrels	At end 2019	
				Thousands million barrels	Share of total
Azerbaijan	1.2	7.0	7.0	7.0	0.4%
Iran	93.1	137.0	155.6	155.6	9.0%
Kazakhstan	5.4	30.0	30.0	30.0	1.7%
Russian Federation	112.1	105.6	107.2	107.2	6.2%
Turkmenistan	0.5	0.6	0.6	0.6	< 0.05%
Uzbekistan	0.6	0.6	0.6	0.6	< 0.05%

Source: BP Statistical Review of World Energy 2020, https://www.bp.com/content/dam/bp/ business-sites/en /global /corporate /pdfs /energy-economics/statistical-review/bp-stats-review-2020-full-report.pdf, Son Erişim: 07.11.2020.

The region has also natural gas reserves. Morever, the region supplies natural gas more than oil. So, there is a rivalry between exterritorial states and intraregional states. The proved natural gas reserves of the Caspian basin are as in the table below.

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7 Sina Kısacık, ''Understanding the 21st Century's Specific Eurasian Regional Security and Energy Security Parameters in the Turkish-American Relationship: A Case Study on South Caucasus and Central Asia'', (Eds.) Hüseyin Işıksal ve Ozan Örmeci, Historical Examinations and Current Issues in Turkish-American Relations, Berlin, Peter Lang, 2020, p.365.

8 Caucasus Asia Center, https://medium.com/caucasus-asia-center/in-pursuit-of-the-caspian-eldorado-84f1e e46 b33d (accessed on November 07, 2020).

Table 2: Total Proved Natural Gas Reserves in the Caspian Basin (1999, 2009, 2018, 2019).

	At end 1999 Trillion cubic metres	At end 2009 Trillion cubic metres	At end 2018 Trillion cubic metres	At end 2019	
				Trillion cubic metres	Share of total
Azerbaijan	1.0	1.0	2.1	2.8	1.4%
Iran	23.6	28.0	32.0	32.0	16.1%
Kazakhstan	2.0	2.0	2.7	2.7	1.3%
Russian Federation	32.9	34.0	38.0	38.0	19.1%
Turkmenistan	2.6	8.2	19.5	19.5	9.8%
Uzbekistan	1.2	1.3	1.2	1.2	0.6%

Source: BP Statistical Review of World Energy 2020, https://www. bp.com/ content/ dam/bp/ business-sites/en /global /corporate /pdfs /energy-economics/statistical-review/bp-stats-review-2020-full-report.pdf, Son Erişim: 07.11.2020.

Apart from having rich oil and natural gas reserves, Caucasus as a region has a role of energy corridor. The region's geographical location provides it constructing a bridge for the West. Especially, The EU has tried to build new pipelines arriving at the states in the region to decrease EU's Russian dependency about energy supply routes. Briefly, it can be said that Caucasus as a region still maintains its geopolitic and geostrategic importance in the 21st century.

When taking all issues mentioned above into consideration, security challenges and conflicts in the Caucasus will be analyzed in terms of the rivalry on the region. The main aim of the study is to identify the security challenges and conflicts in the region in terms of the region's geopolitcal and geostrategic importance. The subject will be elaborated with the geopolitical characteristics of the Caucasus region in the context of the international system. The second subject analyzed in the study is geopolitical and security issues in the region. Finally, the main conflicts in the Caucasus are analyzed. In the context of these three main subjects, the study's hypothesis is that the security challenges and conflicts in the Caucasus region will go on if the intraregional and exterritorial states persist on maintaining the rivalry among them to the region in terms of economic and ethnic dimension. The Caucasus region's energy resources and geopolitics characteristics are independent variables. The rivalry on the region is dependent variable. So, the questions replied in the study are; - Is there any effect of the region's ethnic diversity on security challenges and conflicts in the region?, - How do the energy resources and geographical location of the region affect the rivalry among the states?, - What are the fundements of security challenges and conflicts in the region?

This research has been done by using descriptive and analytical research method. In the research, the post-Soviet political circumstances and developments were analyzed to explain the aim of the study.

Geopolitical Structure, Identity Components and Religion in the Caucasus Region

Caucasus as a term of the region was first used in the period of Petrus I – Tsarist Russia - . Today, it is seen that the Caucasus region has many different identifications in terms of its borders. As it mentoned before, the region has been divided into two parts as North and South. North Caucasus is located within the borders of Russia and has many autonomous republics. On the other hand, South Caucasus comprises of republics of Azerbaijan, Armeni and Georgia and of some autonomous republics such as Abkhazia, Nagorno-Karabakh, Nakhchivan and South Ossetia. As a part, South Caucasus has different names like Trans-Caucasia and Zakavkay named by Russia. The region is located between the Black and Caspian seas. One of the interesting issues of the region is the complex ethnic composition of it. On the other hand, the region has also different religions such as Islamşc and Christian (Orthodox) ones. The region inholds in itself a long history on civilization and cultures of Russia, Turkey and Persian. It can be said that the region constitutes a mosaic of ethnics, religions and cultures.

When taking the region's geopolitical and geostrategic positions into consideration, it has been thought as one of the centers of regional and transregional interests in terms of USSR. The Soviet Union used to the region as a passage corridor to the Black Sea and Iran in the context of its geoeconomic and geostrategic interests and aims. Moreover, USSR wanted to take advantage of the region as an apron in its defence strategy for the communism towards capitalism.

> *However, after the end of the Cold War, considering the geopolitical realities of the region and the surrounding areas including the legal regime of the Caspian Sea, the Caucasus role for exporting the Caspian and Central Asian energy resources to international markets, the transportation and communication situation of Caucasus among the geopolitical fields of Central Asia, Middle East, Black Sea and Anatolia and consequently the continuity and geopolitical interests of Caucasus with the surrounding geopolitical regions, the regional and trans-regional interests in the Caucasus, the ethnic-linguistic and complex interwoven political geography of the region and its cultural affinity with the surrounding areas, geopolitical conflicts in the region, strong repulsive forces and behavioral patterns between the governments in the region in political and economic relations with each other and with the regional and trans-regional governments and accordingly, the*

geopolitical pattern of the region, Caucasus has found special role in the regional and international geopolitical and geo-economical equations.[9]

Taking part in an intersection point of Islam and Christianity civilizations, being an opening door to Central Asia states and constructing a corridor connecting North- South and East-West provide advantages and disadvantages to the region and reveal a multidimensional rivalry among intra and outer states in the region. At the same time, it provides taking attention of regional and transregional Powers to the Caucasus region. In the context of the rivalry in Caucasus, there is no lasting and eminent power in the region. But, it is seen that Azerbaijan has dominated over the region in spite of Russia's control power on Caucasus. If the military capacity is compared in the region, it is clearly seen that Azerbaijan has the highest capacity one. Azerbaijan's proved oil reserve at the end 2019 was 7.0 thousand million barrels that was 0.4% of the total proved oil reserves of the world. In other respects, Azerbaijan's proved gas reserve at the end 2019 was 2.8 trillion cubic metres that was 1.4% of the total proved gas reserves of the world. Increase of Azerbaijan's GDP and of investments in oil and gas pipelines as energy industry has provided advantages to its economic, political and social structure in comparison with Georgia and Armenia. At the same time, Azerbaijan has gained reliance in the perspective of regional and transregional states. It is clear that Azerbaijan is one step ahead besides Georgia and Armenia regionally and globally by any measure.

One of the most important characteristics of Caucasus is the geostrategic structure of it in the context of the rivalry in the region among intra and outer states (powers). The second one is that Caucasus has supplied fossil fuels and transported them through pipelines to the international markets. Caucasus, especially South Caucasus, has also created a transit routes for great powers to gain mobility in terms of geopolitic rivalry in the region. After the Cold War period, the states in South Caucasus have still tried to revise their relationships with the others and they have struggled for their adaptation to the international system. Because of its complicated structure in many aspects, the Caucasus region has some security events. There are crucial factors that affect these security events in the region. These factors are: - redefinition of security and threat concepts after the end of the Cold War, - Russia's policy for Caucasus, - South Caucasus states' orientation and compliment to the West, - strengthening the region's role in energy supply and transportation sectors in the international markets.

The roots of the instability in Caucasus has reached to USSR period. Ethnic separatism is the most important reason for the instability. The ethnic conflicts started in Abkhazia in Gorbachev period prepared a ground for the instability and transformation of Caucasus. The *mukhadzhirstvo,* a term which refers in

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9 Ahmad Jansiz and Muhammed Reza Hojaste, ''Conflicts in the Caucasus Region and Its Effects on Regional Security Approach'', *Journal of Politics and Law*, Vol.8, No.1, 2015, p.86.

Russian to the forced migration of tens of thousands of the Abkhaz who had to leave their homeland in the 1860s-70s, is considered to be the starting point of the Georgian-Abkhaz conflict and later, Georgians settled in the depopulated areas of Abkhazia.[10] The other circumstance is Georgian-Ossetian conflict. South Ossetia declared to join to Russia by uniting with North Ossetia in 1989. The third one is the autonomy declaration of Armenians in Nagorno-Karabakh from Azerbaijan in 1988. Armenians' declartion and separatist acts caused a lasting bloody war between Azerbaijan and Armenia. Armenia adjected Nagorno-Karabakh and the crisis and conflicts have led in many years in spite of many ceasefires. The last conflict between the parties started on 27 September 2020 with Armanian attack. After 44 days, Azerbaijan has retrieved his lands Nagorno-Karabakh at the accretion of Armenia. According to the ceasefire among Azerbaijan, Armenia and Russia, Russian peace forces will be on duty in the region for 5 years. The fourth one is in North Caucasus. It is the declaration of independence of Chechens from Russia in 1991. Chenhens' separatist acts also caused a long lasting war with Russia. All these ethnic-based conflicts, acts and independence declarations were the main stream of the instability in the region.

There are many permanent threats and chalenges from USSR as a heritage for the new republics in the region. They include: - by ignoring the reality of racist and ethnical differences, constructing artificial borders between federal government and autonomous republics has never provided permanent solutions and so, the region is still in instability and conflict, - the new republics' weak economies and insufficient infrastructures in USSR period and after the collapse of the Soviet Union accelerated instability, conflicts and disparities among the republics, - ignoring regional centered policies by not taking religious, cultural and racial differences into consideration. Briefly, it is possible to say that Caucasus has different ethnic, cultural and linguistic groups and so, it is located in a conflux of Islam and Christianity. In particular, the Caucasus has been taken as an example of the 'clash of civilizations' supposedly under way.[11] The geopolitic and geostrategic structure of Caucasus has caused long-term conflicts. Especially, South Caucasus is more complicated structure ethnically and culturally, and the republics of North Caucasus have different minorities im comparison with each other. Moreover, North Caucasus republics (Azerbaijan, Georgia and Armenia) include different religions and sectarians. Many countries of the post-communist region, including the three countries of the South Caucasus, have populations with low levels of religiosity as measured by religious practices such as attendance at religious services, fasting and prayer, nevertheless many of these countries have high levels of subjective

[10] Gulshan M. Pashayeva, ''Security challenges and conflict resolution efforts in the South Caucasus'', *European Policy Centre*, The South Caucasus Between integration and fragmentation, 2015, pp.37-38, https://www.researchgate.net/publication/305642059 (accessed on November 10, 2020).

[11] Svante E. Cornell, ''Religion as a factor in Caucasus conflicts'', *Journal of Civil Wars*, Vol.1, Issue 3, 1998, p.46.

forms of religiosity, including religious affiliation, trust in religious institutions and the importance of religion in one's daily life.[12] Eighty-five percent of people consider themselves to belong to the Orthodox Church in Georgia (10% of the population is Muslim), 95% to the Armenian Apostolic Church in Armenia, and 99% to Islam in Azerbaijan (approximately 65% of adherents are Shi'a and 35% are Sunni).[13] Shiites are the majority of Azerbaijan's population but in Armenia and Georgia, the majority is connected to Eastern Orthodox Church. A significant number of the populations of Nagorno-Karabakh Autonomous Region are also Armenians and in addition, the Nakhchivan Autonomous Republic with a majority of Azerbaijani Turk territory are isolated and surrounded by Iran, Armenia and Turkey.[14] One of the other important issues of the Caucasus region is related to common borders between North Caucasus and Russia. There are approximately 20 local and ethnic groups in North Caucasus and a great number of Russian descent people together with Kazakh minorities, Nogay and other ethnic groups have provided a mosaic in many aspects in North Caucasus. There are many reasons and signs for Caucasus's instability and conflicts such as not having matured and unwillingness of Caucasus republics' leaders and local governors and their ethnic mentalities and attitudes. On the other hand, there is rivalry among Caucasus states on gaining an economic and political environment in international system regionally and globally after the collapse of USSR. They try to benefit from their natural resources but the diferences of their economic developmenta affect citizens' lives and causes migrations that has created ethnic-centered security threats.

The Main Conflicts and Security Issues in the Region

Located on the edge of Europe, the Caucasus has emerged as one of the most important regions for peace and security in Eurasia and the Caucasus contains a set of protracted conflicts (Abkhazia and South Ossetia in Georgia, Nagorno-Karabakh in Azerbaijan and the ongoing instability in Russia's North Caucasus) which threaten regional stability and risk overspill beyond the region.[15] The counntries in the region spend more and more on their military forces and so, the hostility among them (Russia-Georgia, Armenia-Azerbaijan) has increased. Eventually, it can said that the Caucasus is a militarized region.

As one of the most complex and long-standing conflict in the Caucasus, Nagorno-Karabakh conflict has vast dimensions and variables historically. Nagorno-Karabakh autonomous region was established by the Soviet

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12 Robia Charles, ''Religiosity in Armenia, Georgia and Azerbaijan'', *Caucasus Analytical Digest*, No.20, 11 October 2010, p.2, https://www.laender-analysen.de/cad/pdf/CaucasusAnalytical Digest20.pdf (accessed on November 11, 2020).

13 Robia Charles, *ibid.*, p.3.

14 Ahmad Jansiz and Muhammed Reza Hojaste, *ibid.*, p.88.

15 SIPRI, ''Conflict and peacebuilding in the Caucasus'', https://www.sipri.org/research/conflict-peace-and-security/russia-and-eurasia/conflict-and-peacebuilding-caucasus (accessed on November 12, 2020).

government in the 1920s within Azerbaijan. At that time, the majority of the population in the region was ethnically Armenian. Under Bolshevik rule, fighting between the two countries was kept in check, but, as the Soviet Union began to collapse, so did its grip on Armenia and Azerbaijan, and in 1988, the Nagorno-Karabakh legislature passed a resolution to join Armenia despite the region's legal location within Azerbaijan's borders.[16] After the collapse of USSR, Nagorno-Karabakh was remained caught in the middle of the two newly independent countries (Azerbaijan and Armenia) that war broke out between them. As an autonomous region, Nagorno-Karabakh's borders were internationally recognized within Azerbaijan but controlled by Armenia politcally because, by 1993, Armenia got the control of Nagorno-Karabakh by occupying 20% of Azerbaijani territory. In 1994, Russia set forth a ceasefire and so, as a conflict center Nagorno-Karabakh has been frozen for more than a decade. Approximately, 30.000 were killed and hundreds of thousands people displayed till 1994. An estimated 60,000 individuals equally divided among Kurds and Azeris lived in Kelbajar province before the offensive and in the space of a week, 60,000 people were forced to flee their homes.[17] In spite of the ceasefire between Azerbaijan and Armenia, low-tensioned fighting continued. Armenia gained the control Azerbaijan's districts such as Kelbajar, Lachyn, Aghdam, etc.

In fact, Nagorno-karabakh was internationally recognized as a part of Azerbaijan and had no sovereignty status. On the other hand, Azerbaijan and Armenia have maintained hostile attitudes to each other since 1994. Many other states such as Russia, Turkey, Iran and regional and international organizations such as OSCE – Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe tried to resolve the parties but there was no permanent solution. Especially, the negotiation and mediation efforts of Minsk Group have not provided a permanent solution to the conflict. The Minsk Group, a mediation effort led by the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE), was created in 1994 to address the dispute and is co-chaired by the United States, France, and Russia.[18] Again, the parties started to fight in early April 2016 and more than 3000 people were killed. Although the presidents of Azerbaijan and Armenia met through the Minsk Group on a possible solution the conflict, any concrete solution came true. As of this date, both Azerbaijan and Armenia has increased militarization in the border region. Once more, heavy fighting started between the parties along the border in late September 2020. The escalation had started in 2016. Both sides lost many soldiers and civillians. All negotiation and mediation efforts of the United Nations, the United

16 CFR, ''Nagorno-Karabakh Conflict'', https:// www.cfr.org/global- conflict-tracker/ conflict/ nagorno-karabakh-conflict (accessed on November 12, 2020).

17 Human Rights Watch/Helsinki, *Azerbaijan – Seven Years of Conflict in Nagorno-Karabakh*, Library of Congress Catalog Card Number: 94-79484, ISBN 1-56432-142-8, the United States of America, 1994, p.14, https://www.hrw.org/sites/default/files/reports/ AZER%20Conflict%20in%20N-K%20Dec94.pdf (accessed on November 14, 2020).

18 CFR, *ibid*.

States, France and Russia has come nothing and Azerbaijan and Armenia after more than six weeks of intense and bloody fighting have signed a ceasefire of Russian brokered to end the war. According to the truce, Russian peacekeepers will get the control of the disputed region – Nagorno-Karabakh – with almost 2000 troops and 100 armoured personnel carriers. The deal also guarantees a land corridor linking Nagorno-Karabakh to Armenia, which will be monitored by Russian peacekeepers, as well as a staggered withdrawal of Armenian forces from Azeri districts surounding the enclave by December 1, 2020.[19] The truce has been dinstinctly perceived in terms of Azerbaijan and Armenia. The announcement of the truce has been reciprocated as protests in Armenia but as celebrations in Azerbaijans. The President of Azerbaijan, Ilham Aliyev has called the truce as a glorious victory. Moreover, Armenian Prime Minister Nikol Pashinian has explained that the situation is extremely painful for him personally and for Armenians, and it is a catastrophe because he was in no choice and it was necessary to stop conflict. This study is penned at the time of the truce, so the developments after the truce will realized in the forthcoming days.

The second conflict in Caucasus is between Georgia-Abkhazia. Abkhazia is a dissociative territory in Georgia with 246.313 population. Abkhazia is the small Black Sea territory that split away in conflict from rule by Georgia almost thirty years ago as the Soviet Union broke up, but is recognized as a state only by Russia and a handful of Russian allies.[20] In the 19th century, Abkhazians moved on Western Georgia expanding. Historically, there was any conflict between Akbhazians and Georgians in the national borders till the Soviet Union's national building policy. Thereafter, the relations between the parties changed because of the national identity efforts of the Soviet Union for people. Georgia, a parent state of de facto Abkhazia, is an ethnically heterogeneous country, subsequently, from three Caucasian conflicts, the highest level of hostilities were in Georgia and Russia, a patron state of Abkhazia and so-called South Ossetia, is a guarantee for their long-term survival.[21] In the historical period, Abkhazia (formerly named as Abazg) was a kingdom in the 9th century and its capital was Kutaisi. In the 10th, Abkhazian and Georgian kingdoms were unified as in the name of 'Skartvelo'. At that time, Tbilisi was the capital of 'Skartvelo'. In the midst of 18th century with Georgievsk Treaty, Georgia had been a part of Russian tsar as a protectorate. Meanwhile, Abkhazia remained its autonomous position till the rebellion of Circassians in 1864 as the part of Kutaisskaya Gubernia. Because of Russian's recognization independence declaration of Georgia and falling of Tbilisi into Bolsheviks, Akbhazia was obliged to have a

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19 Henry Foy, ''Azerbaijan-Armenia agree full ceasefire in Nagorno-Karabakh'', *Financial Times*, November 10, 2020, https://www.ft.com/content/bfb04708-3f6c-4659-b6ed-9ec7b01e75f4 (accessed on November 15, 2020).

20 Thomas De Waal, ''Can the Coronavirus Reset the Abkhazia Conflict?'', 02 April 2020, https://carnegieeurope.eu/strategiceurope/81436 (accessed on April 02, 2020).

21 Gia Mosashvili, ''Conflict in Abkhazia: Resons and Solutions'', Conference Paper, February 2019, https: // www.researchgate.net/publication/334680589 (accessed on November 15, 2020).

treaty relationship with Goergia. In December 1922 Georgia, Armenia and Azerbaijan formed the Transcaucasian Soviet Socialist Federal Republic. Abkhazia joined it not as a constitutionally independent entity, but through Georgia.[22] Then, Akbhazia became an Autonomous Republic within the Georgian Republic in 1931. As an ethnically heterogeneous country, Georgia has approaximately 80 ethnic groups in its borders. Despite the fact that the largest minorities in Georgia are the Armenians, the Russians and the Azerbaijanis, there was not serious conflict related to them, except the enduring fear of disturbances among the Armenians, who were homogeneous in the Akhalkalaki district – this district is located on the Armenian border.[23] Moreover, Akbhazia, Adjara and Ossetia were the autonomous regions of Georgia in Soviet era. In the Stalinist period, the demographic structure of Abkhazia was changed purposely with the forcible settlement of thousands of Georgians in Abkhazia. Thereby Abkhazians turned into the minority in Abkhazia and so, Georgians took part in the main ethnic group of Abkhazia. On the other hand, the Abkhzians faced harsh measures against their culture, identity and language in Stalinist peirod like not speaking and broadcasting in mother tongue.

After the death of Stalin in 1953, many of these discriminatory measures were abolished and in a number of primary schools the Abkhaz language became the language of education and the Abkhaz State University was opened in Sukhumi in 1978 (with Georgian, Russian and Abkhaz sectors) to serve the needs of higher education in western Georgia, and an Abkhaz television programme was introduced.[24] Nevertheless, the subordination of autonomous republics to union republics left the Abkhaz in an inferior position in terms of access to political and economic decision-making at all-Union level.[25] Due to frictions with the majority of ethnic Georgians, Abkhaz cultural movements requested integration of Abkhazia into the territory of the Russian Soviet Federal Socialist Republic in 1957, 1967 and 1977, but Moscow always turned down these demands, however, the Kremlin also made some concessions to the Abkhazians, including over-representation in the local government and administration.[26] In the capital city of the Abkhaz Autonomous Soviet Socialist Republic (ASSR) – Sukhumi - , the state university and an Abkhaz television were opened in 1978. The Abkhazians started to get strong in the government and the territory economically and politically. During the collapse of the Soviet Union, the tension between Georgia and Abkhazia again started to accelerate and the demonstrations of Abkhazians, Greeks, Armenians and Russians in the

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22 Report of the Independent International Fact-Finding Mission on the Conflict in Georgia, Vol II, September 2009, p.67, https://www.mpil.de/files/pdf4/IIFFMCG_Volume_II1.pdf (accessed on November 17, 2020).

23 Mosashvili, *ibid.*, p.6.

24 Report of the Independent International Fact-Finding Mission on the Conflict in Georgia, *ibid*., p.68.

25 Marco Siddi, ''A short history of the Georgian-Abkhaz conflict from its origins to the 2008 war'', August 2012, p.3, http://reflectionsonabkhazia.net/ pdf/Marco_Siddi _History_of_ Georgian_ Abkhazian_Conflict.pdf (accessed on November 17, 2020).

26 *Ibid.*

Autonomous Republic that were based on promoting Abkhazia to the status of a union republic erupted. The nationalist camp in Georgia and the acceleration of the crisis in Abkhazia increased uninterruptedly in the ongoing process. The parties' military forces came across in Sukhumi and they had armed clashes in 1989. After the armed clashes, the Georgian Supreme Soviet maintained its nationalistic policies by declaring the sovereignty of Georgia in 1990. On the other hand, the Abkhaz Supreme Soviet declared Abkhazia as a sovereign union republic and postulated from Moscow Abkhazia's membership of the Soviet Union as a separate union republic. Boycotting a national vote on the question of preserving the USSR, instead the Georgian electorate overwhelmingly votes ''yes'' in a referendum held on the question of independence, however, most ethnic Abkhaz boycott the Georgian vote and instead participate in the all-Union vote, overwhelmingly endorsing preservation of the Soviet Union. Similarly, Ossetes overwhelmingly vote in favor of upholding the Soviet Union.[27] In spite of the çivil war in South Ossetia and the risk of country's integration, Georgia declared its independence from the Soviet Union on 9 April 1991. Zviad Gamsakhurdia was the first of Georgia's first direct presenditial election on 26 May 1991. Gamsakhurdia's plüralist approach never got through the conflicts and producted any solution. Although he presented twenty-eight seats for the Abkhazians in the Abkhaz Supreme Council, any unilateral change was made in the process. In short, there was any result in the succession of Georgian-Abkhazian talks. At that time, Georgia was in a chaotic position because of internal conflict and struggle and the war in the South Ossetia. In December 1991 a coup d'état organized by the political opposition ousted Gamsakhurdia from power and Former Soviet Foreign Minister Mikhail Shevardnadze was called back from retirement and appointed chairman of the State Council; however, Gamsakhurdia was able to flee Tbilisi and organized armed resistance in the western Georgian province of Mingrelia. Due to rising internal challenges and increasing Russian pressure, Shevardnadze was forced into a ceasefire with South Ossetia.[28] The war began in 1992 and revealed a national tragedy both in Abkhazia and Georgia. Most of the infrastructure was destroyed and thousands of civillians died. In October 1992, the Abkhazians got support of the North Caucasianrepublics of Russia and at the end of the 1993, the Abkhazians defeated the Georgian forces. Eventually, a ceasefire agreement was signed through the mediation of Russia and the UN on 14 May 1994. According to the agreement on a ceasefire and separation of forces, a security zone was constructed on both sides and the armed forces' deployment and heavy military equipments were forbidden. Moreever, the Georgians had to withdraw their troops and the Commonwealth of Independent States' (CIS) peacekeeping force and the UN military observers would take part in the security zone for monitoring compliance.

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27 The UN Refugee Agency, https://www.refworld.org/docid/469f388ca.html (accessed on November 19, 2020).

28 Marco Ciddi, *ibid.*, p.4.

Till the end of the 1996, all peace efforts concentrated on the status strife and the refugees' return. These issues were related to each other and controversial. In 1997, the change in the peace strategy started under the monitoring and controlling of the UN General Secretary – Liviu Bota. The peace process of the UN focused on practical issues such as the refugees' return, security and economic conditions' rehabilitations because of the failure of status negotiations. The first period of the negotiation mechanism of CIS in Geneva produced only modest results such as the deterioration of living standards in Abkhazia and the restriction of contacts and cooperation between CIS member states and Abkhazia. In response, the Abkhazians' hostilities towards ethnic Georgians increased. The second period of the negotiations revealed a document named as ''Basic Principles for the Distribution of Competences between Tbilisi and Sukhumi''. Its name is ''Boden Paper'' derived from the UN special representative - Diter Boden. The paper stated that Abkhazia was a sovereign asset and the conflict between Georgia and Akbhazia would be ended within a federal agreement. Nevertheless, Sukhumi did not take ''Boden Paper'' into consideration because of the lack of Abkhazians' rights and declared its independence in October 1999. Furthermore, the Abkhazians delayed to take part in the Coordinating Comission. The impasse period between Georgia and Abkhazia went on till the end of the 2002. The beginning of the second Geneva process and Sochi process came out an agreement with Eduard Shevardnadze and the president Vladimir Putin in March 2003. The agreement provided refugees turning back to their homes and non-using force. In 2006, the Abkhazia conflict again accelerated because the border gate (Adleri-Leselidze) between Russia and Abkhazia was got in international status. In response, Georgia sent a note to Russia that the only legal border gate between Russia and Georgia is the border gate of ''Lars''. Meanwhile, Abkhazia increased its recognition acts with the lobby activities. Abkhazian leader Sergei Bagapash demanded to recognize Abkhazia as a sovereign state from Russia and other states with the help of Abkhaz Parliamentary in November 2006. Moreover, the Abkhazians held a well-attended meeting fort he recognition of Abkhazia's sovereignty in December 2006.[29] By taking advantage of Georgia – South Ossetia armed clashes, Abkhazia combatted to Kodori Gorge in August 2008 and Russia helped Akbhazia by openning the second military corridor to Georgia through Abkhazia. Eventually, a ceasefire was signed by Georgia and Akbhazia on 16 August 2008. Subsequently, the leaders of Abkhazia and South Ossetia called for the recognition of their independencies. On 26 August 2008, Russia declared to recognize Abkhazia's and South Ossetia's independencies. In brief, the impasse in Georgia and Abkhazia relations dated back to the 1920s. One of the main structural effects on the complications of relations is the Soviet Union's national building policy. The main of the Soviet Union is to create a national identity. In this context, Abkhazians and Ossetians never admitted to

[29] Noelle M. Shanahan Cutts, ''Enemies Through The Gates: Russian Violations of International Law in the Georgia/Abkhazia Conflict'', *Case Western Reserve Journal of International Law*, 40 (1), 2007-2008, pp.293-294.

Georgianization policy and they perceived the policy as a moral threat to their societal existences. There are several facts which created a security dilemma in Abkhazia's local population and resulted mass-led violence:[30]

- Collective deportations of small ethnic groups in the North Caucasus (Karachai, Balkars, Chechens and Ingush people were deported, also the Kalmyks, the Volga Germans, the Crimean Tatars and Turkish Meskhetians from Georgia. Later, Khrushchev permitted only the North Caucasian people and the Kalmyks to return to their homelands) - these facts made fears in ethnic Abkhazians.
- Stalin's Great Purge policy, also known as Great Terror of USSR's political and intellectual elite. During this period, the population of Abkhazia strongly devastated and became small.
- Increased number of ethnic Georgians in Abkhazia who became more in numbers than ethnic Abkhazians during Stalin era.
- The origins of Joseph Stalin, Lavrentiy Beria and Sergo Orjonikidze. They all were Georgian origins and this fact was making concerns in Abkhazia. In most of Abkhazian sources and documents, Georgia is blamed because of unacceptable activities made by these leaders.

In a nutshell, the conflict between Georgia and Abkhazia is seen as a part of geopolitical strifes in Caucasus. In spite of Abkhazia's de facto status, the frozen strifes in the relations have still run on in the context of the parties' historical backgrounds. On the other hand, today, the effects of the tools of Russia's solution mechanism have still carried out on the conflict like in the past.

The other conflict in Caucasus is on South Ossetia between Russia and Georgia. The civil war in Russia (1918-1920) expanded to the many territories in Caucasus. The armed clashes between the Mensheviks and the Red Army also arrived at the region of Ossetia. Especially, Ossetians struggled towards the Mensheviks government in Georgia. In this period, Georgia closed down the local assembilies in 1919. Therefore, South Ossetians and Abkhazians were restrained on self-determination.[31] The Georgian-Ossetian conflict dates back to the 1920s. Like Georgian-Abkhaz conflict, The Georgian-Ossetian one is an ethno-territorial and political conflict. When South Ossetia made abortive attempts to declare its independence but ended up as an autonomous region within Soviet Georgia after the Red Army conquered Georgia and in 1989, South Ossetia lobbied for joining its territory with North Ossetia in Russia or for independence.[32] On the other hand, the independence declaration of Goergia from the Soviet Union accelerated the conflict and caused the armed clashes ended up with the displacment and deaths of tens of thousands of people.

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30 Gia Mosashvili, *ibid.*, p.11.

31 Merve İrem Yapıcı, ''Kafkasya'nın Sorunlu Bölgesi: Güney Osetya'', *Orta Asya ve Kafkasya Araştırmaları Dergisi*, 2(3), 2007, p.73.

32 Jim Nichol, ''Russia-Georgia Conflict in August 2008: Contexts and Implications for U.S. Interets'', CRS Reports for Congress, March 3, 2009, http://www.fas.org/sgp/crs/row/RL34618.pdf (accessed on November 20, 2020).

Subsequently, on 24 June 1992 Boris Yeltsin and Eduard Shevardnadze signed the Sochi Agreement as a ceasefire. According to the agreement, a security zone around Tskhinvali with the contribution of Russian, Georgian, North and South Ossetian troops was set up among the parties. Russia's minatory explanations towards Georgia influenced on the agreement. Just after the Sochi Agreement, on 4 July 1992 Boris Yeltsin, Eduard Shevardnadze and the president of North Ossetia – Alani A. Galazov signed a ceasefire and so, the armed clashes ended up in the region. According to the ceasefire, a security zone was constructed by the tropps of Russia, Georgia and North Ossetia. On the other hand, Some observers warned that Russia's increasing influence in South Ossetia and Abkhazia over the years transformed the separatist conflicts into essentially Russia-Georgia disputes and, most residents of Abkhazia and South Ossetia reportedly were granted Russian citizenship and passports and most appeared to want their regions to be part of Russia.[33] In this period, Eduard Shevardnadze tried to get the help of UN, NATO and OSCE on preserving territorial integrity but all western states and international organizations kept shtum. One of the main issues derived from the the war of South Ossetia is the forced migration. The relations between Georgia and South Ossetia carried on with the constitutive efforts on grasping the nettle far away from conflict and tension. With the 2001 presidency and parliament election triumph of Eduard Kokoeti, the relations between Georgia and South Ossetia started to slow and triangular relations among Russia, South Ossetia and Abkhazia accelerated. The Prime Minister of Abkhazia - Anri Mikhail-ipa Jergenia and the President of South Ossetia – Eduard Kokoeti met together in Moscow and signed a military agreement towards the possiblity of Georgia's military attack. The leaders agreed on getting the help of Russia. On the other hand, the President of Georgia – Mikheil Saakashvili elicited to the triangular meetings among South Ossetia, Abkhazia and Adzharia. According to Saakasvili, Georgia's territorial integrity was the first aim and then, economic integration with the separatist regions would provide peace in the region. In spite of positive approaches of Saakashvili, he was failure in real. Subsequently with the decision of pressure on South Ossetia by Saakashvili, the relations were strained again. In response, the Parliament of South Ossetia decided to unite with Russia on 9 June 2004 and the conflict between both sides started to accelarate. By the late 2004, the armed clashes broke up sternly. Like in the past, the peace efforts never ended with any solution. In this priod, Russia declared that Abkhazians and South Ossetians owned Russian passports would attend the 2007 election in Russia. Ultimately, the war among Russia, Georgia and South Ossetia began on 8 August 2008. Abkhazia also attended to the war after a while. By the mediation of Nicholas Sarkozy, the Presidents Dmitri Medvedev and Mikheil Saakashvili signed the ceasefire deal. According to the ceasefire, Russian troops would leave Georgian territories but maintain to protect the peace in South Ossetia. By reconizing South Ossetia's and Abkhazia's sovereignties, Russia reached at one of the main aims in the war with Georgia. In short, Georgia faced with

[33] Jim Nichol, *ibid.*, p.5.

pecuniary and non-pecunaiary damages at the end of the war. But then, international organizations and vox populi were contented with the disapproval of Russia. In fact, the wounds, scars and hostility of the past as frozen have maintained with other tools today.

It is seen that Caucasus's security challanges and conflicts' basis dates back to the old and have multidimensional structures. It is pathetically to say that there could not find any permanent solution to the challanges and conflicts emerged after the independence period. These security challanges and conflicts:

- The Nagorno-Karabakh Conflict
- The Georgia-Abkhaz Conflict
- The Georgia-South Ossetia Conflict
- The Region States' Relations with Russia
- The Challange of Control of Military Peace forces
- The Challanges of Arms Smuggling in terms of Security, Crime and Terrorism
- The Challange of Control of the Borders on Black Sea
- The Challange of Sharing of the Caspian Sea
- The Challange of Security of Oil Pipe Lines
- Regional Consolidation and Collaboration
- The Challange of Refugees

In 1992, six post-Soviet states belonged to the Commonwealth of Independent States (CIS) and all of them signed the Collective Security Treaty. Immediately after, NATO and the Collective Security Treaty Organization tried to dominate over the Caucasus. Armenia, Azerbaijan and Georgia took part in the coverage zone of the organizations. Especially, one of the main reasons of non-construction of security in the Caucasus is the self-seeking efforts of great Powers in the region based on their economic, political and military interests. The United States, Europoean Union and Russia in particular tried to construct a security system in the region in terms of their interest all the way. Although Azerbaijan and Georgia tried to become integrated into NATO and improve their political and economic relations within international system, Armenia tried to take part in the Collective Security Treaty Organization and gave priority to Russia in terms of its political and economic relations.

Conclusion

Conflicts and instability have touched the Caucasus – South Caucasus in particular – deeply. The ethno-political conflicts in the region that raged in the early 1990s led to the death of over 50,000 people, great material destruction, and contributed significantly to the political instability, economic hardships, and the increase in transnational organized crime that has characterized the

region in its first decade of independence.[34] The conflicts in the region were related to the territorial status of three regions and their ethnic minorities. In this context, the main conflicts in the region: Nagorno-Karabakh Autonomous Province of Azerbaijan, the Autonomous Socialist Soviet Republic of Abkhazia and the South Ossetian Autonomous Province. At present, none of the conflicts in the Caucasus has reached permanent solution and they heve kept in slince as frozen through the ceasefires. The tension between the governments and the representatives of ethnic minorities populations has still maintained, on the other hand, exterritorial states' interventions based on their political and economic interests have held. In addition to internal security threats, the Caucasus has external security threats in the context of the region's valuable energy resources, bridge role on oil pipe lines and EU-Asia and jeopolitical position. As it is seen, the Caucasus has not still had any functioning inter-governmental mechanisms and institutions for building regional stability and security. Moreover, international efforts on conflict resolution by OSCE and UN have not provided a concrete and permanent solution. International security assistance to the regional states, such as NATO's Partnership for Peace program and the Collective Security Treaty Organization, have had limited results, while their integration into Euro-Atlantic institutions such as the Council of Europe and European Union has progressed slowly.[35]

In brief, the Caucasus's complex ethnical structure and historical hostilities between the governments and their minorities populations seem as the main obstacle for building regional security and stability. The second one is that Russia has maintained to dominate over the region as in the past and, the great Powers such as USA, EU and China and internationl organizations such as OSCE, UN and NATO have presented insufficient peacemaking efforts and most of them are military force based efforts. These do not yield to the conflict resolution and building regional security radically. The other reason is exterritorial states' and international organizations' manipulative attitudes and behaviours. It is clear that if internal and external states' conflict resolution and peacemaking efforts are not constructed in security base and the states in the region are not supported to improve their economic, political, cultural and ethnical structures, the Caucasus will preserve its chaotic and insecure position and be far away from stable and peacefull socities in the future as in today.

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34 Svante E. Cornell, ''Security Threats and Challanges in the Caucasus after 9/11'', (Ed.) Ariel Cohen, *Eurasia In Balance: The US And The Regional Power Shift*, Farnham, Ashgate Pub Co, 2005, p.43.

35 *Ibid.*, p.45.

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Part II

Regional Cross – Relations

The Caucasus States' Relations to Each Other (1991-2020)

Nur ÇETİN*

Introduction

Since ancient times, the Caucasus has been the leader of the richest, most complex, and complicated regions of the world in terms of ethnic identity, language, and religion. The fact that the Caucasus is at the intersection of the east-west and south-north routes has made the region the focal point of the "great powers" outside the region, as in historical times. This situation also closely affected the demographic structure and political development of the region.

After the dissolution of the Soviet Union in 1991, three countries of the South Caucasus: Azerbaijan, Armenia and Georgia gained their independence. These countries had to cope with problem areas such as Nagorno-Karabakh, Abkhazia, South Ossetia, Ajaria, Samskhe-Javakheti (Meskhet-Javakheti), as well as consolidating their independence. Unsolved problems and claims between them determined the dynamics of the relations be established between these three countries. At the same time, the Caucasus has always been the region which has taken great powers' interests. Because of these interests, solving problems has always been a great matter. Traditionally, the Caucasus is a region where the interests of the various regional and global powers', such as Russia, the USA, Iran, the EU, Turkey, Israel, in recent times China, and military-political power centres' interests' clash. At the beginning of the 21st century, geopolitical conflicts increased during the struggle for the re-determination of the spheres of influence and the control of the world's natural resources. Especially when we consider the turbulence in the Middle East, the importance of the South Caucasus increases even more. The last Nagorno-Karabakh war, happened in 2020, has once again demonstrated this.

The Caucasus is a point where economic, geopolitical, energy, political, security, transportation and logistics, ethnic, cultural and religious lines intertwine and cross. It is not possible to separate them from each other in many subjects. In this sense, this region is directly related to world security. While discussing the South Caucasian countries and their relations, we should not forget that Russia has always supported Armenia during its establishment and development process and used it as a base against Muslims. It should also be noted that Turkey always has supported Azerbaijan in all conditions. We should not forget that Georgia followed a pro-Western policy and was supported by the USA in the period after the "Rose Revolution" following the definition of the "Wide Black Sea Region" and the inclusion of the Caucasus

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within the scope of NATO enlargement at the Prague Summit of NATO in 2002. In this context, we can say that the Caucasus has become an important part of the new "Great Game".

In this section, we will try to deal with the relations between the South Caucasian countries. In the current situation, we will examine the course of relations, the problems and barriers between them. The most important problems of these countries are territorial claims, political separatism movements based on ethnic origin, issues of reciprocal diasporas and economic development. Since the Nagorno-Karabakh issue will be a separate chapter in this book in the light of recent developments, the Nagorno-Karabakh issue that shapes the relations between Azerbaijan and Armenia will not be dwelled on in detail. To better understand the relations between these countries in the process of independence, the relations between the peoples of the region will be examined. Then, the relations between these countries will be examined in different dimensions, and the disagreements and problems between them will be discussed.

Historical Background

With the arrival of Tsarist Russia to the Caucasus at the beginning of the 19th century, the political map of the Caucasus has undergone great changes. This process started in 1801 with the annexation of the Georgian Kingdom. During and after the process of annexation of the Georgian Kingdoms by Russia, Georgian revolts took place, which caused a lot of trouble to the Russian Empire.[1]

With the Turkmençay treaty conducted between Russia and Iran in 1828, the lands of the Azerbaijani khanates were divided between Russia and Iran. With the realization of this treaty, the territory of Azerbaijan was divided into two pieces, these are north and south. To be permanent in these lands, Tsarist Russia started to follow the policy of resettling Armenians of Iran starting from 1828, and Armenians of the Ottoman Empire just after the Edirne treaty was signed in 1829, into Revan, Karabakh, and Nakhichevan where Turks mostly lived in the Caucasus. In this way, Tsarist Russia started to increase the Christian population against the Muslim population living in this region. At the same time, Russia established a base that could be used against the Ottoman Empire and Iran in the following period. Suny describes these demographic changes as follows:

> *"Before 1828 there had been approximately 87.000 Muslims and 20.000 Armenians in the Erivan khanate. After the migrations, the number of Armenians reached 65.000 and the number of Muslims fell to just over 50.000, including about 10.000 Kurds. The city of Erivan still had a Muslim majority. Of its 11.400 citizens, more than 7.000 were Muslims*

[1] Kamil Ağacan, "Ermenistan-Gürcistan İlişkileri", *Ermeni Araştırmaları,* No: 19, Fall 2005, http://www.eraren.org/index.php?Lisan=tr&Page=DergiIcerik&IcerikNo=364, (Accessed on: 08.01.2021).

> *and less than 4.000 were Armenians. Only later in the century, after population transfers following the Russo-Turkish War of 1877–1878, would the Armenians form a dominant majority in Erivan province, and not until the early twentieth century would Armenians constitute a majority in the provincial capital."*[2]

The establishment of "Erevanskaya oblast (Erevan province)" by Russia at the beginning of the 19th century in the territory of the Revan Khanate where most of the population was Muslim Azerbaijanis -as seen in the Ottoman Archive called "Tahrir Defterleri (cadastral record books)"- and settlement of the large Armenian population in the region ignited the process for the establishment of the Armenian state and the territorial problems between Azerbaijan and Armenia. In this sense, the inclusion of Mount Ararat in the coat of arms of Armenia indicates that Armenians came from the Eastern Anatolia region on the one hand and dreamed of a "great Armenia" on the other. The defeat of the Ottomans in the Ottoman-Russian War of 1877-1878 gave rise to new hopes for the Armenians. The idea of the Armenians to establish a "great Armenia" seriously disturbed other peoples of the region, primarily Georgians and Azerbaijani Turks, and caused distrust in between. At the same time, the process of ethnic cleansing of these regions continued. In the letter sent by the military governor of Batumi Sandjak to the Russian governor of the Caucasus Front in 1910: "The Russian state needs the migration of local people to consolidate the dominance in the region. It was said that immigration is more important, especially from places with rich natural resources and good geographic conditions."[3]

During this period, the "Mesame Dasi" party, which was a Marxist, was founded in Georgia in 1893. In November 1901, the organization of the Russian Social Democratic Workers Party (RSDIP) was established in Tbilisi.[4] In 1904 the charter of the Georgian Social Federative Party was adopted in Geneva. As the revolutionary movements of the Armenians, the Hnchak party (Social Democrat Hinchak Party) was established in 1887 and the Dashnak / Dashnak party (Dashnaksutyun, Armenian Revolutionary Federation) was established in 1890. The killing of an Azeri Turk by the Dashnak gangs in February 1905

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2 Ronald Grigor Suny, "Eastern Armenians under Tsarist Rule", The Armenian People from Ancient to Modern Times, Vol. II: Foreign Dominion to Statehood: The Fifteenth Century to the Twentieth Century, (Ed.) Richard G. Hovannisian, New York: St. Martin's Press, 1997, p. 112, from Farid Shafiyev, "The Forced Resettlement of Azerbaijanis from Armenia, 1948–1953", Journal of Muslim Minority Affairs, Vol:39, No:2, 2019, p.180.

3 Malkhaz Chokharadze ve Mehmet Ali Keskin, "Türk Tarihi ve Gürcü Tarihi Kaynaklarına Göre Rus Yönetiminin Uyguladığı Politika Sonucu Gürcü Muhacirlikleri (19-20.Yüzyıllar Arasında)" (Georgian Immigrations As a Result of the Policies Applied by the Russian Regime According to the Turkish and Georgian History Resources (Between 19-20 Centuries)), *Akademik İncelemeler Dergisi (Journal of Academic Inquiries)*, Vol: 10, Issue: 2, 2015, p.106

4 Nato Dvali, *Gürcistan'da Rus İdaresinin Kuruluşu (1801-1918)*, İstanbul Üniversitesi Sosyal Bilimler Enstitüsü Tarih Anabilim Dalı Yayımlanmamış Doktora Tezi, İstanbul, 2019, p.274.

encouraged the Azerbaijani Turks to organize. At the end of 1905, they founded an organization called "Difai Party" in Ganja. Its only aim was to prevent attacks and injustice against Azerbaijanis. In 1906 the "Socialist Himmet Party" and in 1911 the "Democratic Musavat Party" were established.[5] Most of these parties were nationalists and had different views on the development of their countries.

Following the collapse of Tsarist Russia with the October revolution of 1917, the Bolsheviks -by adopting the "Declaration of the Rights of the Peoples of Russia" on 2 (15) November 1917 to consolidate their own rule and to attract the people- recognized nations right to self-determination.[6] The Caucasian peoples -who believed in this declaration which was declared to gain time to get out of the First World War- declared their independence. Realizing that they could not do it within a confederation, these peoples, respectively, declared their independence. The Bolsheviks appointed Stepan Shaumyan, of Armenian origin, to the Baku administration to keep Azerbaijan under control. The Bolsheviks, acting together with Armenian gangs, caused great massacres in Azerbaijan in 1918.[7] On May 26, 1918, the Democratic Republic of Georgia declared its independence. In this process, Armenia, believing that Britain would support it, attacked Georgia for the annexation of land in December 1918. However, with the intervention of the British, a ceasefire was achieved, but this movement left deep marks on the consciousness of the Georgians. This state, which covers a wider area than today's borders, could only survive for three years and was included in the USSR by the invasion of the Soviet Red Army in February 1921.[8]

On May 28, 1918, Mehmed Emin Resulzade announced the establishment of the independent Azerbaijan Democratic People's State in Tbilisi. The Democratic People's Republic of Azerbaijan was able to survive only 23 months from 28 May 1918 to 28 April 1920.

The establishment of the Democratic Republic of Armenia was declared in Yerevan on May 28, 1918. The Republic, which was shaken by economic, military and political crises during its two and a half years of independence, lost its independence by being invaded by the Soviet Red Army in November 1920. Also, it joined the Soviet Union on December 2, 1920, under the name of the Armenian Soviet Socialist Republic.[9] It would be beneficial to note that the

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5 Dursun Çelik, "XIX ve XX. Yüzyıllarda Azerbaycan", bilig, Vol:3, Fall 1996, pp.67-68

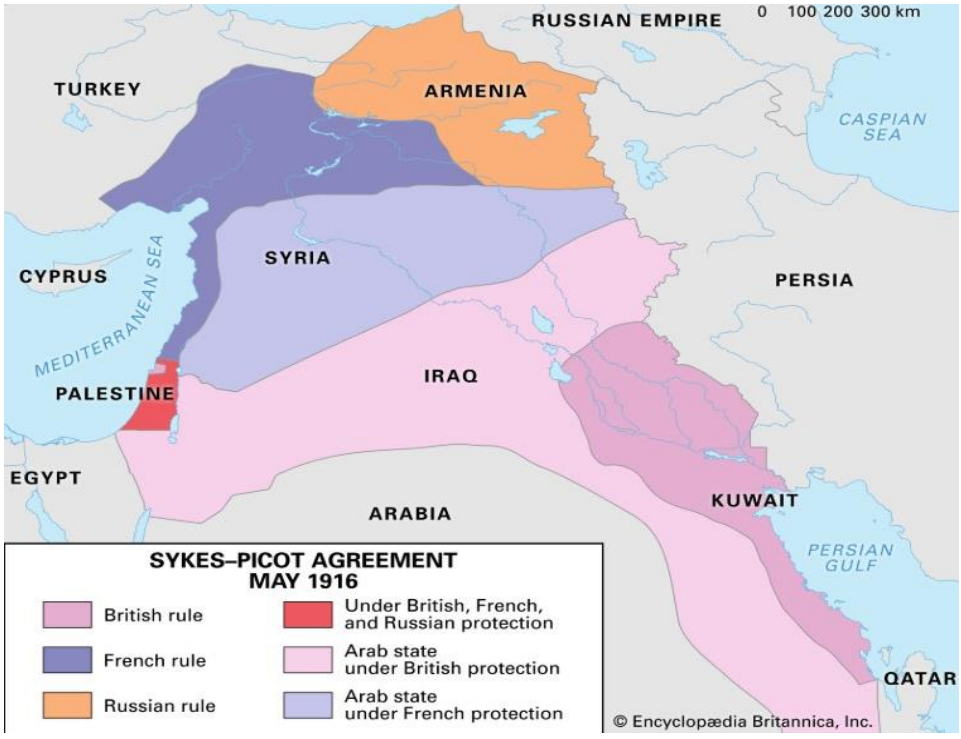
6 Deklaratsiya Prav Narodov Rossii, 2(15) Noyabrya 2017. www.1000dokumente.de /index. html?c =dokument_ru&dokument=0002_vol&object=translation&st=&l=ru, (Accessed on: 09.11.2020).

7 Gaffar Çakmaklı Mehdiyev, "Türksüz Ermenistan" İdeolojisinin Sonuçları: Ermenistan'ın Tek Uluslu ve Monoetnik Devlete Dönüştürülme Süreçleri", *Tesam Akademisi Dergisi/ Turkish Journal of Tesam Academy*, Vol:2, January 2015, pp.12-13.

8 Kamil Ağacan, *ibid.*

9 Caner ÇAKI, "Ermenistan Sovyet Sosyalist Cumhuriyeti'nde Joseph Stalin Döneminde Kullanılan Sovyet Propaganda Posterleri Üzerine İnceleme" (The Examination On Sovyet Propaganda Posters Used In The Armenian Soviet Socialıst Republic In Joseph Stalin's Power(, *Ermeni Araştırmaları Dergisi*, Vol: 61, 2018, p.276.

Ottoman Empire (later the Republic of Turkey) and the interests of the military-political presence in the region; during the First World War, Armenians actions against the Ottoman Empire with the British, French and Russians in return for their promises of vast territories; the mixed settlement of Armenians and Azerbaijani Turks in the Caucasus should be highlighted as important factors in the establishment process of states in the Caucasus between 1918-1921. As it is well known that, according to the secret agreements disclosed after the Brest-Litovsk Treaty, vast territories were promised for the Armenian state in Anatolia as well. These promises have been at the heart of the idea of "Great Armenia" and the land/border disputes that have continued to this day.



For this reason, it is fair to say that territorial and political disputes between Armenians -supported by England, Russia and France- and Azerbaijan Turks in the region had begun in the 19th century, escalated in the Cold War era, and have continued today. As pictured by the map printed in the New York Times magazine[10] on the 100th Anniversary of the Sykes-Picot Agreement and the recent developments in the region, once again, demonstrated that disputes and conflicts are not region-based, rather it is based on great Powers' global and geo-strategical rivalry.

[10] New York Times'ın yayımladığı 'Ortadoğu haritası'na büyük tepki, 16.05.2016, https://www.hurriyet.com.tr/dunya/new-york-timesin-yayimladigi-ortadogu-haritasina-buyuk-tepki-40104680, (Accessed on 07.01.2021).



Source: New York Times'ın yayımladığı 'Ortadoğu haritası'na büyük tepki, 16.05.2016, https://www.hurriyet.com.tr/dunya/new-york-timesin-yayimladigi-ortadogu-haritasina-buyuk-tepki-40104680, (Accessed on 07.01.2021); New York Times Türkiye'yi bölen haritayı yayınladı, 16.05.2017, https://www.haber7.com/guncel/haber/1951020-new-york-times-turkiyeyi-bolen-haritayi-yayinladi, (Accessed on 07.01.2021).

Relations in the Soviet Era and Territorial Disputes

Tsarist Russia, which established its dominance in the Southern Caucasus in the 19th century, followed the policy of "divide and rule", and made many administrative and local reforms that would facilitate its own administrative and military rule and consolidate its position. It is known that Russia had supported Armenians constantly, more Russia had established ethnically mixed and politically problematic lands to avoid being caught alone which would have prevented states to unite against it. The Soviet Government, which inherited this legacy, nevertheless sought to consolidate its administrative system rather than to solve these problems. Some of these problems were solved during the Soviet era; many of them have continued with some changes.

Between the years of 1917-1918, there were territorial disputes between the newly established Republics of Georgia and Azerbaijan on Zagatala province, Signah district, Borçalı, Ahalsıh district, and Karayaz steppe lands where Muslims lived. As a result of the negotiations between Georgia and Azerbaijan Governments, Zagatala province, where 91% of the population was Muslim, was given to the Republic of Azerbaijan. Signah, Borçalı, Karayaz and Ahalsıh regions remained within Georgia.[11]

[11] E. Arkhipova, "Azerbaycano-gruzinskaya granitsa: istoricheskie faktory poyavleniya sporov" (The Azerbaijan-Georgia Borderline: Historical Factors of Current Borderline Territorial Disputes), *Vestnik Volgogradskogo Gosudarstvennogo universiteta*, Vol:4, No:2 (22), History, 2012, pp.79-80.

Armenia, which cooperated with Britain and Russia during the First World War but could not reach the dream of "great Armenia" in the end, made territorial demands from the Soviet Government, which came to power after Tsarist Russia. Armenia, trying to expand its territory in the South Caucasus by relying on Britain and Russia, has made groundless land demands from different regions of Georgia and Azerbaijan since 1921. Including the Lore region and a part of the Mountainous Borçalı lands, 2575.38 km2 of total Georgian lands were given to Armenia from Georgia as the "neutral disputed region" with the decisions of the Communist Party Caucasus Bureau and the Georgian Communist Party meeting held with the participation of Stalin in 1921-1925.[12] It is worth mentioning that the closest comrade of Iosif Stalin, who was of Georgian origin, were Anastas Mikoyan of Armenian origin and Lavrentiy Beriya of Georgian origin.

Until the beginning of 1921, the Bolsheviks seized all three republics in the South Caucasus and made new arrangements in the region. Based on the experience of their first arrival in the early 19th century, the Bolsheviks first left the administration to the semi-military-political bodies, that is, the revolutionary committees (Revkom). Moreover, although Communist organizations under independent names were allowed (for example the Communist Party of Azerbaijan), in fact the party organizations were centralized to keep the region under control, and all authority was given to the Caucasus Bureau, which was established by the Bolsheviks as early as 1919.[13] On March 11, 1922, Federation of South Caucasus alliance agreement between Azerbaijan, Georgia and Armenia was signed, and the authorized bodies were determined. The Presidential Council attended by one person from each republic, as well as the Supreme Economic Council and the Alliance Soviet, the executive body, were established. The decision-making power and executive affairs in all the works of the republics were given to the federation. After a while, this federation became one of the four founding members of the Soviet Union in legal terms. The Federation administration, which lasted for fourteen years, was dissolved in 1936 by Stalin, the "architect" of this building, on the grounds that it had expired. After that, each republic individually continued its activities as a member of the USSR. As a result, this Soviet federation was established by order from above, moving forward from the concerns of Moscow rather than the natural needs and interests of the countries in the region. The federation managed by remote control could not develop a healthy and long-lasting cooperation between these countries. Despite everything, the countries

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[12] Vahid Omarov, Sakit Huseynov, "Mejgosudarstvennie Otnosheniya na Yuznom Kafkaze" ("Interstate Relations in South Caucasus"), *Nauchen Vektor na Balkanite/ Scientifc Vector of the Balkans*, Vol:3, No:1(3), 2019, p.82.

[13] Vügar İmanbeyli, "Modern Dönemde Kafkaslarda İşbirliği Modelleri" (Partnership Models in the Caucasus in the Modern Times), *Avrasya İncelemeleri Dergisi/Journal of Eurasian Studies (AVİD)*, Vol: IV, No:2, 2015, p.242.

of the region continued to maintain relations with each other in many areas until the collapse of the Soviet Union.[14]

Similarly, the claims of Nagorno-Karabakh, Zangezur and Nakhchivan, which Armenia put forward in the 1920s but remained unanswered, came back to the agenda after the victory of the Soviet Union at the end of the World War. Because the Soviet Union perceived Turkey's neutrality during the Second World War as hostility, many peoples, living in the Caucasus who were deemed as traitors, were banished to Siberia. Stalin, in the Postdam Conference and Molotov-Sarper negotiations, had insisted to gain Kars and Ardahan in a serious way to the Soviet Union from Turkey. At the Postdam conference, USSR People's Commissar of Foreign Affairs Molotov told British Foreign Minister Iden, "In 1921, the Turks some portions of Soviet Armenia by taking advantage of the weakness of the Soviet state. Armenians in the Soviet Union were very offended, therefore, the Soviet Government raised the question of the return of lands legally belonging to the Soviet Union". Subsequently, he said that nearly 1 million Armenians lived in Soviet Armenia and more than 1 million Armenians lived outside the existing Soviet Armenia borders and claimed that when the Armenian lands expanded, many Armenians living abroad would have the opportunity to return to their homeland.[15] 20.5 thousand square kilometres of these lands should be given to Armenia and 5.5 thousand square kilometres to Georgia.[16] However, in September 1945, Georgian Foreign People's Commissar Kiknadze complained about the injustice in the division of lands that would have taken from Turkey to Stalin's best man Bariya, claiming that 12 760 square kilometres of land needed to be given to Georgia while 13.190 square kilometres of land to Armenia.[17] That is to say, the disputes between Armenia and Georgia on the territory had also manifested themselves in these events.

During the Second World War, Armenians and Georgians were settled in the lands of Meskhetian Turks living in the Cevaheti region of Georgia, who were exiled from the Caucasus to Central Asia and Siberia, by the Stalin administration. Cevaheti Armenians were among the autonomy initiatives that started within the borders of Georgia after the establishment of independent states with the dissolution of the USSR.[18]

Stalin couldn't keep his promise given to Armenians and Georgians on the land return because he couldn't get expected support from England and the USA. In November 1945, Armenian leader Arutyunov sent a letter to Stalin requesting the transfer of the Nagorno-Karabakh Autonomous Region (NKAO)

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14 Vügar İmanbeyli, *ibid.*, pp.243-244.

15 *Sovetskiy Soyuz na Mejdunarodnıh Konferensiyah*, Moskva: Politizdat, Tom:6, 1984, p. 39–40.

16 "K sovetsko-turetskim otnoşeniyam", 18.08.1945 g., *Arhiv Vneshney Politiki Rossiyskoy Federatsii*, Fon:06, Op:7, P:47, D:762, pp.13-15, from S. Moshkin, "Ruka Moskvy" v İstorii vstupleniya Turtsii v NATO, http://www.politex.info/content/view/642/30/.

17 G. Kiknadze- L. Berii, 04.09.1945, *Arhiv Prezidenta Gruzii*, F:14, Op:19, D:209: p.51.

18 *Kafkasya'daki Gelişmeler ve Türkiye*, Bilge Adamlar Kurulu Raporu, No: 60, Bilgesam Yayınları, Nisan 2014, p.32

from Azerbaijan to Armenia. In the letter, he argued that the majority of the Armenian population in Nagorno-Karabakh has a demand and emphasized that this change is a socio-economic and cultural need.[19] This was a unique event meaning a challenge to Soviet hierarchy. In the history of the Soviet Union, it was the first of its kind that a leader of a Republic talked on behalf of a people living in the lands of another Republic. This letter was sent to the Azerbaijani leader Bagirov to receive his opinion on the matter. Bagirov replied with a letter titled "The territorial integrity of Azerbaijan and the inclusion of three regions of Armenia where Azerbaijanis live, one region of Georgia and two regions of Dagestan Autonomous Soviet Republic into the Azerbaijan Soviet Republic". This meant that if the Government of the Soviet Union attempts to redraw the previously determined boundaries according to the territories in which the ethnic groups live, then this will be a larger and more complex, even dead-end process involving all Soviet units. Bagirov rejected the territorial claims of Armenia and Georgia and demanded the transfer of the regions where Azerbaijan Turks lived in Armenia and Georgia to the Azerbaijan SSR.[20] Two sides were appeased because of the risk that these demands would have created problems for both the Moscow administration and among Republics. However, it will be seen that this situation did not mean that the issue has been resolved but will, again, have broken out in the following years.

On February 22, 1946, the decision prepared by the Government of the Soviet Union titled "Measures to be taken for the resettlement of Armenians abroad in Soviet Armenia" was approved. A committee for the admission and resettlement of the returning Armenians was established under the Armenian SSR Government.[21] It was the Soviet Union's effort to demonstrate her willingness to resettle Armenians as one nation to World public and Western diplomatic centres. Asserting that it would have settled 350-400 thousand Armenians from abroad to Armenia, the Stalinist regime claimed that it enabled the Armenians to return to their homeland and the people to unite. It was decided to immigrate Azerbaijani Turks living in Armenia to Azerbaijan to solve the settlement and accommodation problems of the Armenians who will settle in Armenia from abroad. On December 27, 1947, the decision of the Council of Ministers of the USSR "to relocate Soviet farmers (kolkhozniks) and other Azerbaijanis from the Armenian SSR to the Kura-Araz plain of the Azerbaijan SSR" was adopted. In the period from 1948 until Stalin's death, 150 thousand Azerbaijani Turks were displaced and no support was provided by the state to the Azerbaijani Turks during this period.[22] It is known that Armenia, which once again expressed its claim to Nagorno-Karabakh in the 1970s, could not get what it wanted and the borders did not change. However, when we observe

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19 Farid Shafiyev, "The Forced Resettlement of Azerbaijanis from Armenia, 1948–1953", *Journal of Muslim Minority Affairs*, Vol:39, No:2, 2019, p.182.

20 Farid Shafiyev, *ibid*., p.183.

21 M.Nersisyan, *İstoriya Armyanskogo Naroda s drevneyşih vremen do naşih dney*, Erevan: İzdatelstvo Erevanskiy Universitet, 1980, p.365.

22 Gaffar Çakmaklı Mehdiyev, *ibid*., p.23.

Armenian foreign and domestic policies, we see that Armenia applied ethnic transformation policies, followed by territorial demands and aggressive politics. Using the crisis of the Soviet Union in the 1990s, in 1988 Armenia occupied the Nagorno-Karabakh and 7 regions of Azerbaijan, between 1992 to 1994. Nearly 1 million Azerbaijani Turks were forced to migrate from this region. In 1992 was the year that marked the worst among others for Azerbaijan in terms of ethnic cleansing: the Khojaly massacre was committed by the Armenian forces. The policy of settling the Armenian population in these regions was followed. And Armenia has continued its claims on these lands to this day.

Georgia, which entered the process of independence, also experienced serious ethnic and territorial problems. The most important of these problems is that regions where different ethnic groups live want to be independent / autonomous by leaving Georgia. Since 1989, South Ossetia has started attempts to unite with North Ossetia or to declare its independence.[23] During this period, a "five-day war" took place in August 2008, and Russian soldiers entered South Ossetia and Georgia. Although South Ossetia, which receives support from Russia and North Ossetia under the current conditions, declared its independence, it was not recognized by any state other than Russia.[24] The other problem is the autonomy demands of the Armenians who were settled in the Javakheti region, which was evacuated from the Meskhetian Turks mentioned above. We will touch on this issue in the section on Georgia-Armenia relations. Another problem is the struggle to protect the autonomy of the Muslim Georgians living in the Autonomous Republic of Adjaria against the nationalist policy of Georgia, which started in 1991. Acaristan, which holds the port of Batumi and the Sarp Border Gate, has resisted for more than 10 years, but Saakashvili, who came to power after the "Rose Revolution", actually connected Batumi to Georgia. Another problem in the region is related to the status of Abkhazia. The Autonomous Republic of Abkhazia, located within the borders of Georgia but geographically part of the North Caucasus, wants to be an independent state.[25] After military conflicts between Georgia and Abkhazians in this region in 1991-1992, Georgia took control of these lands. However, Georgia lost its control due to the military support given to Abkhazians by Russia and Armenia and in 1994 Abkhazia declared the establishment of the Republic of Abkhazia. Like South Ossetia, the Republic of Abkhazia, which has not been recognized outside of Russia until now, wants its full independence and receives great support from the Russian Federation. The Republic of Georgia, trying to stay away from Russia, had to join the CIS in 1993 and sign

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23 Jim Nıchol, *Russia-Georgia Conflict in South Ossetia: Context and Implications for U.S. Interests*, Congressional Research Service, Report for Congress, 2009, p.5.

24 Doğan Şafak Polat, "Kafkasya'da Türkiye, Azerbaycan ve Gürcistan İttifakının Bölgesel Güvenliğe Etkileri" (Turkey, Azerbaijan and Georgia's Alliance in the Caucasus and Its Effects to Regional Security), *İstanbul Gelişim Üniversitesi Sosyal Bilimler Dergisi*, Vol:6 (2), Ekim 2019, p. 256.

25 Revaz Gachechiladze, "Geopolitics in the South Caucasus: Local and External Players", *Geopolitics*, Routledge, Vol:7, No:1, 2002, p. 123.

the Collective Security Agreement due to the separatist movements in the country.

Azerbaijan-Armenia relations

The occupation of Nagorno-Karabakh by Armenia has always been seen as a threat to independence and security for Azerbaijan. This situation was the cause of the political instability in the first years of independence. The mass murder of Azerbaijani civilians by Armenian military forces in the town of Khojaly in the Nagorno-Karabakh region of Azerbaijan on 26 February 1992 during the Karabakh War was written in history as the Khojaly Massacre. According to the "Memorial" Human Rights Defense Center[26], Human Rights Watch[27], The New York Times[28] newspaper, the massacre was carried out by Armenia and Armenian forces backed by the 366th Motorized Infantry Regiment. Human Rights Watch described this incident as the biggest massacre in the Nagorno-Karabakh War. Besides, according to the former President of Armenia Serzh Sargsyan, who commanded the Armenian forces in the Karabakh War, the massacre was an attempt of revenge by the Armenian forces.[29] According to the official statement of Azerbaijan, a total of 613 Azerbaijanis, including 106 women and 83 children, lost their lives in the attack. Azerbaijan Parliament declared the massacre in Khojaly in 1994 as "genocide".[30]

Muttalibov, the first President of Azerbaijan, resigned after the massacre committed by Armenian forces in Khojaly in February 1992.[31] After this tragic massacre, Ebulfeyz Elchibey was elected President with nationalist rhetoric. Elchibey did not accept the membership of Azerbaijan to the CIS, which was established with the initiative of Russia, which supports Armenia in the Nagorno-Karabakh issue and Khojaly. However, the economic, military and security aspects of the Nagorno-Karabakh conflict seriously challenged the Elchibey administration.[32] The occupation of Nagorno-Karabakh also put Armenia in a difficult position. The country, which has a restricted geographic

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26 *Doklad Pravozaşitnogo Tsentra "Memorial" o massovyh naruşeniyah prav çeloveka, svyazannyh s zanyatiem naselennogo punkta Hodcaly v noç s 25 na 26 fevralya 1992 g. voorujennymi formirovaniyami*, 1992, http://www.memo.ru/hr/hotpoints/karabah/Hojaly/index.htm, (Accessed on: 10.01.2021).

27 *Azerbaıjan: Seven Years of Conflict in Nagorno-Karabakh*, Human Rights Watch/Helsinki, December 1994, p.6.

28 "Massacre by Armenians Being Reported", *The New York Times Gazetesi*, 3 Mart 1992.

29 Thomas de Waal, *Black Garden: Armenia and Azerbaijan through Peace and War*, New York University Press, 2013, pp.184-185.

30 *Xocalı Soyqırımının 15 İlliyi İlə Əlaqədar Azərbaycan Respublikasının Milli Məclisində Dinləmələr*, 2007-ci il 26 fevral tarixli iclasın stenoqramı, https://meclis. gov.az/?/az/ stenoqram /88.

31 Ömer Göksel İşyar, "Azerbaycan ve Dış Politikası", (Der.) Tayyar Arı, *Orta Asya ve Kafkasya "Rekabetten İşbirliğine"*, Bursa, 2010, p.72.

32 Kamer Kasım, "Azerbaycan. İç Politika", (Der.) M.Yılmaz, T.Demirtepe, *Türk Cumhuriyetleri ve Toplulukları Yıllığı 2013*, Ankara, 2015, pp.6-7.

location and has no access to the sea, cut off its relations with its neighbours, and experienced loneliness and economic embargo in the region. This situation has caused great difficulties in the country and its economic and social consequences have been dire for Armenia. The population of the country has shown a steady decline; Unemployment in the country caused the young population to migrate to other countries, especially Russia, and to settle there. Due to the Nagorno-Karabakh issue, no diplomatic relations have been established between Azerbaijan and Armenia, no dialogue has been established and borders have been kept closed continuously. After the recent developments, although Azerbaijan leaves the door open in bilateral relations and says that it will deal with the problems of the Armenians living in Azerbaijan, Armenia perceives Azerbaijan as an enemy and does not approach dialogue in any way.

Azerbaijan-Georgia relations

During the dissolution process of the USSR, the Republic of Georgia first announced its separation, which is from the South Caucasian countries, on April 9, 1991. The Republic of Armenia declared its independence on 23 August 1991 after the failed military coup attempt in Moscow in August 1991. Finally, the Republic of Azerbaijan declared its independence on October 18, 1991. Diplomatic relations between the Republic of Azerbaijan and the Republic of Georgia were established on November 18, 1992. As expressed in the Georgian National Security Concept adopted in 2011, relations with Azerbaijan are characterized as an ongoing and developing "strategic partnership" despite the different political systems and foreign policy priorities of the two countries.[33] Bilateral relations, which have a pragmatic and realistic structure, are built on mutual trust and mutual interest. Considering that the Caucasus is a high and mountainous region, we can see that Azerbaijan and Georgia are very advantageous in terms of transportation and communication in the South Caucasus.

In addition to serious problems and disagreements between Azerbaijan and Armenia, Armenia's aggressive attitude has prompted Azerbaijan and Georgia to establish good relations in the fields of politics, energy, economy and trade. Georgia, which is the main link of the geopolitical, energy, trade and transportation chain in the South Caucasus region, has been the key country in the Baku-Tbilisi-Ceyhan oil pipeline, the Baku-Tbilisi-Erzurum and TANAP natural gas pipeline, and the Baku-Tbilisi -Kars railway line routes. In other words, all communication systems of Azerbaijan with the West pass-through Georgia in the current situation.

It should also be pointed out that Georgia's connecting gate to World market crosses over Turkey and Azerbaijan. Also, the starting point of the energy lines going to the West is Azerbaijan. And in this sense, we should take into account

[33] National Security Concept of Georgia, https://mod.gov.ge/en/page/70/national-security-concept-of-georgia, (Accessed on: 09.01.2021).

that energy, transportation and logistics lines are also of strategic importance for Georgia. Thus, we can say that the geopolitical interests of Azerbaijan and Georgia coincide. Therefore, it appears that there is a need for both countries to have relations at the level of strategic cooperation. The thing that made two countries closer was that of Russia's foreign policy, seeking to support secessionist movements in the region, such as Abkhazia, South Ossetia, Ajaria and Javakheti region. For this reason, both countries have developed bilateral relations to fight together against the Russian threat, kept a distance from Russia and tried to establish good relations with the Western world. Mutual respect to the territorial integrity of each others was the leading factor in establishing good relations with each other. In the first years of their independence, nationalist leaders Ebulfeyz Elchibey and Zviad Gamsahurdiya came to power in both countries. However, Gamsahurdiya's slogan of "Georgia for Georgians!" and his policy against Azerbaijanis living in Georgia cooled bilateral relations. Leaders whose nationalist side was dominant in both countries were soon removed from power due to internal conflicts. Especially when Azerbaijan was in a hot war with Armenia, the coming to power of Heydar Aliyev in Azerbaijan in 1993 and Eduard Shevardnadze in Georgia showed that the problems between the two states in the South Caucasus can be resolved peacefully. It is worth noting that the new leaders of the two countries were high-level statesmen who were well trained, experienced and respected in the old Communist system.

Shevardnadze visited Azerbaijan in February 1993 to restore bilateral relations and support each other's independence and territorial integrity. During the visit, a "Friendship, Cooperation and Defence Treaty" was signed between the two countries. In the Agreement, the Parties shall develop by respecting each other's independence; that they will work together to ensure world peace, stability and security; They declared that they attach importance to the establishment of a regional security system. And they have committed not to let others use their lands against each other. Baku Embassy of Georgia was opened in February 1995.[34]

The first official visit of the President of the Republic of Azerbaijan Heydar Aliyev to Georgia took place in March 1996. During this important visit, Azerbaijan's embassy in Tbilisi was opened and two important documents were signed: "Treaty of Strengthening Friendship, Cooperation and Mutual Security" and "Declaration of Peace, Security and Cooperation in the Caucasus Region".[35]

Georgian President Mihail Saakashvili, who came to power after the "Rose" revolution, officially visited Baku on 4-5 March 2004. Within the framework of the visit, many documents such as the Joint Declaration, Cooperation in the Field of Education Agreement, and Cooperation Agreement in the Field of

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[34] Kamil Ağacan, "Kaderdaş Devletler: Azerbaycan-Gürcistan İlişkileri", *Avrasya Dosyası, Azerbaycan Özel,* Vol: 7, No:1, 2001, p. 322.

[35] "Azerbaycano-gruzinskie otnoşeniya", Heydar Aliyev Heritage İnternational Online Library, https://lib.aliyev-heritage.org/ru/1407885.html, (Accessed on: 09.01.2021).

Information were signed. In June 2004, Azerbaijani President Ilham Aliyev paid a return visit to Georgia. During the visit, new cooperation agreements were signed between the governments of the two states in the fields of energy, rail transport, taxes, aviation and television; and Joint Declaration was conducted.[36]

In 2007 and 2009, face-to-face meetings were held between Azerbaijani President Ilham Aliyev and Georgian President Mikhail Saakashvili. During the meetings, views on bilateral relations, regional cooperation and international issues were exchanged. Azerbaijan's support to Georgia during Russia's intervention in Georgia in 2008 has raised bilateral relations to a higher level. Particularly, Azerbaijan's political and economic support to Georgia during the Russian intervention in Georgia in August 2008 raised bilateral relations to a higher level.

During his official visit to Tbilisi in November 2015, Azerbaijani President Ilham Aliyev and Georgian President Giorgi Margvelashvili signed a declaration of cooperation in the fields of security, trade, economy, transportation, culture, science and education after negotiations.[37]

During the last war in Nagorno-Karabakh, Tbilisi announced that the passage of military loads to Armenia and Azerbaijan was suspended. At the same time, Georgia denied that military cargo was transferred by civilian aircraft. After signing a ceasefire agreement between the leaders of Azerbaijan, Armenia and Russia, Georgia opened the air corridor for Russian peacekeepers at the request of Yerevan and Baku. This movement of Georgia, which maintained its neutrality in Nagorno-Karabakh issue with its security concerns, is of great importance for Azerbaijan.[38]

Economic relations and energy issues between Azerbaijan and Georgia have a very important place. October 29, 1998, in Ankara, between Presidents of Turkey, Azerbaijan, Georgia, Kazakhstan and Uzbekistan and the US Energy minister, "Ankara Declaration" was signed. This document envisaged the construction of the Caspian-Mediterranean (BTC) pipeline to deliver Caspian Sea energy resources to world markets. This declaration has laid the foundation of a project that excludes Armenia by tightening the relations between Georgia and Azerbaijan on economic and energy issues in the regional sense. One of the two aims in constructing such corridor was that Armenia was left alone in establishing relations with outside World and taken under control of Turkey, Azerbaijan and Georgia. Secondly, by constructing pipelines and transportation routes crossing over these three countries, relations were aimed to be improved.

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36 *Ibid.*

37 Davit Kachkachishvili, "İlham Aliyev: "My podderjivaem territorialnuyu tselostnost Gruzii", 05.11.2015, https://tinyurl.com/y6azcso2, (Accessed on: 05.01.2021).

38 "Aliev: Gruziya ne hotela, çtoby "ozverevşıy vrag ubival naşih grajdanskih lits", 20.11.2020, https://www.ekhokavkaza.com/a/30960292.html, (Accessed on: 05.01.2021).

On October 6, 2004, Presidents Ilham Aliyev and Mihail Saakashvili attended the unification ceremony of the section of the Baku-Tbilisi-Ceyhan main oil pipeline, bearing the name of Heydar Aliyev, on the Azerbaijan-Georgia border. President Mikhail Saakashvili on May 24, 2005, said that;

> *"This project is very important to us. The oil pipeline and next year the natural gas pipeline will make the region, including Georgia, completely energy independent. This is a very important step to strengthen our independence and develop our countries. We are very close neighbours, even we are not just neighbours; we are brothers. I think this is a historical event because the region is changing, the world is changing. In this difficult period, completely new perspectives open up before us. There is a complete mutual understanding between us in all matters."*[39]

Georgian President Mihail Saakashvili and Azerbaijani President Ilham Aliyev attended the opening ceremony held on 13 July 2006. Commissioning of the Baku-Tbilisi-Ceyhan oil pipeline was regarded as a good example of successful cooperation between Azerbaijan, Georgia and Turkey and it was emphasized that this international project serves the interests of all three countries. The Baku-Tbilisi-Ceyhan Pipeline project, which takes place between countries, is very important in terms of connecting both countries and the world, although it transports one million barrels of oil per day to the European market. It also has a special place in terms of being the first energy project to disable Russia.[40] The foundations of Azerbaijan's big investment process in Georgia were laid at the end of 2006. The State Oil Company of the Republic of Azerbaijan (SOCAR) purchased the Kulevi terminal in Georgia, which officially opened on May 16, 2008. The initial capacity of the terminal is 10 million tons, in the future this figure will increase to 20 million tons. Founded by SOCAR on April 25, 2008, SOCAR Energy Georgia company opened the first filling station in Georgia under the SOCAR brand. About 30 SOCAR filling stations are operating in Georgia.[41]

The projects between Azerbaijan and Georgia are not only limited to energy projects but also cover many areas such as seaports, railways and airlines. In particular, the geographical strategic location of the countries, their location at the crossroads of Asia and Europe, enabled them to play an active role in the Europe-Caucasus-Asia Transport Corridor (TRACECA) project, which aims to revitalize the ancient Silk Road connecting the continents. The foundation of Baku-Tbilisi-Kars railway Project -also known as Iron Silk Road- was laid down by tripartite regional cooperation agreement conducted between Turkey, Azerbaijan and Georgia on January 7, 2007, in Tbilisi with the participation of İlham Aliyev, Mikhail Saakashvili, and Turkish Prime Minister Recep Tayyip

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39 "Azerbaycano-gruzinskie otnoşeniya", *ibid.*

40 T.C. Cumhurbaşkanlığı Bakü-Tiflis-Ceyhan Petrol Boru Hattı Açılış Töreninde Yaptıkları Konuşma, 13.07.2006, https:// www.tccb.gov.tr/ konusmalari-ahmet-necdet-sezer/ 1721/ 7794/baku-tiflis-ceyhan-petrol-boru-hatti-acilis-toreninde-yaptiklari-konusma, (Accessed on: 05.01.2021).

41 "Azerbaycano-gruzinskie otnoşeniya", *ibid.*

Erdogan. Line, on October 30 2017, was opened with the participation of the President of Azerbaijan, Turkey's President and Prime Minister of Georgia. The Presidents also emphasized the importance of the Baku-Tbilisi-Kars railway project in terms of both bilateral and regional relations. The line, which will carry out freight transportation between Europe and China, which is planned to carry 6.5 million tons of freight since the day it was put into service, is expected to carry 16 million 500 thousand tons of cargo and 1 million 500 thousand passengers in 2034.[42]

The Baku-Tbilisi-Erzurum (South Caucasus Pipeline) natural gas pipeline is one of the lines used in the delivery of natural gas in the Caspian geography to the global markets. In this context, Azerbaijan's Shah Deniz gas derived from natural gas deposits in the region are transported through the territory of Georgia to Turkey. Agreement on BTE was signed in September 2001 in Baku. In addition to this agreement, another agreement was signed between BOTAŞ and SOCAR to import 6.6 billion m^3 of natural gas for 15 years. This line has been operating since July 2007.[43]

The foundations of the Trans Anatolian Natural Gas Pipeline Project (TANAP), which unites many countries with Azerbaijan and Georgia, was laid on June 26, 2012. With this $ 7 billion project, transportation of Azeri natural to Europe via Georgia and Turkey are planned. Presidents attended the opening ceremony in 2018.[44]

We can see that the relations between Azerbaijan and Georgia are based on mutual interest and are predominantly in the economic field. The main area of cooperation is the energy field. The Georgian side is trying to use its transit potential with maximum efficiency for various transportation and infrastructure projects.

According to the data of the Georgia Statistics Office, Azerbaijan ranks second among Georgia's trade partners with a share of 13.2%.[45] Also, Azerbaijan is the second-largest export market for Georgia. Pataradze, Ambassador of Georgia to Baku, stated that in 2019, the trade turnover between Azerbaijan and Georgia reached nearly 1 billion dollars and it was a record. He emphasized that commercial and economic relations should be maintained, new joint ventures should be increased and new common interests should be determined in the next period. The Ambassador said that, within the

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42 "Bakü-Tiflis-Kars Demiryolu Hattı Projesi", Hazar Strateji Enstitüsü, 18.05.2015, https://web.archive.org/web/20160206232228/http://www.hazar.org/content/yayinlar/baku_tiflis_kars_demiryolu_hatti_projesi_1150.aspx, (Accessed on: 05.01.2021).

43 Mitat Çelikpala, "Son Yürmi Yılda Türkiye'nin Azerbaycan, Gürcistan ve Ukrayna'ya Yönelik Dış Politikası ve Bu Ülkelerdeki Faaliyetleri", (Ed.) İsmail Aydıngün, Çiğdem Balım, *Bağımsızlıklarının Yürminci Yılında Azerbaycan, Gürcistan ve Ukrayna*, II. Kitap, Ankara: Atatürk Kültür Merkezi, 2012, p.350-351.

44 "Enerjinin İpek Yolu TANAP Açılış Töreni", 12.06.2018, https://www.botas.gov.tr/Icerik/enerjinin-ipek-yolu-tanap-acil/51, (Accessed on: 05.01.2021).

45 National Statistics of Georgia, https://www.geostat.ge/ka/modules/categories/637/eksporti, (Accessed on: 09.01.2021).

framework of Georgia's free trade agreement with the European Union and China, Azerbaijan-Georgia joint ventures can supply duty-free goods to the EU by using the Georgia quota; He also noted that Georgian entrepreneurs could establish a business in Azerbaijan with Azerbaijani partners, using the Azerbaijani quota to supply duty-free goods to the regions of Central Asia, Eurasia, China and India. However, he said that with each passing year, tourism between the two countries has been a significant success and 1.5 million Azerbaijani tourists visited Georgia in 2019.[46]

In January-September of 2020, Georgia's trade with Azerbaijan was 670 million USD, and the trade volume decreased by 11% compared to the same period of the previous year. According to the report of the Reporter office, this year Azerbaijan, after Turkey, Russia and China, took 4th place with 8.3% share. [47] According to the data of the Georgian National Statistics Office, the volume of the country's trade with Azerbaijan in January-November 2020 was 399.6 million dollars, making it the second-largest export partner.[48]

In the January-September period of 2020, Georgia ranked 8th with a 3.5% share of Azerbaijani exports. Georgia ranked 4th with a share of 7.8% in the export value of non-oil-gas products.[49]

In conclusion, we should state that in the last 30 years, based on mutual trust and interests, the legal infrastructure of the development of relations between the two countries was established, the "Friendship, Cooperation and Defense Agreement" was signed, and both independent states are members of the Council of Europe and GUAM. All these have been the beginning of a new stage in the development of Azerbaijan-Georgia relations based on common goals. In this sense, the balanced foreign policy of both countries serves peace, security and prosperity in the South Caucasus and the world.[50] Projects such as the Baku-Tbilisi-Ceyhan oil pipeline, the Baku-Tbilisi-Erzurum natural gas pipeline, and the Baku-Tbilisi-Kars railway within the framework of the TRACECA program will help the two countries to act together in all transportation projects in the future and will make a great contribution to the strengthening of energy, diplomatic and transportation relations. Both countries support the mutual territorial integrity, which is very sensitive to them; While Azerbaijan respects the territorial integrity of Georgia, Georgia supports the resolution of the Nagorno-Karabakh conflict within the framework of the territorial integrity

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46 "Tovarooborot mejdu Azerbaycanom i Gruziey v 2019 godu dostig rekordnıh okolo $1 mlrd.-posol v Baku", 8.05.2020, https://tinyurl.com/y34k5wdn, (Accessed on: 11.01.2021).

47 "Tovarooborot Grizii s Azerbaycanom sokratilsya", 19.10.2020, https://report.az/ru/biznes/tovarooborot-gruzii-s-azerbajdzhanom-sokratilsya/, (Accessed on: 11.01.2021).

48 "Georgia's top trading partners in Jan-Nov 2020 remain Turkey, Russia, China", https://agenda.ge/en/news/2020/3977, (Accessed on: 21.12.2020).

49 Azerbaycan'ın Dış Ticareti – 2020 Ocak-Eylül, 17.10.2020, https://www.ticaret.gov.tr/blog/ülkelerden-ticari-haberler/azerbaycan/azerbaycanin-dis-ticareti-2020-ocak-eylul-donemi, (Accessed on: 11.01.2021).

50 V. Ömərov, "Azərbaycan-Gürcüstan münasibətləri: sınaqlardan çıxmış əməkdaşlıq", *Azərbaycan-Gürcüstan: dostluğun inkişaf yolu*. Bakı: Qaya, 2017, p.115-123.

of Azerbaijan. In light of the latest developments in the South Caucasus, Azerbaijan will probably establish better political and economic relations with Russia. Azerbaijan will not abandon her balanced foreign policy and get away from her foreign policy priorities that are Turkey, EU, and the USA. That's why I think relations with Georgia will be moved to a higher level.

There is the issue of the rights of the Meskhetian Turks who were forcibly immigrated to Central Asia from Georgia in 1944 stays as an unresolved issue between the two countries. Due to the conflicts in the Fergana valley in the 1990s, many Meskhetian Turks returned to the Caucasus. However, since they could not settle in Georgia, they settled in Azerbaijan and the North Caucasus. According to the general population census held in Georgia in 1989, 308,000 Azerbaijani Turks were living in Georgia, ie 5.7% of the country's population was Turkish. However, due to the policies implemented during the rule of the radical nationalist Gamsahurdiya, Azerbaijani Turks also migrated abroad to a significant extent.[51] With the decision taken by the Georgian Parliament in 2007, the Meskhetian Turks were granted the right to return to their lands, provided that they accept their Georgian identity. However, there was no government activity supporting this.

In Georgia, Azerbaijan Turks mostly live in Marneuli, Bolnisi, Dmanisi and Gardabani regions of Tbilisi and Kvemo Kartli provinces.[52] This region is called Borçalı among Turks. Georgians who call themselves Engiloy live in Zagatala province of Azerbaijan. According to the census conducted in Azerbaijan in 1999, 14,900 Georgians live, ie 0.2% of the country's population.[53]

Georgia-Armenia relations

Diplomatic relations between the Republic of Armenia and the Republic of Georgia were established on 17 July 1992.[54] For Armenia, which is at war with Azerbaijan, it was very important to develop good relations with Georgia. The importance of Armenian-Georgian relations is primarily since Georgia is recognized as the best partner of the Republic of Armenia in the region, together with the Islamic Republic of Iran and the Russian Federation. Georgia has a special place for Armenia in the context of regional cooperation. Because on the one hand, the connection with Russia, which is the main supporter of Armenia, is provided through Georgia. Because of the war in Karabagh, Armenia is stuck between Turkey and Azerbaijan. On the South is there Iran. Therefore, Georgia remains the only link to connect Armenia to the World.

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51 Kamil Ağacan, "Kaderdaş Devletler: Azerbaycan-Gürcistan İlişkileri", *Avrasya Dosyası, Azerbaycan Özel,* Vol: 7, No:1, 2001, p. 330.

52 Karlı-Jo T. Storm, "A People In-Between: Examining Indicators of Collective Identity among Georgian Azeri-Turks", *Ethnopolitics*, Vol: 19, No. 5, Routledge, 2020, p.506.

53 Kamil Ağacan, *ibid*., p.330.

54 Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Armenia, "Dvustoronnie otnoşeniya. Gruziya" http://mfa.am/ru/country-by-country/ge, (Accessed date: 16.12.2020).

Therefore, Armenia strives to develop cooperation with Georgia in various fields, and establishing good long-term relations with the Republic of Georgia is the priority of the foreign policy of the Republic of Armenia. Armenia is aware that cooperation with Russia, Europe and various regional organizations cannot be imagined without cooperation with its regional neighbour Georgia. Batumi and Poti ports of Georgia in the Black Sea are very important for the development of economic and commercial relations. Armenia's dependence on Russia and is the biggest supporter of the Russians in the region is met with anxiety and distrust by Georgia, which pays heavy prices to Russia for its independence. However, Georgia is aware of the fact that it is a connecting point between Armenia to Russia and this situation makes Armenia dependent on Georgia. When this corridor was cut during the Georgian-Russian war in August 2008, Armenia remained in complete isolation and entered into a great crisis. Different approaches towards the relations of regional powers such as Turkey, Russia and Iran in the region, various perspectives on the solutions of the regional disputes, being under Armenian blockade Georgia's effort to establish relations with Turkey and Azerbaijan, and lastly Armenian's territorial claims affected the relations between the two countries.[55]

Georgia wants to ensure peace and stability in the South Caucasus by conducting a balanced foreign policy, maintaining its neutrality in the Nagorno-Karabakh war and is in favour of establishing a ceasefire, besides all disadvantages beyond its borders. At the same time, Georgia has a significant minority of Armenians and Azerbaijani Turks. This situation created the danger that the war would spread into Georgia. Knowing very well how the ethnic minorities are used by Russia against the territorial integrity and independence, Georgia also wants to develop good relations with these two neighbouring countries.[56]

Tbilisi Embassy of Armenia was opened in July 1992. The Armenian Consulate was opened in Batumi in April 2008. On May 19, 1993, during the official visit of Georgian President E. Shevardnadze to Erevan, nearly 20 documents on various fields of cooperation were signed. The most important of these was the "Agreement on Friendship, Cooperation and Mutual Security between the Republic of Armenia and the Republic of Georgia", which laid the foundation for the relations between the two countries based on mutual respect for state sovereignty and integrity. During this visit, important documents were signed regarding the abolition of mutual visas and visa-free passage of the citizens of the two countries, air transport, road transport, railway transport, customs procedures, social security issues.[57]

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55 Sergey Minasyan, "Armyano-gruzinskie otnosheniya: dinamika i sovremennoe sostoyanie", 14.02.2012, http://www.noravank.am/rus/articles/detail.php?ELEMENT_ID=6306,(Accessed on: 21.11.2020).

56 Kamil Ağacan, *ibid*., 2001, p.328.

57 Soglaşeniya mejdu Pravitelstvami Gosudarstv – Uçastnikov SNG (Respublika Armeniya), https://e-cis.info/cooperation/3018/77985/, (Accessed on: 21.12.2020).

Until today, 88 international agreements have been signed between Armenia and Georgia in different fields. Georgia is very important for Armenia in terms of economy and transport, and the international documents signed demonstrate this. Approximately 80% of the goods imported to Armenia from abroad are transported through the territory of Georgia. Besides, transportation and energy corridors from Russia to Armenia pass through the territory of the Georgian state. In 2018, exports between the two countries were 70 105.8 thousand dollars and imports were 68696.2 thousand dollars.[58]

During the official visit of the President of Armenia R. Kocharian to Georgia in November 1998, the Georgian side expressed its readiness to develop cooperation with Armenia in almost all regional projects. During these visits, Armenia had a proposal on Georgia's integration to strategical partnerships such as "Georgia-Armenia-Iran", "Armenia-Iran-Turkmenistan", "Romania-Bulgaria-Armenia", "Armenia-Russia-Turkmenistan", "Iran-Armenia-Greece".[59]

The "Agreement on Friendship, Cooperation and Mutual Security between the Republic of Armenia and the Republic of Georgia", which was in force during the official visit of the President of Georgia E. Shevardnadze to Erevan on 23 October 2001, was repeated.

In the war that broke out between the two countries as a result of the occupation of Georgia's South Ossetia and Abkhazian regions by Russia in 2008, Georgia closed the Poti port and Armenia's border with Russia, where Armenia made 70% of its trade. This caused a great shock to the economy of Armenia, according to Armenian calculations, the Armenian economy lost 670 million dollars due to this war.[60]

On the occasion of the 100th anniversary of the foundation of the Democratic Republic of Georgia, high-level Armenian officials paid an official visit to Georgia in May 2018. This was the first official visit of the newly appointed Armenian Prime Minister Nikol Pashinyan to Georgia. During his visit, Pashinyan met with Georgian President Giorgi Margvelashvili. Tbilisi's intermediary role for the regulation of relations with the European Union for the new Armenian administration to take a step towards the West, including Armenia in regional energy and logistics projects, and easing the relatively high customs duties between Georgia and Armenia were among the main topics of the talks during the visit to Tbilisi.[61]

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58 Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Georgia, http://armenia.mfa.gov.ge /default. aspx?sec_id =1264&lang=1, (Accessed on: 09.01.2021).

59 N.G.Galoyan, "Armyano-Gruzinskie Otnoşeniya v Kontekste Regionalnoy Bezopasnosti na Yujnom Kavkaze" (Armenian, Georgian Relations In The Context Of Regional Security In Transcaucasia), *Vestnik RUDN, İnternational Relations*, Vol:15, No:4, December 2015, p.125.

60 Stanislav Sekrieru, "Zatyajnıe Konfliktı v stranah vostoçnogo partnerstva: mejdu predotvraşeniem voynı i postroeniem doveriya", Nieghbourhood Policy Paper, January 2013, No:4, p.4 https://www.khas.edu.tr/cms/cies/ dosyalar/files/Nieghbourhood PolicyPaper(06) RussianVersion.pdf (Accessed on: 11.01.2021).

61 Vahid Omarov, Sakit Huseynov, *ibid*., p.83

One thing I want to draw your attention to is that Pashinyan has repeatedly stated that he respects the territorial integrity of Georgia during his visit to Tbilisi, and on the first day of his visit, he put flowers in the cemetery of the martyrs. However, it is known that most of the Georgian martyrs were killed by the Armenian Bagramyan battalion. Another important point is that Pashinyan not only visited the Armenians living in Georgia and their museums but also visited the Samhe-Javakheti region where the Armenians live intensely. This was the first visit of a senior Armenian leader to this region during the period of independence. This means that Armenia has not abandoned its initiatives in the Javakheti region.[62]

Located in the southwest of Georgia and with its borders with Armenia and Turkey in the south, Cevahet region, up to 1944, was the hometown of Meskhetian Turks. Meskhetian Turks exiled to Central Asia by Stalin who thought that they were receiving support from Turkey, the region has led to the settlement of the Armenian and Georgian.[63] In the period after 1991, Armenians in this region got organized and began to demand autonomy from Georgia. The Armenians in the region also provided Russia with a justification that it could intervene in Georgia's internal affairs, and a Russian military base was established in Ahılkelek in 1995 in this region. The demands and armed organizations of the Armenians in Cevaheti continue to pose a threat to Georgia's territorial integrity. On the other hand, Pashinyan's visit to this region showed once again that Armenia did not give up on this idea.

It has been observed that the population of Georgia has been decreasing continuously since 1991, especially after the Rose revolution. In 1991, the population of Georgia was 4,835,900 people; in 2018 the population of Georgia decreased to 3.7 million. 85% of the population is Georgian, 6.5% Azerbaijani, 5.5% Armenian, and 3% others. In this sense, it should be said that unlike Armenia, Georgia does not apply a policy of harsh pressure and intimidation against minorities, but does not favour Meskhetian Turks who want to return to this region.

After Pashinyan visited Georgia, Georgia announced that it made a 52% reduction in its grain export to Armenia by rail. Additionally, it was announced that a "roadmap" of relations covering all fields of activity from legislation to energy will be prepared.[64]

As a result, Georgia is in favour of developing close cooperation with all the states of the region, in line with its goal of becoming the centralist actor at the intersection of all transitions in the South Caucasus in its foreign policy, and acts professionally in its relations with Armenia, despite the complex and turbulent history. Besides, it believes that this situation will have a positive effect on relations with NATO and EU countries, and strengthens its role as a connecting point between Europe and the South Caucasus countries. Taking

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62 *ibid*., p.83.
63 *Kafkasya'daki Gelişmeler ve Türkiye*, *ibid*., p.33.
64 Vahid Omarov, Sakit Huseynov, *ibid*., p.83.

into account the thoughts of Armenia on the Cevaheti region, it carries out the domestic policy on the one hand that keep this covered, on the other hand, it tries to make Armenia more dependent on itself economically. However, it does not ignore the possibility of using Armenia as a link in the development scenarios of Georgia-Iran, Georgia-Russia relations.

GUAM (Organization for Democracy and Economic Development)

I think it would be useful to provide information about GUAM (Organization for Democracy and Economic Development), which was established in 1997, as it includes two countries in the Southern Caucasus region.

The organizations and institutions established in the Post-Soviet geography right after the collapse of the Soviet Union were established under the leadership of Russia and aimed to maintain Russia's influence on the countries around them. During these years, the Nagorno-Karabakh of Azerbaijan was occupied by the Armenians, Khojaly massacre occurred; In Georgia, separatist movements started in Adjara, Abkhazia and South Ossetia. These problems have turned into armed conflict, threatening the independence and integrity of the country. Both republics openly declared that Russia is behind these movements. For this reason, Azerbaijan and Georgia, which are the countries of the South Caucasus, tried to establish distant relations with Russia for their justifiable reasons and avoided becoming a member of the CIS until the last moment. However, with the pressure and different tactics of the Russian Federation, they had to repair relations with Russia and accept its leadership and membership in the CIS. However, Georgia still left its membership of the CIS after the "5-day war" in August 2008.

Likewise, based on the 1992 Collective Security Treaty, Kremlin, aiming to increase its influence in the South Caucasus and Central Asia, established the Collective Security Treaty Organization based on joint defence, in 2002, with Belarus, Armenia, Kazakhstan, Tajikistan and Kyrgyzstan. While Armenia from the South Caucasus joined the organization as a founding member, Azerbaijan and Georgia withdrew from this alliance in 1999. In this sense, in the CIS, where they could not withstand Russian pressure, they went to an alternative organization by taking Ukraine with them in order not to allow Russia to continue its pressure. By publishing a declaration at the CIS Summit held in Chisinau in 1997, they declared that "if Russia continues its hegemonic policy, they can bring up the issue of leaving the CIS".In February 1997, Georgian President Shevardnadze visited Ukraine and Azerbaijan, and during these visits, it was decided that the countries should cooperate strategically. Therefore, with the participation of Moldavia, GUAM was established as a regional integration initiative in the Black Sea where Russia is not a participant and leader. It was created outside the CIS with the participation of post-Soviet

countries Georgia, Ukraine, Azerbaijan and Moldova, and was designated as GUAM, taking its name from the initials of its members.[65]

Another factor that was instrumental in the establishment of GUAM was the joining of Azerbaijan, Armenia and Georgia to the North Atlantic Cooperation Council in 1992 within the framework of NATO's eastward expansion thesis, and in 1994 their inclusion in the Peace for Partnership (PfP) program.

Aiming to weaken the Russian influence in the South Caucasus, the USA planned to take the countries into its orbit and be effective in the region with this program. With the establishment of the Shanghai Five on the initiative of China in 1996 matured and accelerated the idea of GUAM. GUAM started its operations when the Presidents of Azerbaijan, Georgia, Moldova and Ukraine signed a joint agreement at the European Council meeting in Strasbourg on 10 October 1997.

In the agreement, the Presidents underlined the development and importance of all kinds of cooperation to strengthen the stability and security in Europe based on the principles of sovereignty, territorial integrity, inviolability of borders, democracy, rule of law and respect for human rights. Founded in such a period, this organization was created to be an alternative to Russia and to establish closer relations with NATO and the USA. Russia perceived GUAM as a threat, while the US and EU supported GUAM.

In April 1999, military units of Georgia, Ukraine and Azerbaijan carried out the first exercise within the framework of GUAM. Uzbekistan also joined this union in April 1999. However, Uzbekistan left the organization after the Andijan incidents in May 2005. GUAM's first summit meeting held in Yalta on June 7, 2001, played a major role in the structural shaping and formalization of the organization in the international arena. In this process, the issue of the South Caucasus countries was discussed at NATO's Istanbul summit in 2004, but although Azerbaijan and Georgia attempted to join NATO, these attempts were not welcomed in order not to confront Russia and Iran.

At the GUAM Chisinau summit meeting in May 2005, the members confirmed their commitment to the goals and principles regarding democratic society, European integration, economic development, stability and security in the region, and it was decided to transform GUAM into an international organization. The Union has become an international organization since the Kyiv summit in 2006 and has received the title of GUAM Organization for Democracy and Economic Development. At the Kyiv Summit of GUAM on 22-23 May 2006, the Presidents adopted the GUAM's charter and the Kyiv Declaration (Vikipedi, 2020). The main points of the Kyiv Declaration are strengthening democracy, protecting fundamental human rights and freedoms, ensuring the economic development and security of states and stability; dynamic economic growth; effective cooperation in solving difficult-to-solve problems that disrupt the sovereignty, territorial integrity and freedom of states, and complicate the implementation of democratic reforms and the economic development of the

[65] Kamil Ağacan, *ibid*., 2001, p.323.

region; strengthening cooperation in combating international terrorism, extremism and aggressive conflict and other adverse situations; deepening of cooperation in the fields of economy, trade and transportation. At the NATO Summit held in Bucharest, the capital of Romania between 2-4 April 2008, the demands of Georgia and Ukraine to join NATO were discussed, but the fact that Russia prevented this left its mark on the meeting.

GUAM's next Heads of State Summit was held on 1 July 2008 in Batumi, Georgia. Azerbaijan and Georgia participated in all meetings of GUAM and tried to support them, but GUAM, which is considered as an alternative to organizations established with the participation of Russia such as CIS, SCO, EEB, cannot be effective in the post-Soviet geography, in the Black Sea region and the South Caucasus. It is known that this issue stems from Russia, which has strengthened economically and militarily and produces different policies against each member country, as well as the West whose influence is limited in this region.

Conclusion

After 1991, the South Caucasus region has emerged as an area of deep-rooted and unresolved conflicts and disputes. There were very risky ethnic and territorial disputes such as the hot conflict between Azerbaijan and Armenia in Nagorno-Karabakh, Abkhazia and South Ossetia, which declared its independence from Georgia. For this reason, it was not possible to establish healthy cooperation, peace in the first place, between the three regional countries. The three states of this region are members of different military-political and economic unions in the regional context, they have territorial demands against each other and resort to different guarantor countries in ensuring their security. This shows that we cannot talk about the "Common Southern Caucasus", which lives in peace in the near and medium-term. After 1991 among states, regions where different peoples live in together, have been the subject of the claims of the parties. The reason for most of them is not the collapse of the Soviet Union, but rather the nationalist policies that the newly established countries have begun to follow and the use of these "disputed" regions. Putting its claim into practice that is "Armenia belongs to the Armenians!", Armenia invaded Nagorno-Karabakh in 1988 with this thought. In this sense, Armenia is the most likely homogeneous country in the world. At the same time, Z. Gamsakhurdia, was at the administration of Georgia, with the nationalist slogan of "Georgia is for Georgians!" which mobilized Azerbaijani Turks living in Signah and Borçalı. Georgian annexation demands have been brought to the agenda for the regions in Azerbaijan where Ingiloids live intensely.

At the root of the problems between countries in this region stems from the efforts of the states to carry out nationalist policies that are independent of the geopolitical position, history, demographic and cultural structure of this geography and do not reflect the truth. These wrong policies damage the development of countries and their relations with neighbours and dominant

powers. Armenia is a very clear example of this: Armenia, which could not establish good relations with its neighbours due to the wrong policies it followed and remained in regional isolation in this sense, remained outside of many energy, commercial, economic and transportation projects passing through the South Caucasus region. Armenia, which has weak commercial connections and constantly emigrates, is trying to manage the situation with the support of Russia and the help of Armenian diasporas abroad. The latest developments in the country show that Armenia does not learn much, they see foreign powers as responsible for the current problems and live with the dream of a rematch.

Azerbaijan and Georgia act together against the claims of Yerevan and its supporter Russia. In this sense, many factors bring these countries closer to each other: Russia's support for separatist movements that may threaten the stable development of these countries and the presence of military units in the region; to act cautiously against Iran, to develop cooperation with the USA and EU countries; attempts and close relations with Turkey for NATO membership. These countries are of strategic importance because it connects the Caspian via Turkey to the Western world. In this context, these countries also connect Central Asian countries with Turkey and the West. Therefore, Azerbaijan and Georgia are at a key point in the areas of security, strategic, military, energy, economy, trade and transportation in this region.

As a result, when the countries in the South Caucasus region do not adopt the establishment and development of relations with their own will, a "common way" cannot be found and it is not possible to ensure security and stability in the region. In this case, the South Caucasus region, which will be constantly weak, will always try to solve its problems with the intervention of external and dominant powers and will remain dependent on the outside in this sense.

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The Caucasus States' Relations with Turkey (1991-2020)

Mehmet Fatih ÖZTARSU*

Introduction

The Caucasus region has always become a strategic crossroad for major powers on the way to regional domination. As geographical location shaped the importance of the territory; Russia, Iran, and Ottoman Empire found themselves in an endless competition in regards to territorial partition. This reality created opportunity and challenge for all parties and played a role to determine the exact borders of these imperial powers.

The region had become a scene of bloody clashes during World War I that resulted in the collapse of the Russian and Ottoman Empires. After the establishment Soviet Union, this area remained an essential property of the new state, and it limited the role of Turkey. Therefore, the Cold War period heavily affected the foreign policymaking process of Turkey in terms of its eastern neighborhood. As a member of the Western alliance, Turkey could only act as a player amid Soviet-American confrontation. According to the Soviet Union, Turkey could have caused a security danger by implementing Western policies and its strong bonds with the region. However, this situation changed after the collapse of the Soviet Union, and the Caucasus appeared as a new destination with its various economy and energy facilities.

The independence of Azerbaijan, Armenia, and Georgia brought new opportunities for the regional and global powers and caused a new type of policy, especially for Turkey as a neighbor. Since Russia always appeared as a permanent regional power throughout history, the post-Soviet period also enabled this country to establish a sustainable policy. It is possible to claim that the end of the Soviet Union didn't mean the expiration of the Russian influence in the Caucasus. Moscow always tried to grasp the remained power from the Soviet period and monitored the moves of Turkey and Iran.

Turkey has adopted a new regional policy by establishing bilateral relations with the Caucasus republics starting from 1991. The country had long historical ties with the region. Therefore, this issue became an important motivation in the rapprochement towards the newly independent republics. Additionally, gaining advantages of cooperation in economy and energy issues shaped the Turkish foreign policy preferences in pragmatic meaning.

The Caspian energy sources, bridge role between Asia and Europe, competition with Russia and Iran, disputes with Armenia, changeable political dynamics of the region, and other kinds of reasons determined the Turkish policy making process. Moreover, Turkey's identity as a NATO (North Atlantic

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Treaty Organization) ally and European Union partner appeared as additional elements that shaped the regional affairs. Consequently, Turkish policy towards the Caucasus has started in a chaotic atmosphere and straightened in time. Even though the bumpy way of relations faced challenges in three decades, Turkey could form a balanced policy based on mutual gains with the regional countries.

Research Methodology

This article employs a descriptive-analytical approach by using scholarly literature, documents, and news. The researcher utilized library and online sources that consist of academic and journalistic views of professional names and institutions. In the section on economic relations, various numbers and statistical data present the previous year's results since it is not easy to collect the current period's information. Therefore, reliable sources were checked to gather sufficient outcomes regarding bilateral economic interaction.

Theoretical Framework

Turkish foreign policy towards the Caucasus provides significant elements that present evaluation between conflict and cooperation. The region had become a buffer zone between the Western and Soviet influence during the Cold War period. After the Soviet collapse, the situation slightly altered with the existence of newly established republics. Although these countries had gained their independence twice in a century, the Soviet regime had shaped the geopolitical dynamics. This situation shows a balance between conflict and cooperation opportunities.

Turkey has formed a balanced policy towards the region as a neighbor country. The policy has these parameters; a) accepting Russia and Iran as competitors, b) employing pro-Western policies due to NATO membership identity, and c) utilizing a suitable tool to overcome domestic variables of the region. The Turkish posture has various explanations, such as soft regionalism[1] and functionalism.[2] These approaches are analyzing Turkey's current form of regional policy with its strong and weak points. Regardless of the core theoretical viewpoint, the regional perspective might be an acceptable outlook but the region includes undeniable realities of conflict/dispute level. These factors have the potential to harm the immature policy-making process in regards to regionalism. Therefore, there is a necessity to obtain a more realistic explanation for the Turkish regional policy.

Armenia has a hostile relationship with Azerbaijan and Turkey because of the Nagorno-Karabakh problem and 1915 events. Even though the status quo in the Nagorno-Karabakh issue has changed, there is no clear signal for détente.

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1 Kemal Kirişçi and Andrew Moffatt, "Turkey and the South Caucasus: An opportunity for soft regionalism?" *Brookings Institute*, (2016).

2 Araz Aslanlı, "Türkiye-Azerbaycan Ekonomik İlişkileri," *Yönetim ve Ekonomi: Celal Bayar Üniversitesi İktisadi ve İdari Bilimler Fakültesi Dergisi*, 25, no.1, (2018): 15-27.

Thus, the frozen nature of the conflict would remain a negative aspect for the regional policies of Turkey. On the other side, Georgia has become a trustful partner for Turkey and gained opportunities after Armenia lost advantages from the early 1990s. This country played a transit role for energy and economic projects. Obtaining a partnership tendency facilitated a defense relationship with Turkey. Likewise, Azerbaijan shares a cultural similarity with Turkey. This fact made positive contributions to the relations. As a result, Turkey has formed a partnership with Georgia and Azerbaijan that suffered from ethnic and regional conflicts and territorial integrity problems. The lack of Armenia prevents consistency about the regionalist claims in the literature. Additionally, this condition constitutes an alliance formation between Armenia-Russia and Turkey-Azerbaijan-Georgia.

The abovementioned conflict and cooperation balance has brought security concerns and partnership possibilities for Turkey, Georgia, and Azerbaijan. This issue can be the subject of neorealism[3] that defends that states should survive to protect their existence. This way requires gaining benefits in various ways. Cooperation is also an option to meet this requirement, but the core issue is security. Therefore, security concern[4] stands as the only motivation source for countries to form cooperation or conflictual relationship.

The international system is anarchic, and there is no higher-body to protect the interests of states. Security cooperation can become the only preference for the countries on the way of collaboration. As the South Caucasus example indicates, Turkey's relationship with the regional countries proves this approach's validity. Armenia remained as an occupier in the Nagorno-Karabakh and threatened the territorial integrity of Azerbaijan. Similarly, Georgia faced national security concerns due to the Abkhazia and South Ossetia problems. Under this reality, Russia and the West appear as beneficial partners. They provide cooperation prospects in particular fields such as politics, economics, and defense. Their organizational presence under the Collective Security Treaty Organization and NATO ensures security protection. On the other side, the European Union and Eurasian Economic Union are political-economy organizations to build reliable cooperation.

Consequently, neorealism is the main theoretical framework to analyze and understand Turkey's policy towards the Caucasus in this article. There might be some changes in case of a political shift in the coming years. Therefore, regionalism can be an appropriate term after settling disputes between the regional countries.

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3 John A Vasquez, "The Realist Paradigm and Degenerative versus Progressive Research Programs: An Appraisal of Neotraditional Research on Waltz's Balancing Proposition," *The American Political Science Review*, 91, no. 4, (1997): 899-912.

4 Randall L. Schweller, "New Realist Research on Alliances: Refining, Not Refuting, Walt's Balancing Proposition," *American Political Science Review*, 91, no. 4, (1997): 928.

Turkey's Approach towards the Caucasus

The Caucasus region had been an indispensable asset among three big powers that are Russia, Turkey, and Iran over the centuries. The existence of the Soviet Union made a fundamental impact on the Caucasus and made this region near abroad of Russia[5]. This situation was strengthened, especially after World War II, with the termination of German intentions on the geostrategic importance of the Caucasus. Given the fact that the region was surrounded by Western influence through Turkey, the Cold War-era displayed a scene of a covert struggle[6] for restricting the role of this neighboring country. Since the imperial past of the region always kept the potential of unexpected clashes, Ankara's position was continuously monitored by Moscow. Finally, this situation altered in the late 1980s when the Soviet regime was on the edge of dissolution.

Relations between Turkey and the Caucasus republics started in the early 1990s after the collapse of the Soviet Union. Turkey had recognized the independence of these countries and established ties in various aspects such as politics, economy, and culture. Even though Russia became mostly hesitant and suspicious about Turkey's snap entrance to the region from the very beginning,[7] the behavior changed in the coming years with the appearance of various kinds of projects under the auspices of the liberal world order.[8] The two countries obtained their way of the policy-making process by considering self-benefit.

The Caucasus region lives under uncontrollable disputes and conflicts as much as cooperation opportunities. Turkey's stance was shaped by these realities that changed policy level from idealist to pragmatist one. Generally, the ethnic and regional conflicts in Georgia and between Armenia and Azerbaijan played a harmful role in the region-wide cooperation expectations. However, Ankara obtained a position of a mediator and preventive role to decrease the level of dispute or create appeasement as a regional player, at least for its own political and economic benefits.[9] As a result, the country had to close borders with Armenia after the increase of escalation in Nagorno-Karabakh[10] and offered common platforms to gather the parties on the table. This posture didn't facilitate the Turkish role as expected since the country couldn't become a successful mediator between Russia and Georgia as well as Armenia and

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5 Gerard Toal, *Near Abroad: Putin, the West and the Contest for Ukraine and the Caucasus* (Oxford University Press, 2016).

6 Cavid Veliyev, "Turkey's role in the South Caucasus: between fragmentation and integration," in. *The South Caucasus Between integration and fragmentation*, Baku: Strateji Araşdırmalar Merkezi and European Policy Centre, 2015, 85.

7 Kevork Oskanian, "Turkey's global strategy: Turkey and the Caucasus", *London: LSE IDEAS, London School of Economics and Political Science*, (2011): 23.

8 Mustafa Aydin, "Turkish Policy Toward the Caucasus," *The Quarterly Journal*, (2002), 40.

9 Svante E. Cornell, *The Nagorno-Karabakh Conflict*, Uppsala University, (1999), 15.

10 Ruben Saftrasyan, "Armenian-Turkish Relations: From Interstate Dispute to Neighborliness." *Center for Policy Studies Central European University*, (2003): 16.

Azerbaijan.[11] On the other side, Ankara followed the way of maximum gain and minimum damage pathways in the bilateral and multilateral relations.

Consequently, the Turkish policy in the Caucasus provides friendship, partnership, and disagreement contents. The same cultural background rhetoric with Azerbaijan formed a strong tie, the geopolitical importance of Georgia established partnership and ongoing historical and current disputes with Armenia caused disagreement perspective of the relations. Additionally, Turkey has to calculate external dynamics that come from powerful countries such as Russia, Iran, China, and the US. All initiatives and projects are subject to change in case of changeable dynamics in the region.

The relations bring two different aspects that are bilateral and multilateral. First one includes Turkey's bilateral relations with the regional countries in political, economic, and military spheres. The latter one consists of joint partnership initiatives in regards to the economy and military. Therefore, the subtitles of this article include Turkey-Azerbaijan, Turkey-Armenia and Turkey-Georgia Relations with bilateral and multilateral perspectives.

Bilateral Relations
Turkey and Azerbaijan Relations

Turkey and Azerbaijan are two countries that share a common historical and cultural background. Speaking the same language and adopting similar cultural values made these countries closer than others in the region.[12] Both of them use the closest dialect of the Turkish language, and practically they show their intentions of improving relations by taking the cultural similarity as the major reference.

The geographical connection consists of the 17 km-border between the Nakhchivan Autonomous Republic of Azerbaijan and Igdir province of Turkey. The two countries use this border as an addition to Georgia because the borders with Armenia are closed since the early 1990s when Armenia occupied the territories of Azerbaijan.

Turkey had recognized Azerbaijan as a state from the very beginning of the 1990s, right after the declaration of independence.[13] Back in the first quarter of the 20th century, it is possible to see a robust ground of the bilateral relations, especially during the establishment of the Azerbaijan Democratic Republic in 1918. This period was interrupted by the Soviet rule that lasted for seventy years that made these two close countries far away from contact. However, Turkey found an opportunity to regain consciousness about referencing

11 Veliyev, "Turkey's role", 85.
12 Aydin, "Turkish Policy", 44.
13 Çağla Gül Yesevi and Burcu Yavuz Tiftikçigil, "Turkey-Azerbaijan Energy Relations: A Political and Economic Analysis." *International Journal of Energy Economics and Policy*, 5, no.1, (2015): 28.

cultural togetherness with Azerbaijan in the late 1980s when the Soviet regime was decaying.[14]

The bilateral relations show changeable dynamics due to the presidential attitudes from the early 1990s. The period during the first President Ayaz Muttalibov didn't bring an effective outcome because of political turbulence and his short-term leadership. This situation precisely changed when Abulfaz Elchibey came to power in 1992. His pro-Turkish political orientation made positive contributions to bilateral relations, and the first significant partnership projects started with the support of his counterparts Turgut Ozal and Suleyman Demirel.[15] After his term, Heydar Aliyev adopted a balanced policy that formed a strong bond in the bilateral relations.[16] Considering that policy's importance, the course of improved ties turned into a strategic partnership in the term of Ilham Aliyev's presidency, who came to power in 2003.

Turkey and Azerbaijan relations include several positive and negative developments with the effects of internal and external dynamics. Given the energy and economy partnership, both countries focused on mutual gain prospects. In the aspect of military relations, Azerbaijan successfully adopted collaboration with Turkey and NATO modernization attempts on its army.

In the negative aspect, the Armenian issue appeared as an altering factor in the relations, especially in the period of the Turkey-Armenia normalization process between 2008 and 2010. Turkish President Abdullah Gul's visit to Yerevan to watching the FIFA World Cup Qualifier soccer game between Turkish and Armenian teams paved the way for the normalization process between Turkey and Armenia.[17] The US and Europe supported this process, and these two countries signed protocols for normalization in Switzerland in October 2009. As a reaction, Azerbaijan condemned this development by claiming Armenia's occupation in the Nagorno-Karabakh territory should end for a normalization process.

Additionally, the visa services became another concerning point in the relations for a long time. Azerbaijan is always concerned about Iran's reaction if Turkey receives visa facilities. Moreover, it is possible to claim that Russia also played as an inhibitor factor which limited Turkey's maneuver abilities in the Caucasus.[18] For example, as a Minsk Group member, Turkey has tried to exercise a mediator role in the Nagorno-Karabakh problem in which Russia has

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14 "Cornell, "The Nagorno-Karabakh", 80.

15 Fariz Ismailzade, "Turkey-Azerbaijan: The Honeymoon is Over," *Turkish Policy Quarterly*, (2005): 3.

16 Cornell, "The Nagorno-Karabakh", 67.

17 Bülent Aras and Fatih Özbay, "Turkish-Armenian Relations: Will Football Diplomacy Work?" *SETA*, 2008.

18 Ali Valigholizadeh, Yashar Zaki, and Kazem Zoghi Barani, "An analytical study of geopolitical consequences of normalization of Turkish–Armenian relations," *Journal of Eurasian Studies*, (2013): 204.

always been the dominant actor.[19] As a country that recognized Azerbaijan's territorial integrity and condemned Armenia's occupation policy, Turkey's mediation attempts remained inconclusive until the Nagorno-Karabakh War in 2020. This condition pushed Turkey to adopt a partisan role to support Azerbaijan in military means starting from the Four-Day War in 2016.[20] The change of behavior from mediator to partisan player caused a balance shift in the regional politics in which Russia had to accept Turkey-Azerbaijan military dominance and change of status quo in the Nagorno-Karabakh conflict.

Economic Relations

Azerbaijan has a distinguished place in the Caucasus with its hydrocarbon sources. Having a coastal line with the Caspian Sea and obtaining a transit role among countries made Azerbaijan one of the attractive destinations in regards to economy and energy cooperation. Not only for Turkey, but the Western countries also tried to take advantage of this country starting from the early 1990s.

Turkey has adopted a policy of mutual gain and facilitated various projects with Azerbaijan. The bridge position of Turkey between East and West made positive contributions to the bilateral relations. Additionally, Turkey's active involvement in the economy and energy projects along with the Western initiatives increased the importance of Azerbaijan in front of the world.[21]

Baku-Tbilisi-Ceyhan (BTC) Oil Pipeline Project is one of the very first cooperation subjects between the countries. This 1768 km-length pipeline connected Baku and Ceyhan province of Turkey for carrying the Caspian oil to the world. The pipeline length is 1076 km in Turkey, 443 km in Azerbaijan, and 249 km in Georgia.[22] Turkey's share was determined as 6.53% in the consortium in where British Petroleum, SOCAR, Eni, Chevron, and Total also took place. This project enabled Azerbaijan to take a pro-active role in world politics and allowed to adopt Western modernization facilities in the country.

Similarly, Baku-Tbilisi-Erzurum (BTE) Natural Gas Pipeline Project made a similar impact on the relations. Following the route of the BTC pipeline, this project facilitated gas exports from the Shah Deniz field. That field's operation is run by British Petroleum with 28.8% share while Turkish TPAO's is 19%, SOCAR's 16.7%, Petronas' is 15.5%, Lukoil's is 10% and NIOC's is 10%.[23] This initiative brought new energy cooperation that is the Trans-Anatolian Natural Gas Project (TANAP) contracted in 2011 and started operation in 2018. Despite

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19 Daria Isachenko, "Turkey–Russia Partnership in the War over Nagorno-Karabakh," *Berlin: Stiftung Mercator*, (2020): 2.

20 "Nagorno-Karabakh clash: Turkey backs Azeris 'to the end' against Armenia," *BBC*, 3 April 2016. https://www.bbc.com/news/world-europe-35953358.

21 Veliyev, "Turkey's role", 85.

22 "Azerbaijan Energy Profile," International Energy Agency, 2020. https://www.iea.org/reports/azerbaijan-energy-profile/energy-security.

23 "Azerbaijan increases gas export to Turkey," *Neftegaz*, 2 April 2020. https://neftegaz.ru/en/news/worldwide/539787-azerbaijan-increases-gas-export-to-turkey/

the project started with 16 billion cubic meters from the beginning, it aimed to increase the level to 32 billion cubic meters in the coming years. In this situation, Turkey receives 6 billion cubic meters, while the European share is 10 billion cubic meters. Connecting the BTE line and Trans-Adriatic Pipeline made Azerbaijan an energy hub, and this situation increased the country's reputation in the energy sector for the Western countries.[24]

Moreover, the STAR refinery that was established by Azerbaijani company SOCAR in Izmir city of Turkey is another example of the energy relationship. The total cost of the refinery is $6.3 billion, and it is capable of producing 300 thousand tons of LPG, 700 thousand tons of petroleum coke, and 200 thousand tons of sulfur.[25] Annually, the processing capacity of 10 million tons of crude oil and refined petroleum products of Turkey, with 1.6 million cubic meters of storage capacity aims to meet the total needs of 25%. This project increased the level of the Azerbaijani investment in Turkey to $18 billion.

Azerbaijan's 27.3% of natural gas exports went to Turkey in 2019.[26] Additionally, Azerbaijan exported 945.18 million cubic meters of gas to Turkey in January 2020 that is more than the previous year's amount. After acquiring Turkey's petrochemical company Petkim in 2008 for $2 billion, SOCAR's investments continued to acquire EWE Turkey Holding that included EWE Energy, Bursagaz, Kayserigaz, Millenicom, and Enervis in 2019.[27] Another step came in the Aliaga region in the city of Izmir with the project of petrochemical research and development (R&D) center in the same year.[28] The project costs $1.5 billion. In 2020, the total Turkish investments in Azerbaijan reached $20 billion.[29] Similarly, Azerbaijani investments in Turkey reached $20 billion in 2020.[30] In the same year, the trade turnover between the countries reached $4.4 billion.[31]

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24 Emil Avdaliani, "Azerbaijan Becomes Turkey's Top Gas Supplier." *Modern Diplomacy*, 8 August 2020, https://moderndiplomacy.eu/2020/08/21/azerbaijan-becomes-turkeys-top-gas-supplier.

25 Zaur Gahramanov, "The Strong Energy Bridge Between Turkey and Azerbaijan," *Turkish Policy Quarterly*, 18, no. 2, (2019): 125.

26 "Minister of Energy Parviz Shahbazov met with his Turkish counterpart," Azerbaijan Ministry of Energy, 2020. https://minenergy.gov.az/en/xeberler-arxivi/energetika-naziri-perviz-sahbazov-turkiyeli-hemkari-ile-gorusub.

27 "SOCAR to supply natural gas to Kayseri and Bursa," SOCAR, 2020. http://www.socar.com.tr/en/corporate-communication/news/2019-news/ 2019/ 01/ 30/ socar-to-supply-natural-gas-to-kayseri-and-bursa.

28 "SOCAR to establish $1.5 billion petrochemical R&D center in Turkey," *Daily Sabah*, 2019. https://www.dailysabah.com/energy/2019/04/08/socar-to-establish-15-billion-petrochemical-rd-center-in-turkey.

29 "Azerbaijani and Turkish Business World Convened at Dinner Hosted by DEIK," DEIK, 2020. https://www.deik.org.tr/press-releases-azerbaijani-and-turkish-business-worls-convened-at-dinner-hosted-by-deik

30 "Azerbaijan's investment in Turkish economy to reach $20B," *Azernews*, 2020. https://www.azernews.az/business/173624.html

31 "Turkey aims to sign agreement on free trade with Azerbaijan," *Bilaterals*, 2020. https://www.bilaterals.org/?turkey-aims-to-sign-agreement-on&lang=en.

In the aspect of transportation, the Baku-Tbilisi-Kars (BTK) Railway Project that started in 2005 and completed in 2017 made a positive impact on the relations.[32] The railway connects Central Asia and Europe through Azerbaijan, Georgia, and Turkey. The railway can carry 6.5 million tons of cargo and one million passengers with the prospect of 17 million tons of cargo by 2023.[33]

Another railway project planned to connect Azerbaijani exclave Nakhchivan to Turkey is currently under research as of 2020.[34] According to Turkish officials, this railway will facilitate new economic opportunities in the region in the Nagorno-Karabakh's post-ceasefire process.

Military Relations

The close relationship between Turkey and Azerbaijan has a notable extension in the military aspect. Since Azerbaijan suffered from the Armenian occupation in its western territories (Nagorno-Karabakh and adjacent regions) from the early 1990s, the country's priority became military modernization to secure territorial integrity.

The military relations subject has two significant perspectives; first, Turkey has always supported the cause of Azerbaijan in regards to the Armenian occupation, and second, NATO modernization course became possible with the assistance of Turkey.[35] The increasing level of military modernization and arms supplies created a balance shift in the Nagorno-Karabakh in 2020.

Military cooperation commenced as early as 1992 when two countries began to set relations in many areas. A mutual military training agreement came into effect in the same year, and this is one of the first cooperation initiatives. That period has another importance of the pro-Turkish policies of former President Abulfez Elchibey.[36] His intimate ties with Turkey enabled Azerbaijan to adopt the Turkish military assistance against national security threats. It is possible to claim that Heydar Aliyev's approach was also similar, but there was the only difference that he was seeking a balanced policy in the region. He also supported and encouraged the emergence of military relations

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32 "Baku-Tbilisi-Kars Railway," *Center for Strategic and International Studies*, 2020. https://reconnectingasia.csis.org/database/projects/baku-tbilisi-kars-railway-construction/efca2104-5465-4e13-a869-e23d96faf30b/

33 Fuad Shahbazov, "The Central Asia-Caucasus Analyst. Baku-Tbilisi-Kars Railway to Become Central Asia's Gateway to Europe," *CACI Analyst*, 2017, https:// www. cacianalyst.org/publications /analytical-articles/item/13486-baku-tbilisi-kars-railway-to-become-central-asias-gateway-to-europe.html.

34 "Turkey's infrastructure projects, investments total almost $6B in 2020," *TRT World*, 2020. https:// www. trtworld.com/ business/ turkey-s-infrastructure- projects-investments - total-almost-6b-in-2020-41399.

35 Oskanian, "Turkey's global strategy," 26.

36 Mehmet Dikkaya and Jason Strakes, "A Paradigm Shift in Turkish-Azerbaijani Relations? Result for Turkish-Armenian Reconciliation Process between 2008 and 2010," *Review of Socio-Economic Perspectives*, 2, no.1, (2017): 85.

by taking into consideration the reality that NATO modernization could bring benefit to Azerbaijan.

In the coming years, both sides signed protocols on joint activities of military personals, use of military-technical equipment, and defense industry cooperation. In 1999, an important step played a decisive role in Azerbaijan for becoming a part of international military activities. That year two sides signed an agreement on military financial assistance, and the Azerbaijani army went to Kosovo with the Kosovo Turkish Battalion Command.[37] From that year to 2008, 34 personnel of the Azerbaijani army served in Kosovo with the Turkish-led 4th Mechanized Infantry Company.[38] During that period, a total of 362 personnel served in the peacekeeping mission.

In the late 1990s, Azerbaijan gained another opportunity in Afghanistan to be part of the ISAF (International Security Support Forces) mission. This mission also related to the partnership with Turkey, and 90 servicemen served for the security mission under the Turkish battalion from 2009.[39] The number of military and medical personnel changes in time according to the necessity in the region. As of 2015, Azerbaijan increased the number of servicemen within the Resolute Support Mission (RSM). In addition to them, the Azerbaijani soldiers served in Iraq and Sudan to support the United Nations mission for peacekeeping.

All of these involvements positively affected the reputation of Azerbaijan in front of the international arena. The military relations with Turkey had reflections in other war-torn countries as an addition to the developments in the South Caucasus region.

The defense industry cooperation increased from the year 2000 when the TCG AB-34 (P-134) assault boat of the Turkish Naval Forces was delivered to Azerbaijan. In 2001, 80 military vehicles and four backhoe loaders were delivered to Nakhchivan 5th Corps Command.[40] At the same period, Turkey has made 170 million dollars of military aid to the Azerbaijani army. This period included other cooperation facilities on military history, museums, archives, and publications as well as education and technical subjects. Similarly, the parties signed another protocol on education and training cooperation in the High Military School of Azerbaijan in 2008.[41]

As an extension of the relations, Turkey-Azerbaijan High-Level Strategic Council and Agreement on Strategic Partnership and Mutual Support were

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37 Ismailzade, "Turkey-Azerbaijan," 5.

38 "Participation in the international peacekeeping operations," Azerbaijan Ministry of Defence, 2020. https://mod.gov.az/en/participation-in-international-peacekeeping-operations-027.

39 "International Military Cooperation," Azerbaijan Ministry of Defence, 2020. https://mod.gov.az/en/international-military-cooperation-025.

40 Ahmet Yüce, "Azerbaycan-Türkiye Askeri İşbirliği Faaliyetlerinin Hukuki Temeli," *Azərbaycan Ali Hərbi Məktəbi Elmi Əsərlər Məcmuəsi*, 26, no. 1, 2016.

41 "Milletlerarası Andlaşma," *Resmi Gazete*, 2009, https://www.resmigazete.gov.tr/eskiler/ 2009/02/20090206-1.htm.

established in 2010.[42] These attempts aim to facilitate a high-level partnership between the countries in addition to military cooperation. According to this initiative, Turkey and Azerbaijan assure common defense efforts against third-party attack to one of the members. It includes the military-security, military-technical, economic, and humanitarian cooperation fields.[43] Some analysts identify this as *casus foederis* by claiming both parties guarantee to fulfill obligations against security threats.[44]

As the most primary page in the strategic cooperation, the institutional attempt strengthened the military relations that brought frequent and sustainable military activities in the coming years. As a result, some military drills came into the agenda in the 2010s as bilateral and multilateral programs.[45] The prominent ones are Anatolian Phoenix, Mustafa Kemal Ataturk, TurAz Eagle, and TurAz Hawk military drills.[46]

On the side of the defense industry, both countries obtained a high-level partnership starting from the late 1990s. In recent years, Altay tank, Atak helicopter, and Anka unmanned aerial vehicle became prominent defense products which played a positive role in the relations. Particularly, the Nagorno-Karabakh War in 2020 became a scene of practical usage of the cooperation. The 44-day war allowed using the Turkish military equipment on the way to the Azerbaijani victory. In this regard, the Turkish TB2 drones and TRG-300 rocket artillery played an important role.[47] Consequently, the three-decades-long military relationship between Turkey and Azerbaijan reached a summit of achievement to regain occupied territories of Azerbaijan and to change the status quo in the region.

Turkey and Armenia Relations

Turkey and Armenia are neighbor countries that share 311 km-length borders, including Georgian and Azerbaijani tripoint from the north to the south. They both have a neighborhood with Azerbaijan, Georgia, and Iran.

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42 "Milletlerarası Andlaşma," *Resmi Gazete*, 2011, https://www.resmigazete. gov.tr/ eskiler/ 2011/ 05/20110528M1-30.htm.

43 Araz Aslanlı, "10. yılında Azerbaycan-Türkiye Stratejik Ortaklık Anlaşması ve ortak askeri tatbikatlar," *Anadolu Ajansı*, 2020, https://www.aa.com.tr/tr/analiz/10-yilinda-azerbaycan-turkiye-stratejik-ortaklik-anlasmasi-ve-ortak-askeri-tatbikatlar/1937068.

44 Vasıf Huseynov, "Azerbaijan, Turkey Hold Large-Scale Military Drills Amidst Escalation of Tensions With Armenia," *Jamestown*, 2020, https://jamestown.org/ program/ azerbaijan-turkey-hold-large-scale-military-drills-amidst-escalation-of-tensions-with-armenia.

45 Mehmet Fatih Öztarsu, "Türk Dış Politikası ve Kafkasya," in *Türk Dış Politikası*, ed. Hasan Acar (Ankara: Nobel Akademik Yayıncılık, 2020), 492.

46 "International Military Cooperation," Azerbaijan Ministry of Defence, 2020. https:// mod.gov.az / en/international-military-cooperation-025.

47 Shaan Shaikh and Wes Rumbaugh, "The Air and Missile War in Nagorno-Karabakh: Lessons for the Future of Strike and Defense," *Center for Strategic and International Studies*, 2020, https://www.csis.org/analysis/air-and-missile-war-nagorno-karabakh-lessons-future-strike-and-defense.

The two country relationship was influenced by the political and historical issues which formed the current status of bilateral relations. From the Armenian side, Turkey is a country of historical conflicts originating from the 1915 events, so-called genocide issues.[48] Additionally, Turkey's strong support to Azerbaijan about the Nagorno-Karabakh issue made negative contributions to the relations. On the other side, Turkey sees this country as an occupier in the Nagorno-Karabakh that is Azerbaijani territory. As a result, the two countries obtained a hostile relationship that directly affected the regional stability.

Even though Turkey is one of the first countries which recognized the independence of Armenia, the country has closed the borders since the Armenian occupation and military aggression pushed the limits in 1993 with the result of massacres, violation of the Azerbaijani territorial integrity and security threats to the region. As a response, Armenia struggles against Turkey in the international arena by calling this country as guilty of the so-called genocide, and engages the Armenian diaspora to create pressure over Turkey in the Western countries.

Moreover, Armenia covertly adopts policy of territorial claims from Turkey by describing the Eastern Anatolia as part of the Armenian historical area. Although it seems an unrealistic approach in the case of the modern International Relations, its official roots are available in the Armenian Declaration of Independence[49] which states that *"The Republic of Armenia stands in support of the task of achieving international recognition of the 1915 Genocide in Ottoman Turkey and Western Armenia."* This statement always shape the political discourse of the Armenian government and most of the politicians use rhetoric of irredentist purposes against Turkey.[50] In another meaning, Yerevan doesn't recognize the current borders by rejecting the arrangements of the Kars and Moscow Treaties signed in 1921.

All of the abovementioned issues stand as main determinants shaping the bilateral relations. Turkey's concerns regarding the border and historical discussions as addition to the Nagorno-Karabakh issue had become main elements in the relationship.[51] Although the status quo in the Nagorno-Karabakh changed in late 2020, Ankara waits to see intentions of Yerevan about possible improvement in the relations.

The relations started in a positive atmosphere after the independence in 1991. Turkey's recognition step brought mutual meetings and cooperation possibilities. In the period of first Armenian President, Levon Ter Petrosyan,

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48 Jim Nichol, *Armenia, Azerbaijan, and Georgia: Political Developments and Implications for U.S. Interests*, (Washington D.C.: Congressional Research Service, 2010), 14.

49 "Armenian Declaration of Independence," Government of Armenia, 1991. https://www.gov.am/en/independence.

50 Mehmet Fatih Öztarsu, "Kimlik Temelli Politikalar Bağlamında Bir Belirsizlik Örneği: Türkiye ve Ermenistan İlişkileri," *Uluslararası İlişkilerde Güncel Sorunlar*, ed. Mehmet Emin Erendor (Ankara: Nobel Akademik Yayıncılık, 2018), 11.

51 Aydin, "Turkish Policy", 43.

Turkey had invited Armenia to join Black Sea Economic Cooperation Organization as founder member[52], and also Turkey delivered humanitarian aid and energy transfer to Armenia in early 1990s.[53] 41,000 tons of wheat delivered to Armenia as a part of humanitarian aid[54]

However, this process ended with the increasing level of military aggression of Armenia in the Nagorno-Karabakh region. As a result, Turkey closed the borders with this country to support Azerbaijan. Therefore, Armenia faced economic embargo and regional isolation from major economy and energy projects.[55] Additionally, the Kars-Gyumri-Tbilisi railway line became dysfunctional with these developments.[56]

Since the mid-1990s, Armenia suffered from regional isolation while Turkey and Azerbaijan successfully implement significant projects such as BTC, BTE, BTK, and TANAP. Routes of these initiatives could use the Armenian territory instead of Georgia because of low-cost opportunity. But Yerevan couldn't be part of that option due to the hostile relations with these countries.

In the 2000s, three notable initiatives opened a new phase in bilateral relations, at least on the dialogue level. First, the establishment of the Turkish-Armenian Reconciliation Commission in 2001 aimed to facilitate civil-level meetings to discuss common issues for seeking solutions.[57] Although the Armenian side intended to engage in this dialogue process, the disapproval of the Armenian diaspora played a preventive role with the rhetoric of anti-Turkey. Second, Turkey's proposal to open history archives in 2005 for adopting a fair analysis of the common problems is another significant development. According to this initiative, the formation of the "Joint Historians Commission"[58] was rejected by Armenia with the claims of Armenian officials who said that Turkey's precondition stance is not beneficial for both sides. Third, the parties came together for a normalization process starting in 2008.

In September 2008, Turkish President Abdullah Gul had visited Yerevan to watch the World Cup Qualifier Game after the invitation of Armenian President Serzh Sargsyan.[59] Both sides found an occasion to commence a new process in the relations with the contributions of "football diplomacy." This friendly atmosphere enabled Turkey and Armenia to create a normalization effort to

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52 Valigholizadeh, et al., "An analytical study," 205.

53 "Ermenistan'a yapılan buğday yardımı," TBMM, 1993. https://www.tbmm.gov.tr/ tutanaklar/ TUTANAK/TBMM/d19/c034/b095/tbmm190340950325.pdf.

54 Cüneyt Akalın, "Türk-Ermeni ilişkilerine Türkeş'in katkısı," Teori, 2020, https:// teoridergisi.com / turk-ermeni-iliskilerine-turkesin-katkisi.

55 Cornell, *The Nagorno-Karabakh*, 70.

56 Pınar Sayan et al., "Economic cooperation in the South Caucasus and the wider region: Gained losses, lost benefits," *Caucasus Edition: Journal of Conflict Transformation*, (2016): 74.

57 Richard Giragosian, "Changing Armenia-Turkish Relations," *Friedrich Ebert Stiftung*, (2009): 2.

58 Yıldız Deveci Bozkuş, "Ermeni Tarih Ders Kitaplarında 1915 Olayları," *Tesam Akademi Dergisi*, (2015): 90.

59 Veliyev, "Turkey's role", 90.

avoid hatred and open a new white page with the assistance of the US and the European Union.[60] As a part of this process, Sargsyan visited Turkey to watch the next football game in 2009. That period has another importance of Barack Obama's tenure in the US presidency. He openly declared that the two countries need to open borders and start a new relationship. His approach received support from the Turkish and Armenian governments, and it played a confidence-building role.

After the preparation of the public, the two countries came to the table to ease the relations. As a result, Turkey and Armenia signed "Protocol on the Establishment of Diplomatic Relations" and "Protocol on the Development of Bilateral Relations" in Zurich in October 2009.[61] For ratifying approval, Turkey sent the protocols to the Grand National Assembly while Armenia was sending them to the Constitutional Court.[62] This process ended with the rejection of the Armenian side with the reasons for restrictions and preconditions issue.

Consequently, Armenia suspended the ratification process in 2010, recalled the protocols from the parliament in 2015, and identified it void in 2018. Armenia didn't become satisfied with the preconditions issue of Turkey since Yerevan officials expected Turkey to avoid side issues under the effect of Azerbaijan.[63] On the side of Turkey, the leadership effect played an influential role in the process. Turkish Prime Minister Recep Tayyip Erdogan put the Nagorno-Karabakh issue as a priority while President Gul was supporting the normalization with Armenia. Government assurances always played a decisive role to convince Azerbaijan, even before the normalization period.[64] It is possible to claim a similar argument for the Armenian side, too. President Sargsyan faced harsh criticism from the opposition parties that hold rallies against him because the Armenian political environment and diaspora were always suspicious about Turkey's intentions.[65] Eventually, Sargsyan changed his policy and recalled the protocols. It was more beneficial in regards to consolidating domestic power.

The protocols presented a substantial opportunity for Armenia to get rid of the regional isolation and economic depression by the closed borders. Insisting on the territorial hostility with Azerbaijan had a security interest dimension since both parties didn't reach a final settlement. In a nutshell, nationalist rhetoric played a dominant role and provided nothing more than before.

The Nagorno-Karabakh War in 2020 is another parameter in the relations. Turkey overtly and practically supported Azerbaijan by providing military

60 Oskanian, "Turkey's global strategy," 25.

61 "Protocol on the Establishment of the Diplomatic Relations," Turkey Ministry of Foreign Affairs, 2009. http://www.mfa.gov.tr/site_media/html/zurih-protokolleri-en.pdf.

62 Nichol, *Armenia, Azerbaijan,* 15.

63 Valigholizadeh, et al., "An analytical study," 199.

64 Ismailzade, "Turkey-Azerbaijan," 8.

65 Dennis Sammut, "Armenia – Stuck between a rock and a hard place," in *The South Caucasus Between integration and fragmentation*, (Baku: Strateji Araşdırmalar Merkezi and European Policy Centre, 2015), 48.

assistance.[66] On the other side, Armenia claimed that Turkey has sent paramilitary forces from Syria to the Caucasus.[67] This claim became one of the most frequent discussions in the international arena regarding the war. As a response, Turkey claimed that Armenia was committing crimes against humanity in the war area and violates the territorial integrity of Azerbaijan. Therefore, it is possible to argue that the war process triggered a propaganda war between Armenia and Turkey. Although Turkish President Recep Tayyip Erdogan showed intention to open borders if both parties agree on better relations, the situation presents a negative picture in the relations.[68]

Economic Relations

Due to the closed borders, the two countries haven't gained an opportunity for economic improvement. Armenia has been suffering from its isolation and can use the routes via Iran and Georgia for trade affairs. The trade interaction with Turkey is held through Georgia. As of 2020, Armenia's imports from Turkey reached $265 million, while exports reached $ 2.19 million.[69] The number was $267 million in 2007.[70] Therefore, it is possible to claim that there is no big chance in years.

On the other side, Turkey ranks fourth as an import partner after Russia, China, and Iran. The main export and import products are construction materials, oil and mineral fuels, industrial machinery, motor vehicles, precious stones and metals, textile, aluminum, iron, steel, and pharmaceuticals.

Since there are no diplomatic relations, subjects of the bilateral economic interaction are based on civil initiatives. Therefore, the Turkish-Armenian Business Development Council, established in 1997, plays a notable role in economic relations. Still, there is an expectation of mutual gain after the opening of borders.[71]

Turkey and Georgia Relations

As a Caucasus and the Black Sea country, Georgia shares borders with Turkey's northeastern territories, and both countries have coastal lines to the Black Sea. That area had been a crossroads of numerous empires throughout history, counting the Roman, Seljuk, and Ottoman Empires. This situation has

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66 Maria Tsvetkova and Olzhas Auyezov, "Analysis: Russia and Turkey keep powder dry in Nagorno-Karabakh conflict," *Reuters*, 2020, https://www.reuters.com/article/armenia-azerbaijan-allies-analysis/analysis-russia-and-turkey-keep-powder-dry-in-nagorno-karabakh-conflict-idUSKBN27P0N8.

67 Ed Butler, "The Syrian mercenaries used as 'cannon fodder' in Nagorno-Karabakh," *BBC*, 2020, https://www.bbc.com/news/stories-55238803.

68 "Turkey can open border if Armenia takes steps for peace -Erdogan," *Reuters*, 2020. https://www.reuters.com/article/armenia-azerbaijan-turkey-idUSKBN28K21I.

69 "Armenia: Trade Statistics," *Global Edge*, 2020. https://globaledge.msu. edu/ countries/ Armenia /tradestats.

70 Valigholizadeh, et al., "An analytical study," 201.

71 Giragosian, "Changing Armenia," 4.

brought a cultural togetherness for the current states which have successful neighborhood relations.

Georgia provides geopolitical significance for Turkey since the closed-borders with Armenia presented a negative role in reaching the Caucasus.[72] Additionally, the robustness of the Georgia and Azerbaijan relations strengthened the ties with Turkey. This situation made Georgia a vital partner in the region. Moreover, Georgia has experienced domestic turbulence with Abkhazia and South Ossetia from the early 1990s and hostile relations with Russia. This fact caused an indispensable collaboration with Turkey and Azerbaijan. As a result, Georgian territories facilitated the transfer of the Caspian hydrocarbon sources to the West and East-West transport projects.

Turkey has an image of the Western country model since it is a NATO ally and European Union membership candidate. These identities played a crucial role in Georgian politics in adopting a pro-Western tendency in the policy-making process.[73] Furthermore, the conflicts of Abkhazia and South Ossetia pushed Georgia to seek options for engaging the Western partnership.

Turkey is one of the first countries which recognized the independence of Georgia. Two countries established diplomatic relations in 1992 and opened embassies mutually. While Turkey has a consulate in Batumi city, Georgia established consulates in Istanbul and Trabzon.[74] Even though the first President Zviad Gamsakhurdia's period didn't bring a notable improvement in the relations, second President Eduard Shevardnadze adopted a close relationship with Turkey. He identified Turkey as a strategic partner.[75]

The two countries have three border gates that are Sarp (1988), Turkgozu (1995), and Aktash (2015). These gates are Turkey's important accession channels to the Caucasus region. On the other side, these gates are crucial to receiving benefits in the economy, transportation, and tourism projects.

In the early 2000s, Turkey adopted a balanced policy towards Georgia's problems with Adjara, Abkhazia, and South Ossetia by declaring its respect for territorial integrity. This process became a scene of a close relationship with the efforts of third President Mikheil Saakashvili. Georgia considered that Turkey became a window towards Europe.[76] In the coming years, Georgia

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72 Orkhan Gafarlı, Arevik Anapiosyan, Khatuna Chapichadze, and Mehmet Fatih Öztarsu, "The Role of Global and Regional Actors in the South Caucasus," in *The South Caucasus and Its Neighborhood: From Politics and Economics to Group Rights* ed. Phil Gamaghelyan, Sevil Huseynova, Mariam Karapetyan, and Sergey Rumyansev, (2016), 51.

73 Evanthia Balla, "Turkish and Iranian interests and policies in the South Caucasus," *The Norwegian Peacebuilding Resource Centre*, 2013.

74 "Türkiye - Gürcistan Siyasi İlişkileri," Turkey Ministry of Foreign Affairs, 2020. http:// www. Mfa . gov.tr/turkiye-gurcistan-siyasi-iliskileri.tr.mfa.

75 Aydin, "Turkish Policy", 44.

76 Bayram Balcı, "Strengths and Constraints of Turkish Policy in the South Caucasus," *Carnegie Endowment for International Peace*, 2014, https://carnegieendowment.org/ 2014/06/18/strengths-and-constraints-of-turkish-policy-in-south-caucasus-pub-55945.

became a part of a regional partnership with Turkey after the declaration of the High-Level Strategic Cooperation Council in 2016.

Economy and defense are two major subjects that form the cooperation between Turkey and Georgia. From the early 1990s, Georgia enjoyed the geopolitical shift caused by the Armenian occupation in the Nagorno-Karabakh. This situation enabled Tbilisi to grow as an effective partner for significant regional economic and energy projects. Moreover, the Armenian military presence in Nagorno-Karabakh paved the way for defense initiatives for regional security. Therefore, Georgia always adopted a partnership role in most of the economy and defense partnerships between Turkey and Azerbaijan. Until 2018, two countries signed over 76 agreements covering all spheres of cooperation, including economy and military.[77] Consequently, both sides consider the importance of all types of relations as an addition to political stability.

Economy-Energy Relations

Economic relations cover various areas, such as energy, trade, tourism, culture, and education. It is possible to claim that proximity played an enormous role in high-level economic interaction. Turkey ranks the first country within the top 10 import countries of Georgia.[78] Russia, China, the US, and Azerbaijan come after Turkey in the import list.

The trade volume reached $1.85 billion as of 2019.[79] In the same year, Turkey's export to Georgia is about $1.61 billion, and Georgia's export totaled around $202 million.[80] The trade volume was $1.42 billion in 2017. Therefore there is an increasing tendency in economic relations. The trade goods are motor vehicles, ores, oil and mineral fuels, textile, construction materials, industrial machinery, fruits, plastics, tobacco, iron, and steel. Moreover, over 2000 Turkish companies are currently operating in Georgia. On the other side, Georgia has approximately 327 companies in Turkey as of March 2020.[81]

Progress in economic relations came after the Free Trade Agreement (FTA) was signed in 2007. FTA created facilities for eliminating the tariff and non-tariff system as well as customs duties on import materials. Waiving the restrictions on trade affairs brought fair conditions and promotion of economic partnership. Additionally, the FTA document includes the note: "the Agreement Establishing an Association between Turkey and the European Economic

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77 "Relations between Georgia and the Republic of Turkey," Georgia Ministry of Foreign Affairs, 2020. https:// mfa.gov.ge/ MainNav/ForeignPolicy/ BilateralRelations/ თურქეთის-რესპუბლიკა. aspx?lang=en-US.

78 "Georgia: Trade Statistics," Global Edge, 2020. https://globaledge.msu.edu/ countries/ Georgia / tradestats.

79 "Economic Relations between Turkey and Georgia," Turkey Ministry of Foreign Affairs, 2020. http://www.mfa.gov.tr/economic-relations-between-turkey-and-georgia.en.mfa.

80 "Georgia: Trade Statistics."

81 "Economic Relations between Turkey and Georgia."

Community and the Partnership and Co-operation Agreement between the European Union and Georgia."[82] This issue shows the willingness of Georgia to approach Western countries with the assistance of Turkey.

On the other side, the countries implemented the visa-free travel opportunity from 2006, and citizens of these countries can travel without passport compulsion since 2011.[83] Using ID in mutual travel activities boosted economic interaction. According to the statistics, over than 2 million passengers passed from the Turkish-Georgian customs gates in 2018 and 2019.[84] The number reached 1.55 million passengers and 53.797 trucks in the first five months of 2020.[85] Furthermore, Georgia benefited from the BTC and BTE projects that connect the Caspian oil and gas sources to Europe. The projects approved the Tbilisi location instead of Yerevan since Armenia continued its occupation in the Nagorno-Karabakh. Therefore, Georgia adopted a corridor role for a wide range of projects in the Caucasus. Recently, TANAP strengthened its position in regards to the energy corridor and partner of Turkey and Azerbaijan. Moreover, the BTK project also made significant contributions to Georgia in the case of transport projects.

Consequently, some Turkish government agencies and institutions are currently operating in Turkey as a part of the economic relationship. For example, TIKA – Turkish Cooperation and Coordination Agency has implemented over 700 projects on charity, economy, infrastructure, and cultural areas in Georgia since 1994.[86]

Military Relations

Turkey and Georgia military relations mostly include NATO modernization activities and joint regional defense partnership. As a NATO member country, Turkey has always become a significant model for Georgia in case of Westernization attempts. This model has another importance of becoming a neighbor that implements multiple collaboration initiatives containing defense cooperation.

Georgia has three substantial security concerns: First, the instability on territorial integrity within the country due to the Abkhazia and South Ossetia conflicts. Second, the Russian aggression effect from the north. Third, the regional security concerns coming from the Nagorno-Karabakh conflict in the

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82 "Georgia-Turkey Free Trade Agreement," Asia Regional Integration Center, 2020. https://aric.adb.org/fta/georgia-turkey-free-trade-agreement.

83 "Relations between Georgia."

84 "Sarp Sınır Kapısı'ndan 4 ayda 1 milyon 663 bin kişi geçti," *Hürriyet*, 2019. https://www.hurriyet. com.tr/ekonomi/sarp-sinir-kapisindan-4-ayda-1-milyon-663-bin-kisi-gecti-41214930.

85 "Sarp'tan 5 ayda 1 milyon 55 bin 213 kişi geçti," *TRT Haber*, 2020. https:// www. trthaber.com/ haber/ekonomi/sarptan-5-ayda-1-milyon-55-bin-213-kisi-gecti-493289. html.

86 "Turkey: 20 years supporting charity projects in Georgia," *Agenda*, 2015, https:// agenda. ge/en/news/2015/1713

south. Although the last one is no longer a direct threat, there is a necessity to wait and see new developments until avoiding fundamental challenges.

The military relations started back in the mid-1990s. Both sides signed an agreement on military-technical, education, and scientific cooperation in 1996[87] and an "Agreement of Military Assistance and Cooperation" in 1999.[88] This period became a scene of the first military drills when two countries realized naval exercises in 1998. That year Turkey granted $10 million worth of financial aid.[89] In 2000, Georgia declared that Turkish soldiers under the NATO command might deploy in Vaziani and Guauta bases[90] after Russian soldiers left.[91]

In 2007, the total number of trained Georgian military personnel number reached 700, and in the same year, Turkey granted various types of military equipment worth $750.000.[92] That number became 2000, and the number of Turkish military instructors in Georgia reached 3000 in 2018.[93] One year later, the trained Georgian personnel number totaled 2200.[94] The same year, both sides reached an agreement worth $17 million for the modernization of logistics.[95]

In 2018, both countries joined the large-scale military exercise named "The Noble 2018" with 3000 military personnel of NATO member and partner countries.[96] The two countries joined other NATO-related exercises held in Georgia in 2019.[97] The other military drills are "SOF Trilateral exercise of SOF Caucasian Eagle, International Exercise Eternity", "Special Operation Forces Field Exercise Caucasian Eagle" and "Staff Computer-Assisted Trilateral Exercise Eternity 2017." These drills include the Turkey-Azerbaijan-Georgia trilateral format.

During the Nagorno-Karabakh War in 2020, Georgia has denied the Armenian claims over Turkey about paramilitary fighters issue. Head of the

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87 "Gürcistan'a askeri malzeme yardımı," *Hürriyet*, 2007. https://www.hurriyet. com.tr /dunya / gurcistana-askeri-malzeme-yardimi-6453416.

88 Selçuk Ural and İrfan Tokgöz, "Bağımsızlıktan Kadife Devrime Gürcistan Dış Politikasında Türkiye'nin Yeri (1991-2004)," *Sosyal Bilimler Enstitüsü Dergisi*, 7, (2011): 129.

89 Yelda Demirağ, "Bağımsızlıktan Kadife Devrime Türkiye-Gürcistan İlişkileri," *Uluslararası İlişkiler*, 2, no. 7, (2005): 136.

90 "Russian Military Hands Over Vaziani Base to Georgia," *Jamestown*, 2001. https:// jamestown.org/program/russian-military-hands-over-vaziani-base-to-georgia.

91 "Gürcistan'a Türk askeri yerleştirilecek," *Yenişafak*, 2000.

92 "Gürcistan'a askeri malzeme."

93 "Türkiye-Gürcistan askeri eğitim işbirliğinin," *Haberler*, 2018. https://www. haberler. com/turkiye-gurcistan-askeri-egitim-is-birliginin-20-10773833-haberi.

94 "Turkey praises cooperation with Georgia," *Anadolu Ajansı*, 2019. https:// www.aa. com.tr/en/turkey/turkey-praises-cooperation-with-georgia/1632092.

95 "Türkiye'den Gürcistan'a 17 milyon dolarlık askeri reform tahsisi," *Akşam*, 2019. https://www. aksam.com.tr/guncel/turkiyeden-gurcistana-17-milyon-dolarlik-askeri-reform-tahsisi/haber-1032779.

96 "Relations between Georgia."

97 "NATO-Georgia Exercise 2019 Kicked Off in Krtsanisi," NATO, 2019. https:// www. jftc.nato.int/ articles/nato-georgia-exercise-2019-kicked-krtsanisi.

State Security Service of Georgia Grigol Liluashvili said that the Armenian accusation of militant transfer through the Georgian territories is groundless.[98]

Problematic Issues

Turkey and Georgia show a unique type of relationship in the international arena. They follow a mutually advantageous way by avoiding potential threats that might damage the ties. However, these countries face some questionable issues which can play a harmful role in bilateral relations. These are the Caucasus Diaspora and the Ahiska Turks (Meskhetian Turks) issues.[99]

First; the Caucasus Diaspora that consists of, mostly, Abkhazian and other ethnicities is an element that shows anti-Georgian posture. Their population in Turkey has a notable amount, and this shapes the political aspect of the relations. Although Georgia and Abkhazia had a tumultuous past, Turkey extends the trade affairs with Abkhazia.[100] However, Turkey always declared its strong supports towards the Georgian territorial integrity case. This situation is the same for the Abkhaz criticisms about the Tbilisi policies. Turkey ensures the improvement of relations with Georgia and tries to persuade the diaspora groups in Turkey. Here, one can argue that Turkey adopts a mediator role between the parties.

Second; the return of the Ahiska Turks stands is another issue in the relations. The native people of the Meskheti region of southwestern Georgia are ethnic Turks, and these people faced a mass-deportation in 1944 with the Soviet Union's decision. The deportation came after the ethnic cleansing decision of the Soviet leader Joseph Stalin who became suspicious of insubstantial threats from Turkey in the neighborhood. As a result, over 150.000 Ahiska Turks were expelled to Central Asia and other parts of the Soviet Union. Georgia adopted the Repatriation Law in 2007, but it became insufficient due to the lack of satisfactory facilities.[101] Consequently, Turkey continuously demands regulation of the situation and calls for new arrangements in case of practical solutions. As of 2020, there is no satisfactory improvement in this issue.

Multiliteral Relations

The value of the Caucasus region has always become attractive for Turkish foreign policy. Since it appeared like an arena of competition among various countries after the Cold War, Turkey mostly focused on cooperation opportunities. At first glance, Russia and the Western countries tried to maximize their benefits here. Additionally, the Caucasus always remained a

98 "Georgia: Reports on Allowing Syria Fighters to Azerbaijan," *Civil.ge*, 2020. https://civil.ge/archives/373057

99 Cornell, *The Nagorno-Karabakh*, 60.

100 Gafarlı et al., "The Role of Global," 54.

101 Paul Rimple, "Georgia: Parliament considers Meskhetian Turk repatriation plan," *Refworld*, 2007, https://www.refworld.org/docid/46a4850a8.html.

crossroad of regional and international organizations such as NATO, Collective Security Treaty Organization (CSTO), Commonwealth of Independent States (CIS), European Union, and Eurasian Economic Union. Therefore, the bilateral relations with the regional countries paved the way for multilateral interaction in specific fields, mainly economy, energy, and defense.

Turkey, as a part of the Western bloc, obtained pragmatic relations with the regional countries. Even though Turkey and Armenia have not acquired a good relationship, there is always the potential to alter this status, as football diplomacy showed. Turkey's main concern was about regional security that faced threats by the Nagorno-Karabakh occupation. This regional conflict brought the absence of diplomatic relations and the presence of closed-borders. On the other side, Turkey attached importance to Georgia since Armenia became reluctant and opposite to join the regional development due to the occupation status. As Georgia appeared a bridge for beneficial projects, Turkey and Azerbaijan facilitated new kinds of collaboration topics. This process was strengthened after the Russo-Georgian War in 2008 when Georgia had to seek alternatives in the neighborhood. Therefore, Georgia assumed a harmonious partnership with these countries.

Turkey-Georgia-Azerbaijan Partnership

Since the early 1990s, Turkey and Georgia relations have improved in various areas. During this period, Georgia faced external pressure from Russia and domestic turbulence because of regional conflicts and political instability. The two countries built mutual trust after the 2000s, with the contributions of pro-Western President Mikheil Saakashvili. In this context, Armenia and Russia emerged as other factors that pushed Georgia to adopt more Western-oriented policies. First, the Armenian occupation in the Nagorno-Karabakh enabled Tbilisi to embrace the role of transferring routes of energy and economic projects. Second, Georgia also suffered from regional conflicts and the Russian invasion. This issue caused a mutual understanding between Georgia and Azerbaijan on the way to building strong cooperation. Both countries always emphasized the importance of respect for territorial integrity. Last but not least, rapprochement between European organizations and Georgia shaped this country's political preferences. Finally, Georgia has become an asset of a newly emerging trilateral format after a series of political challenges.

Turkey had actively strived on regional collaboration issues after the collapse of the Soviet Union. The country hosted various meetings and implemented policy actions towards the Caucasus countries. The establishment of the Organization of the Black Sea Economic Cooperation in 1992 in Istanbul is one of the first activities.[102] The organization declared its principles under the peace, prosperity, and stability motto. Turkey, as a founder member, had urged the regional countries to take part in the organization. Therefore, it is necessary to mention that Armenia became a partner for Turkey in that period.

[102] Nichol, *Armenia, Azerbaijan,* 14.

The organization has set sub-committees such as The Parliamentary Assembly of the Black Sea Economic Cooperation, The Black Sea Trade and Development Bank, and The Black Sea Economic Cooperation Organization Business Council to consolidate the relations in the regional scope.

In the energy field, the three countries built a significant relationship with the implementation of BTC, BTE, and TANAP. Since Armenia's occupier status created trouble for regional security, Tbilisi had gained an occasion to replace Yerevan's possible participation in the projects. Although the way through Tbilisi was costly, it became the only option for the projects. As a result, the country enabled the connection of the South Caucasus Pipeline and Trans-Adriatic Pipeline. Furthermore, BTK Railway Projects has reinforced the position of Georgia.

Consequently, the first stage of the regional cooperation consists of mutual economic gain to maximize benefits by using available conditions. The fulfillment of such a partnership faces obstructions from infinite political developments. For example, the unpredictable consequences of the regional conflicts and shifting relationships among the neighbors always negatively influenced the partnership potentials. Especially, the Armenian-Azerbaijani hostility and the Russian-Georgian relations played a crucial role to shape geopolitics since the 1990s.

Defense Partnership

The frozen conflict provides a risk of conflict recurrence. This security threat urged Turkey to propose Caucasus Pact in the late 1990s to gather all regional countries to seek solution alternatives to avoid the risk of conflict. Even though the parties couldn't achieve the prospect of collective action, Turkey had reiterated the proposal of the Caucasus Stability and Cooperation Platform in 2008 after the war in Georgia.[103] This model had contemplated a 3+2 formula in which Azerbaijan, Armenia, and Georgia take part along with Turkey and Russia for a joint initiative to stop continuing disputes. Consequently, the countries became unsuccessful in establishing such a platform or pact due to a lack of trust and confidence.

The Caucasus Meeting which was formed in Trabzon city in 2002, is the earliest initiative to build a multilateral cooperation format. The ongoing cooperation on energy continued in other economic areas, but the parties didn't establish an institutional approach. Therefore, delegations met in another meeting ten years later in Trabzon city to create a joint framework of regional partnership and adaptation to NATO's Peace for Partnership program.[104] This step was followed by the Tbilisi talks in 2014.[105] According to the meeting results, the parties agreed on integration to activities of regional and

[103] Balla, "Turkish and Iranian."
[104] Veliyev, "Turkey's role", 88.
[105] Gafarlı et al., "The Role of Global," 52.

international organizations. Additionally, regional security concerns and territorial integrity became the main issues in solving regional disputes.

The risk of war recurrence forced the parties to implement a defense partnership by inviting Georgia to the existing military cooperation between Turkey and Azerbaijan. It was a notable step for Georgia since the country always announced its policy tendency to the NATO modernization programs. Consequently, the parties held meetings on defense cooperation starting from 2014. This step brought the 2020-2022 Action Plan in which Turkey ensured to provide military assistance to the members.

Conclusion

The Caucasus region has always been an engaging area for the regional and global powers due to its strategic location. Turkey has formed a foreign policy format towards this region with the aim of mutual gain. As a NATO member and European Union candidate country, Turkey's approaches mostly brought pro-Western motivations regarding economic, energy, and defense cooperation.

Azerbaijan and Georgia became significant partners with their cultural and geographic importance, while Armenia remained the belligerent party claiming territorial gain from Azerbaijan. As a result, Turkey's policy-making process excluded this country from huge projects. This factor, directly and indirectly, contributed to the emergence of Turkey and Georgia relations but harmed a unique regional policy from Turkey.

The region is a crossroad of various international and regional organizations in which Turkey, Georgia, Armenia, and Azerbaijan take part. NATO, the European Union, CIS, CSTO, and Eurasian Economic Union play a decisive role in shaping the political agenda of the Caucasus countries. Therefore, Turkey can assist Georgia and Azerbaijan to adopt pro-Western initiatives that appear as a concern for Russia. This situation makes both parties to encounter a conflict of interest and mutual benefits. Since they have different projections of regional influence, this might create disputes in the future. In doing so, active policy-making process made Turkey a model for the region from the 1990s.

Consequently, energy and economy-based cooperation allowed Turkey to lead a new type of partnership initiatives. Achievements in the bilateral relationship allowed Turkey, Georgia, and Azerbaijan to form multilateral relations after the 2010s. Prospects of problem-solving, mutual benefits, and avoiding security threats might enlarge the scope. However, there is always a risk of negative factors from internal and external disputes in the region. Therefore, Turkey has to follow the current form of the relations and try to solve the disagreements and disputes. Regionalist policy might appear after the establishment of balance between conflict and cooperation.

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The Caucasus States' Relations with U.S.A (1991-2020)

Emirhan KAYA*

Introduction

The South Caucasus, comprising the three Caucasian states, is described as the most turmoiled region of the former Soviet Union. The three republics, as small post-Soviet states with weak military capacities, have been open to the influence of external powers since they gained independence following the breakup of the Soviet Union. Initially, the eruption of ethnic conflicts throughout the region delayed the post-Soviet transition of the South Caucasus states. The three major conflicts in Nagorno-Karabakh, Abkhazia and South Ossetia also prepare the ground for outside intervention in the Caucasus. Therefore, the prospect of renewed armed conflict is regarded as a destabilizing effect for the region. Additionally, as the neighbors of Russia's volatile North Caucasus, these newly independent states are closely monitored by Russia. While Russia claims the region as its exclusive sphere of interest, the U.S. aims to limit Russian and Iranian influence. The rivalry between Euro-Atlantic institutions and Russian-led organizations reflects the conflicting interests of the major powers. Although it was commonly recognized that the U.S. did not have vital interests in the region, the U.S. administrations gave priority to several issues such as energy, security or democracy in certain periods.

This chapter is organized in two main parts. In the first part, the U.S. policy toward the region in the 1990s will be introduced as a background to later periods and current relations. Following the first part, the Caucasus states' relations with the U.S. from the 2000s onwards will be examined. The three Caucasian states will be analyzed individually since the U.S. has not developed a coherent policy toward the region. Likewise, it is considered that the Caucasus states have different foreign policy orientations. It should be noted that the September 11 attacks, Russia-Georgia war of 2008, and Russian annexation of Crimea are the key turning points of U.S. relations with the region.

The 1990s: First Steps Toward the Region

With the easing of ideological and political restraints of the Soviet era, the national revival of the Gorbachev period had brought the autonomous regions and ethnic groups to the scene in the Caucasus. Initially, the conflict between Armenia and Azerbaijan broke out in the late 1980s. Besides, conflicts in Abkhazia and South Ossetia as well as Russia's North Caucasus provinces were

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sources of insecurity for the region.[1] The U.S., with no historical links and established relations with the Caucasus, was reluctant to strategically engage in the region until the mid-1990s. Accordingly, it was content with the leading role assumed by Russia in conflict management during this first phase of its policy toward the region.[2] Although the top priority of the U.S. was to stop the fighting in order to provide stability, it avoided direct military involvement in the region since its immediate interests did not warrant such a decision. It should also be noted that the U.S. policy makers were preoccupied with the crises of Yugoslavia, Somalia and Haiti at that time.[3] In that regard, the U.S. aimed a peaceful transition requiring the construction of market economies and promotion of democracy.[4] From the viewpoint of the Caucasus states, the U.S. and the Western European states were relevant actors of the regional conflicts and a source of economic investment and aid.[5] Between FY1992 and FY1999, Armenia and Georgia were determined to have the highest per capita share of U.S. foreign assistance among the post-Soviet states. U.S. foreign assistance budgeted in that period for Armenia, Georgia and Azerbaijan was 1 billion, 733 million and 198 million $ respectively.[6]

The armed conflicts in the South Caucasus were "frozen" towards the middle of the 1990s. Firstly, the defeat of the Georgian army by Abkhaz separatists forced the Georgian President Eduard Shevardnadze to make the October 1993 deal with Russia. Although the UN Observer Mission in Georgia (UNOMIG) was established in August 1993, the U.S. avoided sending international peacekeeping force to Georgia.[7] As of 1 October 2005, the U.S. provided 2 of 121 military observers.[8] On the other hand, the CIS Peacekeeping Force created as a result of the Moscow Agreement of May 1994 included the already deployed

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1 Eugene Rumer, Richard Sokolsky and Paul Stronski, "U.S. Policy Toward the South Caucasus: Take Three", *Carnegie Endowment for International Peace*, Washington, May 2017, pp.7-9.

2 George Khelasvili and S. Nail Macfarlane, "The Evolution of US Policy towards the South Caucasus", *Uluslararası İlişkiler*, Volume 7, No 26, 2010, pp.111-112.

3 Eugene Rumer, Richard Sokolsky and Paul Stronski, ibid., p.11.

4 James Nixey, "The South Caucasus: Drama on Three Stages", ed. Robin Niblett, *America and a Changed World: A Question of Leadership*, London: Wiley-Blackwell, 2010, p.126.

5 Licinia Simao, "The South Caucasus and the West: From Hegemony to Contestation", Ed. Galina M. Yemelianova and Laurence Broers, *Routledge Handbook of the Caucasus*, Oxon: Routledge, 2020.

6 Cory Welt, "The United States, the South Caucasus, and Euro-Atlantic Integration", (prepared for publication in *The South Caucasus: Security, Energy and Europeanisation*, eds. Meliha Altunışık and Oktay Tanrısever), July 2015, https://home.gwu.edu/~cwelt/US_ South%20Caucasus_Euro-Atlantic.pdf, p. 4, (accessed on December 24, 2020).

7 Gerard Toal, *Near Abroad: Putin, the West and the Contest over Ukraine and the Caucasus*, New York: Oxford University Press, 2017, p.101.

8 "Report of the Secretary-General on the Situation in Abkhazia, Georgia", *United Nations Security Council*, 19 0ctober 2005, https://www.securitycouncilreport.org/ atf/ cf/% 7B65BFCF9B-6D27-4E9C-8CD3-CF6E4FF96FF9%7D/Georgia%20S2005657.pdf, (accessed on November 11, 2020).

Russian troops that numbered over 1000.[9] Shortly after the Georgian deal with Russia, the ceasefire reached in May 1994 froze the conflicts between Armenia and Azerbaijan. In the meantime, Georgia, like Armenia and Azerbaijan, joined the Commonwealth of Independent States (CIS) in December 1993. While the Caucasus states were brought together under a Moscow-dominated organization, on the other hand, the bipartisan view triumphed in the U.S. political arena of the 1990s was that Russia had to be contained through NATO and EU enlargements.[10] Consequently, Georgia joined the NATO Partnership for Peace Program in 1994 and then left the Collective Security Treaty (CST), together with Azerbaijan and Uzbekistan in 1999. Their withdrawal was the result of their incremental shift to the U.S.[11] On the other hand, Georgia was one of the six remaining members and has never left the organization. As indicated in table 1, the Caucasus states thus started to pursue distinct patterns of engagement.

Table 1: The Caucasus States' Institutional Engagement with Western and Russian-led Organizations

	Georgia	**Azerbaijan**	**Armenia**
Commonwealth of Independent	1993	1993	1992
NATO Partnership for Peace	1994	1994	1994
Collective Security Treaty	1994 (w.	1994 (w.1999)	1994
NATO Planning and Review	1999	1997	2002
NATO Partnership Action Plan	2004	2005	2005
GUAM Organization for Democracy and Economic Development	2006	2006	-
EU Eastern Partnership Program	2009	2009	2009
Eurasian Economic Union	-	-	2015
EU Association Agreement	2016	-	-

9 "2007 Annual Review of Global Peace Operations: Abkhazia-Georgia Mission Notes", Global Peace Operations Review, https://peaceoperationsreview.org/wp-content/uploads/2014/10/2007 _ abz_geor_mission_notes.pdf, p. 98, (accessed on October 11, 2020).

10 Licinia Simao, ibid.

11 Faisal Javaid, "Collective Security Treaty Organization (CSTO) and Central Asian Region: Opportunities and Challenges", *European Academic Research*, Vol. IV, Issue 12, March 2017, pp. 10616-10617.

In the face of these developments, the U.S. sought to avoid confrontation with Russia in the Caucasus and highlighted normative foreign policy goals for the region. Within the context of the normative priorities, it was taken into account that in 1992, while Armenia and Azerbaijan were defined as "partly free" states, Georgia was categorized as a "not free state" by Freedom House.[12] Accordingly, the initial principles of U.S. policy toward the South Caucasus states were support for their sovereignty, independence, democratization and integration in the Western structures. Furthermore, U.S. emphasis for these principles was also attributed to a significant development in the strategic environment of the region that Russia began to reassert its power in the Caucasus in the late 1990s.[13] Therefore, NATO membership was not a realistic option for the Caucasus states. In September 1995, NATO had already declared that resolution of ethnic or external territorial disputes "would be a factor in determining whether to invite a state to join the Alliance."[14]

It should also be noted that the factor precluding "a significant U.S. engagement" in the region was the perception of the U.S. policy makers about the absence of vital security interests. On the other hand, the West saw the region as "a strategically important crossroads for hydrocarbons" in the 1990s and early 2000s. The significant oil reserves discovered in the region were thought to be beneficial in strengthening the sovereignty of these states and in increasing global energy security as an alternative to Russian energy.[15] Once the major conflicts of the South Caucasus were mitigated, the ensuing aim of the U.S. and the international community was to promote economic growth driven by oil.[16] In accordance with the growing importance of the energy issues for the U.S. policy, Ambassador Richard Morningstar was appointed to the newly-created position of "the Secretary of State for Caspian Basin Energy Diplomacy" in July 1998.[17]

The development of Caspian basin energy resources came to the fore for commercial reasons. In that context, the U.S. encouraged the development of energy production and transportation capacity in the Caspian basin. The U.S.,

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12 Freedom in the World: Political Rights & Civil Liberties 1991-1992, *Freedom House*, https://freedomhouse.org/sites/default/files/2020-02/Freedom_in_the_World_1991-1992_complete_book.pdf, (accessed on November 6, 2020).

13 Brenda Shaffer, "Foreign Policies of the States of the Caucasus: Evolution in the Post-Soviet Period", *Uluslararası İlişkiler*, Volume 7, No 26, 2010, p.54.

14 "Study on NATO Enlargement", *North Atlantic Treaty Organization*, 3 September 1995, https://www.nato.int/cps/en/natohq/official_texts_24733.htm, (accessed on December 25, 2020).

15 Fiona Hill, Kemal Kirişçi and Andrew Moffatt, *Retracing the Caucasian Circle: Considerations and Constraints for U.S., EU, and Turkish Engagement in the South Caucasus*, Center on the United States and Europe at Brookings, Turkey Project Policy Paper, Number 6, 2015, p.1.

16 Eugene Rumer, Richard Sokolsky and Paul Stronski, ibid., p.11.

17 "U.S. Caspian Energy Diplomacy: Promoting Sovereignty and Prosperity", *National Archives*, https://clintonwhitehouse5.archives.gov/textonly/WH/EOP/NSC/html/nsc-14.html, (accessed on November 10, 2020).

while favoring a western corridor of pipelines across friendly states, attempted to prevent any major north-south pipeline projects that would strengthen the dominant position of Russia or give Iran the upper hand.[18] Besides, the Caspian oil boom would serve the interests of the American oil companies.[19] For instance, the American oil companies of Amoco, Unocal, Exxon and Pennzoil were included in the AIOC consortium which was formed in September 1994 and called "the contract of the century."[20] With a share of 43,8% held by American companies in this consortium, the U.S. was able to exclude Iran from Azerbaijan oil development.[21] The U.S. has thus maintained its "pole position" among the international supporters of Azeri oil contracts.[22] Furthermore, the 870 km long oil pipeline from Baku to the Georgian Black Sea port of Supsa was opened in 1999. It was the first pipeline from Caspian Sea to bypass Russia.[23] The U.S. then led the negotiations that set the stage for the construction of the Baku-Tbilisi-Ceyhan (BTC) oil pipeline designed to transport Azerbaijani oil to the Mediterranean.[24] The BTC oil pipeline became operational in 2006.

18 Gerard Toal, ibid., p.104.

19 Svante Cornell, "US Engagement in the Caucasus: Changing Gears", *Helsinki Monitor*, Vol. 16, Issue 2, 2005, pp.111-112.

20 "Oil Section", *Azerbaijan International*, https://www.azer.com/aiweb/categories /topics / Oil/oil .html, (accessed on November 1, 2020).

21 Younkyoo Kim and Gu-Ho Eom, "The Geopolitics of Caspian Oil: Rivalries of the US, Russia, and Turkey in the South Caucasus", *Global Economic Review*, Volume 37, Issue 1, 2008, p.98.

22 Terry, Adams, "Oil and Geopolitical Strategy in the Caucasus", *Asian Affairs*, Vol. 30, No. 1, 1999, p.17.

23 Cory Welt, ibid., p.7.

24 Fiona Hill, Kemal Kirişçi and Andrew Moffatt, ibid., p.10.

Table 2: U.S. Imports of Crude Oil and Petroleum Products from Azerbaijan and Georgia (Thousand Barrels)

Year	Azerbaijan	Georgia	Total U.S. Imports	Year	Azerbaijan	Georgia	Total U.S. Imports
1998	4.232	-	3.908.446	**2009**	27.516	-	4.267.110
1999	-	1.129	3.961.074	**2010**	20.216	233	4.304.533
2000	-	268	4.194.096	**2011**	13.052	-	4.174.210
2001	-	498	4.333.038	**2012**	8.745	-	3.878.852
2002	7	158	4.208.538	**2013**	10.708	63	3.598.454
2003	-	1322	4.476.501	**2014**	8.881	1269	3.372.904
2004	484	19	4.811.104	**2015**	5.539	437	3.448.734
2005	563	722	5.005.541	**2016**	3.715	-	3.680.227
2006	10.091	-	5.003.082	**2017**	3.084	295	3.702.640
2007	22.809	669	4.915.957	**2018**	5.286	-	3.629.042
2008	27.152	92	4.726.994				

Source: U.S. Energy Information Administration, (https://www.eia.gov/)

Despite U.S. efforts for the development of energy production and transportation capacity in the region, it should also be underlined that the share of the South Caucasus states in U.S. energy imports is not considerable. As indicated in table 2, Azerbaijan and Georgia together do not even account for 1% of total U.S. imports of crude oil and petroleum products in any given year between 1998 and 2018. Besides, any country from the South Caucasus or Central Asia is not classified a natural gas exporter to the U.S. On the other hand, Azerbaijan supplies around 5% of the EU's oil imports.[25] However, it is emphasized that Caspian energy is inadequate for reducing Europe's dependence on Russian energy exports significantly.[26] This finding was reflected in the statistics that in 2019, Russia had a share of 44,7% in EU's natural gas imports and 28% in petroleum oil imports as the largest supplier of both energy products. Only Kazakhstan, as a Caspian littoral state, was among major crude oil suppliers to the EU with a share of 8,3% in 2019.[27] In that

[25] "Facts and Figures about EU-Azerbaijan Relations", *European Neighbourhood Policy Partners*, 10 June 2020, https:// www. euneighbours. eu/ sites/ default/ files/ publications/ 2020- 06/ EAP %20 FACTSHEET_ Azerbaijan_EN.pdf, (accessed on November 7, 2020).

[26] Eugene Rumer, Richard Sokolsky and Paul Stronski, ibid., p.24.

[27] "EU Imports of Energy Products-Recent Developments", *European Commission*, https://ec. europa.eu/ eurostat/ statistics-explained/index.php?title=EU_imports_of_

context, it should be pointed out that the South Caucasus is also of great importance as part of the energy transport corridor from Central Asia to Europe. The oil and gas pipelines on this corridor are expected to enhance both the global energy security and the regional economic development.

The 2000s and Beyond

Changing priorities in U.S. foreign policy following the September 11 attacks led to a new approach beyond the region's energy potential. In that period, the South Caucasus became both a potential launch pad for U.S. armed forces and a source of radicalized Islam since combatants from Azerbaijan and Georgia joined the ranks of terrorist groups in the Middle East.[28] The logistics of the war in Afghanistan, the international coalition against terrorism, and the creation of the "coalition of the willing" supporting the Iraq invasion emerged as the urgent needs of U.S. policy. All the South Caucasus states contributed troops to these coalitions in Afghanistan and Iraq.[29] Their troops also had been serving in the NATO Kosovo Force (KFOR). Until the recognition of Kosovo in 2008, Georgia and Azerbaijan sent over 180 and 30 troops respectively. They did not recognize Kosovo's declaration of independence and ultimately withdrew their peacekeepers in 2008. As for Armenia, it began to send troops to Kosovo in 2004 and the number of Armenian troops reached 80 at most.[30] Furthermore, the September 11 attacks and the ensuing Afghanistan intervention brought the strategic location of Azerbaijan to the fore. Azerbaijan provided the logistical support that NATO needed by opening its airspace and airfields.[31]

In addition to the security issues, the U.S. interest in the energy development in the Caucasus continued until the end of the first decade of the 21st century. In the period of 2003-2008 when the world oil prices were high, the Caucasus was a focal point of international interest. Various energy export projects from the Caspian region were economically feasible in that respect.[32] The U.S. supported the NABUCCO gas pipeline for which an intergovernmental accord was signed on July 13, 2009. It was the first component of the East-West energy corridor designed to transport Caspian and Iraqi gas to Europe.[33] However, as the importance of Caspian energy for the U.S. diminished, its energy and security interests in Azerbaijan declined. Furthermore, the Russia-Georgia war of August 2008 deteriorated U.S.-Russian relations significantly. Russia's

energy _ products_-_recent _developments&oldid =490725# Main_ suppliers_ of_ natural_gas_and_petroleum_oils_to_the_EU, (accessed on October 10, 2020).

28 James Nixey, ibid., p.126.

29 Eugene Rumer, Richard Sokolsky and Paul Stronski, ibid., pp.15-16.

30 Cory Welt, ibid., p.6.

31 Rovshan Ibrahimov, U.S.-Azerbaijan Relations: A View from Baku, Rethink Institute, Rethink Paper 17, Washington, October 2014, p.10.

32 Brenda Shaffer, ibid., p.55.

33 Bülent Aras and Emre İşeri, "The Nabucco Natural Gas Pipeline: From Opera to Reality", *SETA Policy Brief*, Ankara, 2009, p.3.

strategic activism and its increasing assertion caused the U.S. to develop a more coherent approach toward the South Caucasus.[34]

Georgia

Georgia's pro-Western stance and pursuit of NATO membership makes the country unique for the U.S. in the post-Soviet space. From the mid-1990s, Georgian President Eduard Shevardnadze (1995-2003), who was a former Soviet foreign minister, had formed a strong working relationship with U.S. Secretary of State James Baker.[35] The ruling U.S. elite also showed strong respect for and confidence in Shevardnadze personally.[36] However, he was unable to adopt a pro-Western foreign policy for fear of a possible Russian backlash.[37] The next Georgian President, Mikheil Saakashvili (2004-2007, 2008-2013), also established personal and friendly relations with the U.S. administration. He was nominated for the Nobel Prize by U.S. Senators John McCain and Hillary Clinton in 2005.[38] On the other hand, the initial business-minded relations between Saakashvili and Russian President Medvedev deteriorated with time.[39] Although Shevardnadze refrained from provoking Moscow, the efforts of Saakashvili to align Georgia with the U.S. were evident.[40]

In the early 2000s, Georgia had already been concerned about Russia's war in Chechnya and a possible Russian anti-terrorist military operation in its territory. Although Georgia had denied the presence of Chechen militants in this region for over two years,[41] the Chechen fighters that sought refuge in Georgia's Pankisi Gorge prompted Russia to cross into Georgia.[42] In August 2002, Russia launched airstrikes into Pankisi Gorge in spite of Georgian deployments to the area in order to send the guerillas away. The U.S. condemned Russian airstrikes and responded swiftly to the Russian warnings that it might exercise its right to

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34 George Khelasvili and S. Nail Macfarlane, ibid., p.106.

35 Gerard Toal, ibid., p.100.

36 Archil Gegeshidze, "Contemporary Georgian-American Relations: Key Features of the Evolution", *Georgian Foundation for Strategic and International Studies*, Expert Opinion 74, 2017, p.3.

37 Tamta Utiashvili, "Why is a Small State like Georgia Important for the USA, the EU and Russia?", *E-International Relations*, June 4, 2014, https://www.e-ir.info/pdf/50048, (accessed on December 31, 2020), p6.

38 Archil Gegeshidze, ibid., p.4.

39 Laetitia Spetschinsky and Irina V. Bolgova, "Post-Soviet or Post-Colonial? The Relations Between Russia and Georgia after 1991", *European Review of International Studies*, Vol. 1, No. 3, Winter 2014, p.122.

40 Brenda Shaffer, ibid., p.60.

41 Cory Welt, ibid., p.5.

42 Michael Cecire, "How Extreme are the Extremists? Pankisi Gorge as a Case Study", *Foreign Policy Research Institute E-Notes*, July 2015, https://www.fpri.org/ article/ 2015/ 07/how-extreme-are-the-extremists-pankisi-gorge-as-a-case-study/, (accessed on November 12, 2020).

self-defense.[43] Meanwhile, in March 2002, President George W. Bush declared the second stage of the war on terror involving the extension of its military assistance to the Philippines, Yemen and Georgia in their struggle against terrorist organizations.[44] Afterwards, the U.S. started the Georgia Train and Equip Program (GTEP) of 64 million dollars that lasted until 2004. The U.S. army provided training for roughly 2000 soldiers, a few police troops and border guards through this program. It was followed by Sustainment and Stability Operations Program (SSOP) launched in 2005 to support the U.S.-led operations in Iraq.[45] In return for the U.S. aid, Georgia deployed over 150 soldiers to Tikrit in August 2003.[46] Georgian military personnel grew to over 2000 on 15 July 2007 and upon the outbreak of the war with Russia, the Georgian forces withdrew from Iraq on 10 August 2008.[47] Before the withdrawal, Georgia had had the third largest number of troops after the U.S. and the United Kingdom. Georgia also became the largest non-NATO contributor to the International Security Assistance Force (ISAF) in Afghanistan with approximately 1560 troops.[48] However, it should be noted that the U.S. avoided providing military-related aid not to contribute to the escalation of local ethnic conflicts in Georgia.[49]

Another significant development for Georgian politics was the peaceful Rose Revolution that began in 2003. Initially, the contrast between the results reported by the official electoral commission and the non-governmental organization called "Fair Elections" was exposed following the November 2 elections. The observers from the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE) also confirmed the violation of international election standards.[50] Afterwards thousands of protesters marched in the streets of Tbilisi to demand fair elections during the Rose Revolution of November 2003. It was regarded as the first breakthrough of American democracy-promotion in the post-Soviet space outside of the Baltic states.[51] In sum, the color revolutions

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43 "Georgia's Pankisi Gorge: Russian Concerns and U.S. Interests", *CRS Report for Congress*, 6 March 2003, https://www.everycrsreport.com/files/20030306 _RS21319_ bb7 cf52b928cc1e18ac 27876f0e2f43d71b8dc5e.pdf, p. 2, (accessed on December 16, 2020).

44 Kumar Ramakrishna, "911, American Praetorian Unilateralism and the Impact on State-Society Relations in Southeast Asia", *Institute of Defence and Strategic Studies*, Singapore, June 2002, p. 1.

45 Jim Nichol, "Armenia, Azerbaijan, and Georgia: Political Developments and Implications for U.S. Interests", *Congressional Research Service*, 21 June 2013, p.30.

46 Gerard Toal, ibid., p.111.

47 Stephen A. Carney, *Allied Participation in Operation Iraqi Freedom*, Washington, D.C.: United States Army Center of Military History, 2011, pp.63-64.

48 Jim Nichol, "Georgia [Republic]: Recent Developments and U.S. Interests", *Congressional Research Service*, 2 April 2014, pp.5-6.

49 James Nixey, ibid., p.127.

50 Giga Chikhladze and Irakli Chikhladze, "The Rose Revolution: A Chronicle", ed. Zurab Karumidze and James V. Wertsch, *Enough!: The Rose Revolution in the Republic of Georgia 2003*, New York: Nova Science Publishers, 2005, p.3.

51 Lincoln A. Mitchell, "Democracy in Georgia since the Rose Revolution", *Orbis*, Volume 50, Issue 4, 2006, p.670.

in Georgia and Ukraine paved the way for closing relations for the EU and the USA. When President George W. Bush visited Georgia on 10 May 2005, he emphasized that the U.S. encouraged Georgia's participation in the European institutions and closer cooperation with the NATO.[52]

Although the Rose Revolution raised hopes for the completion of democratic transition in Georgia, pessimism began to spread again after a few years.[53] In 2004, the Georgian parliament took steps to strengthen executive presidential power. As a result, 80.000 state employees were fired and the government started to put pressure on the media and businessmen. In spite of the growing authoritarianism of Saakashvili during the post-revolutionary period, the Georgian government enjoyed "an exceptional level of support" from the U.S.[54] In the face of the Georgian government forces' violent dispersal of largely peaceful protestors in November 2007, the U.S. and EU were unwilling to openly criticize Saakashvili.[55] Moreover, in September 2005, the U.S. decided to allocate 295 million dollars to Georgia through the Millennium Challenge Corporation (MCC) over a five-year period. The U.S. financial assistance aimed to reconstruct regional infrastructure and promote private sector development.[56] In July 2013, Georgia and the MCC signed a compact of 140 million dollars for a second five-year. The MCC also signed a compact with Armenia that came into effect in September 2006. However, Armenia's problems with democratization jeopardized the funding process and since then, Armenia has not satisfied the necessary conditions for a new compact.[57]

At the Bucharest Summit in March 2008, NATO promised Georgia and Ukraine eventual membership in spite of Russian warnings about its "red lines" and opposition from some European allies led by Germany and France. However, the U.S. had a higher level of enthusiasm for the involvement of Georgia and Ukraine whose political elites have actively pursued membership in the organization.[58] The salient claim about U.S.-Georgian relations was that Georgia had "become more pro-American in the previous five years than any

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52 "Text: Bush's Speech in Georgia", *BBC News*, 10 May 2005, http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/ hi/ europe/ 4534267.stm (accessed on October 29, 2020).

53 Christian Timm, "From Corruption to Rotation: Politics in Georgia Before and After the Rose Revolution", ed. Susan Stewart, Margarate Klein, Andrea Schmitz and Hans-Henning Schröder, *Presidents, Oligarchs and Bureaucrats: Forms of Rule in the Post-Soviet Space*, Farnham: Ashgate, 2012.

54 Gerard Toal, ibid., pp.117-118.

55 "Crossing the Line: Georgia's Violent Dispersal of Protestors and Raid on Imedi Television", *Human Rights Watch*, 19 December 2007, https://www.hrw.org/ report/2007/12/19/crossing-line/georgias-violent-dispersal-protestors-and-raid-imedi-television, (accessed on January 5, 2021).

56 "U.S. Assistance to Georgia-Fiscal Year 2006", *Bureau of European and Eurasian Affairs*, 12 May 2006, https://2001-2009.state.gov/p/eur/rls/fs/66198.htm (accessed on October 29, 2020).

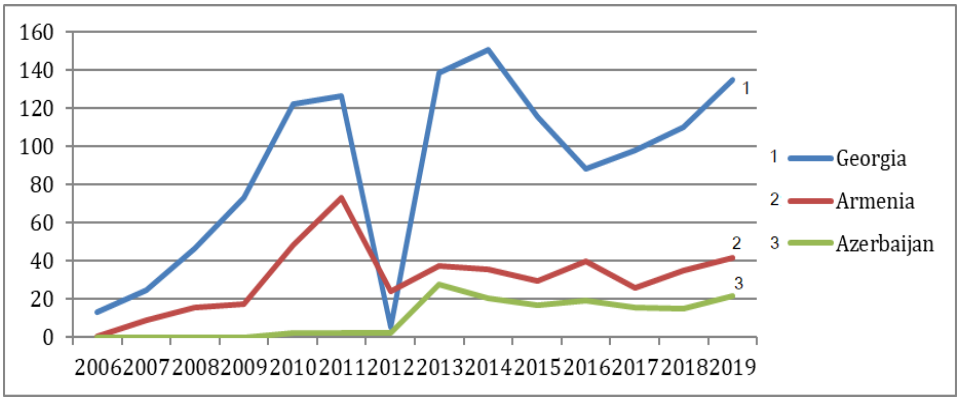
57 Jim Nichol, ibid., pp.43-44.

58 Dusica Lazarevic, "NATO Enlargement to Ukraine and Georgia: Old Wine in New Bottles?", *Connections*, Volume 9, No.1, Winter 2009, pp.64-65.

other country in the world."[59] Russia eventually took a military action against Georgia in August 2008 and the brief war marked a turning point in U.S. foreign policy toward the region. The U.S. then focused on managing the status quo.[60] The inability of the West to defend Georgia weakened the credibility of Western support to the Caucasus states.[61] The war in 2008 stopped the expansion of Western institutions into the region and worried Georgia's neighbors about Russian intentions.[62] Following the departure of the UNOMIG and OSCE mission from Georgia in 2009, the EU Monitoring Mission (EUMM), established on 15 September 2008, remained as the only international peace mission that was officially mandated.[63] With regard to the Euro-Atlantic integration of the Caucasus states, the 2008 war led to a less NATO-oriented approach but a greater emphasis on the role of the EU. In January 2009, the U.S. signed the Charter on Strategic Partnership with Georgia and avoided providing lethal military assistance.[64] As indicated in table 3, there was a remarkable increase in U.S. finding spent for Georgia between 2012 and 2014. It was also a response to the perception that it assented to the Russian dominance in the South Caucasus.[65] Thus, the military cooperation between the two states continued following the Russian invasion. However, it was observed that any defense assistance program would not make it possible for Georgia to defend itself against Russia or to take back South Ossetia or Abkhazia.[66] Within the framework of cooperation between U.S. and Georgia on defense and security, the sale of Javelin anti-tank missiles to Georgia has been a significant topic recently. In January 2018, Georgia began to receive Javelin anti-tank systems at a cost of 75 million $ and it was reported that the U.S. would continue the production of new missiles for several countries including Georgia.[67]

59 James Nixey, ibid., p.127.
60 Eugene Rumer, Richard Sokolsky and Paul Stronski, ibid., pp.18-19.
61 Licinia Simao, ibid.
62 Eugene Rumer, Richard Sokolsky and Paul Stronski, ibid., p.6.
63 Nana Macharashvili, Ekaterine Basilaia and Nikoloz Samkharade, Assessing the EU's Conflict Prevention and Peacebuilding Interventions in Georgia, Ivane Javakhishvili Tbilisi State University, WOSCAP, Tbilisi 2017, s.50.
64 Cory Welt, ibid., pp.10-11.
65 Jim Nichol, ibid., p.7.
66 Steven Pifer, interview by Bernard Gwertzman, "Delivering Tough Love to Ukraine, Georgia", July 23, 2009, *Council on Foreign Relations*, https://www.cfr.org/interview/delivering-tough-love-ukraine-georgia, (accessed on December 29, 2020).
67 Tea Mariamidze, "Georgia to Get Javelin Missiles from US", *Georgia Today*, 2 March 2020, http://georgiatoday.ge/news/19702/Georgia-to-Get-Javelin-Missiles-from-US, (accessed on January 5, 2021).

Table 3: U.S. Funding Spent for the South Caucasus States (Million $)



Source: U.S. Government Foreign Assistance (https://www.foreignassistance.gov/)

Georgia and Azerbaijan, together with Ukraine, participated in the "coalition of the willing" in Iraq and also contributed the operations in Afghanistan although the fifth (2004) and sixth (2009) waves of the NATO enlargements did not include them.[68] At the time of Russian invasion in August 2008, Georgia was the second-largest contributor of military forces in Iraq after the U.S.[69] Georgia has provided over 20.000 troops for ISAF and Resolute Support Mission (RSM) in Afghanistan since 2010. Furthermore, Georgia has been hosting annual U.S.-led military exercises called "Agile Spirit" and "Noble Partner" since 2011 and 2014 respectively.[70] However, following the October 2012 elections, perception of politically motivated court cases and prosecutions was regarded as an obstacle to NATO membership.[71]

After the inadequate reaction of the West to Russia's bilateral "association agreements" with Abkhazia and South Osetia in November 2014 and March 2015 respectively, Georgia attempted to improve its relations with Russia while aiming to enhance its integration with the EU and NATO at the same time. It meant a departure from its previous "either-or" approach.[72] The new Georgian government followed the goal of membership in the EU and NATO within the

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68 Boris Barkanov, "Crisis in Ukraine: Clash of Civilizations or Geopolitics?", Ed. Roger E. Kanet, Matthew Sussex, *Power, Politics and Confrontation in Eurasia: Foreign Policy in a Contested Region*, London: Palgrave Macmillan, 2015, p.225.

69 Luke Coffey, "NATO Membership for Georgia: In U.S. and European Interest", *The Heritage Foundation*, Special Report No. 199, Washington, 2018, p.2.

70 "U.S. Security Cooperation with Georgia", *U.S. Department of State, Bureau of Political-Military Affairs*, 16 June 2020, https://www.state.gov/u-s-security-cooperation-with-georgia/#:~:text= Georgia% 20is% 20the%20largest% 20non, other% 20country% 20in %20the%20world, (accessed on October 31, 2020).

71 Cory Welt, ibid., p.13.

72 Fiona Hill, Kemal Kirişçi and Andrew Moffatt, ibid., p.21.

framework of a pragmatic approach.[73] Georgia finally signed the Association Agreement with the EU in 2014 and it came into force in 2016.

Table 4: U.S. Foreign Direct Investment in Georgia, 2010-2019 (Million $)[74]

	U.S. FDI	U.S. Share	Russian FDI	Total FDI
2010	141,21	16%	50,974	865
2011	35,29	3%	58,017	1.134
2012	20,25	1,9%	22,017	1.048
2013	53,88	5,2%	7,813	1.039
2014	184,44	10%	87,908	1.837
2015	18,90	1%	52,369	1.728
2016	59,81	3,6%	28,497	1.652
2017	79,11	4%	51,318	1.978
2018	103,65	7,9%	73,636	1.306
2019	111,48	8,5%	54,471	1.310

Source: Foreign Direct Investments, National Statistics Office of Georgia, (https://www.geostat.ge/en/modules/categories/191/foreign-direct-investments).

Georgia is criticized for its ongoing economic dependence on Russia despite three decades since the disintegration of the Soviet Union. For instance, it is underlined that Georgia still imports considerable amounts of electricity from Russia.[75] However, as indicted in table 4, U.S. FDI in Georgia has been higher than that of Russia since 2010. Moreover, it should be underlined that opportunities for future U.S. investment exist in Georgia. In that context, the Anaklia port project launched in 2017 is thought to deepen the U.S.-Georgia relationship. As a multi-billion-dollar project, it is a major example of the involvement of U.S. companies in the development of regional infrastructure. U.S.-based SSA Marine, appointed as terminal operator for Anaklia deep-sea port, is a member of Anaklia Development Consortium. In August 2017, the company had the operating rights to the port's container terminal for 20 years.[76] On the other hand, Conti International, another U.S. company in the

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73 Sergey M. Markedonov and Maxim A. Suchkov, "Russia and the United States in the Caucasus: Cooperation and Competition", *Caucasus Survey*, Volume 8, Issue 2, 2020, p.187.

74 Foreign Direct Investments, *National Statistics Office of Georgia*, https:// www. geostat. ge/en/ modules/categories/191/foreign-direct-investments, (accessed on December 23, 2020).

75 Matthew Bryza, Robert M., Cutler and Giorgi Vashakmadze, "US Foreign Policy and Euro-Caspian Energy Security: The Time is Now to Build the Trans-Caspian Pipeline", *Atlantic Council*, 12 June 2020, https://www.atlanticcouncil.org/blogs/energysource/us-foreign- policy-and-euro-caspian-energy-security-the-time-is-now-to-build-the-trans-caspian-pipeline/, (accessed on November 12, 2020).

76 "Anaklia Development Consortium Signs Agreement with US-Based SSA Marine to Invest in and Operate Container Terminal of Anaklia Deep Sea Port in Georgia", *Anadolu Agency*, 1 August 2017, https://www.aa.com.tr/en/p/duyurular/1002/anaklia-development-

consortium, officially pulled out of it in August 2019. Eventually, the Georgian government suspended its contract with the consortium in January 2020.[77] Thus, progress on the project stalled although it was planned to be completed by 2021. Accordingly, it is emphasized that Georgia should be encouraged by the U.S. to find a new investor for the completion of the project.[78]

Another important issue for the future of U.S.-Georgian relations is the possibility of a free trade agreement (FTA) that has been on the agenda of these countries since January 2012.[79] Despite the lack of a FTA, it should be taken into account that the U.S. and Georgia signed a Trade and Investment Framework Agreement (TIFA) in June 2007 and established a High-Level Dialogue on Trade and Investment in 2012. Moreover, Georgia signed free trade agreements with the EU in 2014 and China in 2017. At the time of Russia's annexation of Crimea, there was a push for a free trade agreement with Georgia during the Obama administration. It was also striking that Georgia was ranked on par with Luxembourg in Economic Freedom Index and also ranked 7th in the World Bank Ease of Doing Business Index in 2019.[80]

Azerbaijan

As a background information regarding the U.S.-Azerbaijani relations, it should firstly be underlined that as a result of the aggressive activity of the Armenian lobby, the U.S. Congress had banned any governmental assistance to Azerbaijan with the adoption of the section 907a of the 1992 Freedom Support Act.[81] Nevertheless, Azerbaijan received prominence in U.S. foreign policy under Presidents Bill Clinton (1993-2001) and George W. Bush (2001-2009). In that period, the U.S. was engaged in energy and security issues in its relations with Azerbaijan. From the viewpoint of Azerbaijan, the Nagorno-Karabakh

consortium-signs-agreement-with-us-based-ssa-marine-to-invest-in-and-operate-container-terminal-of-anaklia-deep-sea-port-in-georgia, (acessed on December 29, 2020).

77 Maximilian Hess and Maia Otarashvili, "Georgia's Doomed Deep-Sea Port Ambitions: Geopolitics of the Cancelled Anaklia Project", Foreign Policy Research Institute, October 2020, https:// www.fpri.org/wp-content/uploads/2020/10/georgias-doomed-deep-sea- port-ambitions.pdf, (accessed on December 29, 2020), pp.10-11.

78 Alexis Mrachek, "Top Five Priorities for the U.S.-Georgian Relationship in 2020", *The Heritage Foundation*, 31 January 2020, https://www.heritage.org/global-politics/report/top-five-priorities-the-us-georgian-relationship-2020, (accessed on December 29, 2020).

79 "High Level Trade Dialogue (HLTD)", *The Embassy of Georgia to the United States of America*, https://georgiaembassyusa.org/bilateral-trade/, (accessed on December 29, 2020).

80 Kenneth Rapoza, "Why does Everyone Suddenly Want a Free Trade Deal With Georgia?", *Forbes*, 5 March 2020, https://www.forbes.com/sites/kenrapoza/2020/03/05/why-does-everyone-suddenly-want-a-free-trade-deal-with-georgia/?sh=5a24191a50e6, (accessed on January 5, 2021).

81 Farhad Mirzayev, "Insoluble Dilemma: Armenian-Azerbaijan Conflict over Nagorno-Karabakh", Ed. David A. Frankel*, International Law, Conventions and Justice*, Athens Institute of Education and Research, Athens 2011, p.126.

conflict was a significant issue to be resolved with the support of major actors. The U.S. contributed to the organization of the Key West meeting of Azeri and Armenian presidents in 2001. Although it was the high point in the diplomatic efforts of the Minsk group, it failed to conclude a peace agreement between Azerbaijan and Armenia.[82] On the other hand, despite the U.S. ban on foreign assistance to Azerbaijan, the investments of American companies provided the flow of money to Baku since the U.S. intended to Westernize Azerbaijan's oil industry. Eventually, the Congress authorized the President to waiver section 907 of Freedom Support Act[83] in 2002 when Azerbaijan cooperated with the U.S. in combating terrorism.[84] Additionally, the development of Caspian energy resources was regarded as a national security objective for the U.S. to decrease the dependence on the Middle East and to undermine the hegemony of Russia.[85]

Under the presidency of Heydar Aliyev (1993-2003), Azerbaijan adopted a balancing policy between regional and global actors and avoided becoming a member of an exclusive alliance. Since 2005, when Azerbaijan began acquiring massive oil revenues, Baku's foreign policy capacity has increased noticeably.[86] Accordingly, in May 2006, Azerbaijan was among the founders of the GUAM Organization for Democracy and Economic Development, a U.S.-backed initiative to promote regional integration with the participation of Georgia, Ukraine and Moldova as well. However, the 2008 war and lack of security guarantees from the U.S. and NATO worried Azerbaijan about a potential Russian offensive. Moreover, since 2010, the U.S. military assistance to Azerbaijan has diminished and there has been no progress on their cooperation in energy and security fields. U.S. military assistance programs called the Caspian Guard and the Caspian Sea Maritime Proliferation Program (CSMPP) were not renewed after 2009. With regard to the security dimension of the U.S. policy, Azerbaijan was a significant partner only in the Northern Distribution Network (NDN) that carried 30% of all land cargo to Afghanistan. Azerbaijan, on the other hand, signed arms sale deals worth $1,6 billion with Israel in 2012 and $4 billion with Russia in 2013.[87] It should be remembered that while Azerbaijani Jews who immigrated to Israel invest in Azerbaijan, American Jewish Committee, as an interest group in the U.S., supports Azerbaijan.

Under the Obama administration, the U.S. sought to reset its relations with Russia and supported the normalization of the relations between Armenia and Turkey without any reference to the solution of the Nagorno-Karabakh conflict. It was also underlined that the Obama administration focused more on human

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82 Fiona Hill, Kemal Kirişçi and Andrew Moffatt, ibid., p.10.

83 107th Congress Public Law 115, *The U.S. Government Printing Office*, https:// www. govinfo. gov /content/pkg/PLAW-107publ115/html/PLAW-107publ 115.htm, (02. 11. 2020).

84 Inessa Baban and Zaur Shiriyev, "The U.S. South Caucasus Strategy and Azerbaijan", *Turkish Policy Quarterly*, Vol. 9, No. 2, Summer 2010, pp.95-97.

85 Oksan Bayülgen, "Facing the Dilemma of Global Capitalism: The Case of Azerbaijan", *Central Asian Survey*, Vol. 22, Issue 2-3, June/September 2003, p.210.

86 Brenda Shaffer, ibid., pp.56-57.

87 Galib Bashirov, ibid., pp.782-786.

rights and democratization issues and did not hesitate to openly criticize Azerbaijan for its bad record on human rights.[88] Accordingly, the U.S. and the EU criticized the decision of the Azeri National TV and Radio Council to ban foreign radio broadcasts from January 1, 2009 for retarding democratic reform and stifling media freedom.[89] Another worrying development for Azerbaijan was its omission from the Nuclear Security Summit held in Washington in April 2010.[90] In return, Azerbaijan cancelled bilateral military exercises with the U.S. in 2010 and 2011. Furthermore, the U.S. did not assume a leading role in the resolution in the Nagorno-Karabakh conflict. Although the U.S. remained a co-chair of the Minsk group in order to prevent the resumption and escalation of the Nagorno-Karabakh conflict, the Obama administration regarded it as an intercommunal affair and did not oppose Russia's increasing role as a mediator in the conflict. The number of reported cases of ceasefire violations peaked in the summer of 2014 in Nagorno-Karabakh.[91] The reluctance of the West to push Armenia to withdraw its troops from the territories under occupation frustrated Azerbaijan in 2014 and 2015. The relations between the U.S. and Azerbaijan came on the verge of diplomatic rupture.[92] Accordingly, the U.S. seemed indifferent to the Four-Day War between Armenia and Azerbaijan in 2016.[93] The recent developments also did not provoke a strong U.S. response. It seemed that the outbreak of fighting over Nagorno-Karabakh in September 2020 was not of a high priority for the Trump administration. It is in line with America's gradual withdrawal from the region and its resultant passivity.[94]

Although the U.S. did not provide political support for the development of Azeri energy as in the past, several projects including Azerbaijan are in progress. Recently, as part of the Southern Gas Corridor (SGC) project that aims to bring Azerbaijani gas to Europe, the first Azerbaijani gas from Shah-Deniz-II field reached Albania at the end of May 2020. It is expected that the Azerbaijani gas will reach Italy via the Trans Adriatic Pipeline.[95] Furthermore, the Trans-Caspian Gas Pipeline (TCGP) linking Turkmenistan and Azerbaijan will connect Turkmen gas with the SGC infrastructure. Thus, it is anticipated to contribute

88 Galib Bashirov, ibid., p.771.

89 Azeri Ban on Foreign Broadcasts, BBC News, 30 December 2008, http://news.bbc.co.uk /2/hi/ europe/7805109.stm, (accessed on December 23, 2020).

90 Inessa Baban and Zaur Shiriyev, ibid., pp. 98-99.

91 Sergey M. Markedonov and Maxim A. Suchkov, ibid., p.191.

92 Fiona Hill, Kemal Kirişçi and Andrew Moffatt, ibid., p.19.

93 Galib Bashirov, ibid., p.791.

94 Houshig Kaymakamian, "Where the US Stands on Armenia, Azerbaijan, and Nagorno-Karabakh", *Al Arabiya English*, 29 October 2020, https://english.alarabiya .net/ en/ features/ 2020/ 10/29/Where-the-US-stands-on- Armenia-Azerbaijan-and-Nagorno-Karabakh, (accessed on January 7, 2021).

95 Esmira Jafarova, "First Azerbaijani Gas Reaches Albania Amid Covid-19", *The Central Asia-Caucasus Analyst*, 14 July 2020, https://www.cacianalyst.org/publications/ analytical- articles/item /13630-first-azerbaijani-gas-reaches-albania-amid-covid-19. html, (accessed on Novermber 12, 2020).

to the diversification of European energy routes and sources while limiting Russian and Chinese influence in Central Asia.[96]

It should also be noted that due to its oil and gas revenues, Azerbaijan is not in need of money and accordingly, not dependent on foreign aid. Therefore, it is stressed by some observers that the EU and the U.S. do not have any leverage on Azerbaijan. However, it is evident that Azerbaijan needs foreign investment and cooperation in security matters.[97] From the U.S. perspective, its increasing domestic energy production and promotion of unconventional energy exploration downgraded Azerbaijan's status to a small producer of conventional oil.[98] As the U.S. became an energy exporter itself, the importance of European energy markets for the U.S. has increased. For instance, the U.S., as the world biggest gas producer, increased its LNG exports to the EU considerably. While the EU had a share of 10% in U.S. LNG exports in 2017, it rose to 36% in 2019. The share of U.S. in EU LNG imports rose from 4 to 16% in the same period.[99] However, it is pointed out that the growing role of the U.S. as an energy exporter may have a negative impact on the investments on the southern energy corridor.[100]

Armenia

Armenia has the weakest economy of the three Caucasian republics and not rich in terms of natural resources. Besides, its land border with Azerbaijan and Turkey are closed. Armenia's lack of friendly neighbors increases the value of its relationship with the U.S. However, since Russia is the primary guarantor of Armenia's security, it sees no interest in joining the NATO.[101] Although Armenia has desired good relations with the U.S. and the EU, it had the strongest political and economic links with Russia of the three republics. It has developed outstanding relations with Iran as well.[102] Iran is an access point to the outside world for Armenia, blockaded by Turkey and Azerbaijan. However, the U.S. has grown discontented with the possibility that Armenia would become a transit country for Iranian gas to Georgia.[103] Following the Russia-Georgia war of 2008, Armenia's growing foreign debts resulted in Russia's expanding role in its energy sector. It was because Armenia's trade is conducted on a large scale through Georgian territory and it lost around 600 million dollars during the

96 Matthew Bryza, Robert M. Cutler and Giorgi Vashakmadze, ibid.

97 Michael B. Bishku, "The South Caucasus Republics: Relations with the U.S. and the EU", *Middle East Policy*, Vol. XXII, No. 2, Summer 2015, pp.50-52.

98 Galib Bashirov, "Energy, Security and Democracy: The Shifting US Policy in Azerbaijan", *Cambridge Review of International Affairs*, Vol. 32, No. 6, 2019, p.786.

99 "EU-U.S. LNG Trade", *European Commission*, https:// ec.europa.eu/ energy/sites/ ener/ files/ eu-us_lng_trade_folder.pdf, (accessed on January 3, 2021).

100 Licinia Simao.

101 James Nixey, ibid., p.131.

102 Michael B. Bishku, ibid., p.40.

103 Renee Rippberger, "The Enemy of My Friend is My Friend: Assessing Armenia's Relationship with Iran", *International Center for Human Development*, Yerevan, 2019, p.11.

war.[104] Nevertheless, it is emphasized that Armenia seeks to pursue a policy of "complementarity" in its relations between the West and Russia.[105] Accordingly, Armenia is both a member of NATO's Partnership for Peace program and the CSTO from which Georgia and Azerbaijan withdrew in 1999.

Although Armenia has several trade partners, its economic dependence on Russia is noticeable and many of its industries are owned or operated by the Russians. Furthermore, Caucasus Barometer surveys held between 2011 and 2015 indicate that 75 to 83 percent of the respondents considers Russia Armenia's closest friend.[106] Under Russian pressure, Armenia dropped its plans to sign an Association Agreement with the EU in 2013 despite its initial interest in the negotiations. The Euromaidan revolution and annexation of Crimea by Russia led Armenia to question its policy of complementarity.[107] In 2014, Armenia voted against the UN Resolution affirming Ukraine's territorial integrity and declaring March 16 referendum illegitimate while Azerbaijan and Georgia voted for it.[108] As a result, while the EU rejected Armenia's offer to sign the Association Agreement without a free trade agreement, Armenia joined the Eurasian Economic Union (EEU) in 2015.

On the other hand, Armenia sent troops to Iraq, Kosovo, Lebanon, Mali and Afghanistan in order to support U.S. operations. It is underlined that Armenia needs American support to make its transition "from a reliance on aid toward a relationship based on trade."[109] Furthermore, Armenia has a highly influential diaspora community in the West.[110] The worsening economic situation in Armenia has contributed the expansion of global Armenian diaspora of 11 million. It is estimated that up to 1,5 million Americans of Armenian origin live in the U.S. According to 2015 data, their per capita income is about 20% higher than the U.S. average.[111] The Armenian allegation of genocide, still denied by Turkey, is a salient issue on the agenda of the diaspora. Although a non-binding resolution recognizing the massacre as a genocide passed the House and the Senate in late 2019, it was not taken up by the White House.[112]

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104 Michael B. Bishku, ibid., p.50.

105 Cory Welt, ibid., p.14.

106 Galstyan, Narek, "Armenia's Foreign Policy in the Public Perception", ed. Kornely Kakachia and Alexander Markarov, *Values and Identity as Sources of Foreign Policy in Armenia and Georgia*, Publishing House Universal, Tbilisi 2016, p.238.

107 Licinia Simao, ibid.

108 Jim Nichol, ibid., p.1.

109 "Armenia-Overview", *Armenian National Committee of America*, https:// anca. org/ armenia- overview/, (accessed on January 9, 2020).

110 Michael B. Bishku, ibid., pp.42-47.

111 Monika Machowska, "Armenian Diaspora Lobbying Agendas in the United States in the 21st Century", *Ukrainian Policymaker*, Volume 6, 2020, pp.53-56.

112 Brennan, David, "Why the Armenian Genocide Remains Unrecognized by the U.S. Despite Bipartisan Efforts", *Newsweek*, 24 April 2020, https://www.newsweek.com/why-armenian-genocide-remains-unrecognized-us-despite-bipartisan-efforts-1500038, (accessed on December 23, 2020).

Table 5: U.S. Foreign Trade with the Caucasus States (2018)

	Exports to the U.S. (million $)	U.S. Share in Exports	Imports from the U.S. (million $)	U.S. Share in Imports
Azerbaijan	340	1,71%	447	3,76%
Georgia	189	4,95%	317	3,46%
Armenia	56,7	1,99%	144	3,01%

Source: The Observatory of Economic Complexity (OEC), (https://oec.world/en)

Lastly, U.S. foreign aid to Armenia and the trade between two countries will be examined briefly. As indicated in table 3, Armenia is the second receiver of the U.S. funding spent for three Caucasian states. Recently, in FY2019, $41,10 million foreign aid was allocated to Armenia. Its regional rank (in Europe and Eurasia) was 11 among 42 countries, while Georgia and Azerbaijan were 3rd and 13th respectively.[113] Furthermore, it should be noted that the volume of U.S. trade with the South Caucasus is relatively small. U.S. trade with the three states of the region totaled 1,4 billion dollars in 2019, and U.S. exports to Georgia that amounts to 769 million dollars account for around half of this trade.[114] When the data on trade in goods are examined, it is observed that while Georgia is the 84th trade partner of the U.S. in exports and 110th in imports in 2019, Azerbaijan is the 114th in exports and 153rd in imports, and Armenia is the 170th in exports and 138th in imports in the same year.[115] The share of the U.S. in the imports or exports of any South Caucasus state is not more than 5%. The U.S. is not among top 4 import or export partners of any South Caucasus states.[116] On the other hand, the EU is the main trade partner of Georgia and Azerbaijan and the main export market of Armenia.[117]

Conclusion

Since their independence, the three Caucasus states have each taken different routes in international politics. In addition, their tendencies toward both authoritarianism and reforms seem to complicate regional politics. They

113 U.S. Foreign Aid by Country, *USAID*, https://explorer.usaid.gov/cd/ARM, (accessed on January 9, 2021).

114 "Caucasus Region", *Office of the U.S. Trade Representative*, https://ustr.gov/countries-regions/europe-middle-east/russia-and-eurasia/caucasus-region#:~:text=Two%2Dway%20goods%20trade%20between,States'%2087th%20largest%20trading%20partner, (accessed on November 14, 2020).

115 "U.S. International Trade in Goods and Services, Annual Revision", *U.S. Census Bureau*, 4 June 2020, https://www.census.gov/foreign-trade/Press-Release/ 2019pr/ final_ revisions/ final.pdf, (accessed on November 14, 2020).

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need to balance their relations with their neighbors and major powers due to their vulnerability to global dynamics. In that regard, the asymmetry of power and interest between the major powers, namely the U.S. and Russia, is a decisive factor in regional politics. Since the Russian interventions in Georgia and Ukraine proved its assertiveness, the region became a focus of attention. It should also be noted that the second Karabakh war that ended in November 2020 increased Russian military presence in the region. Therefore, although the U.S. does not have vital interests in the Caucasus, rolling back Russian influence in the region remains a main objective for it. For this purpose, the U.S. should consider the varying external engagement priorities of the Caucasus states and develop an agenda based on a long-term perspective. Furthermore, U.S. cooperation with the EU is of critical importance due to Russia's leading regional position. The role of NATO might be emphasized more strongly in order to counter Russian aggression. Otherwise, U.S. disengagement from the Caucasus might create a power vacuum that leads to new conflicts. In addition to the Western engagement of the Caucasus states, development of economic and cultural ties with them still make sense for U.S. policy.

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The Caucasus States' Relations with Russia (1991-2020)

Toğrul İSMAYIL* & Ali NECEFOĞLU**

Introduction

The Caucasus has been in the Kremlin's area of interest for centuries. Taking advantage of the chaos created by the Napoleonic Wars in Europe, the Russian empire began to seize the Caucasus gradually from the first years of the 19th century. With the Treaty of Gulistan signed after the Russo-Qajar War between 1804-1813, Kremlin captured most of the Caucasus. With the Treaty of Turkmenchay signed as a result of the Russo-Qajar War of 1826-1828, it drew the southern border in the Caucasus and dominated the region to a great extent. As a result of the Russian-Circassian War, which was completed in 1864, the Kremlin has ruled the entire Caucasus by expelling a large part of the northern peoples. This domination lasted until the Bolshevik Revolution of 1917, and with the Russian Civil War that began after the revolution, independent republics were established in the Caucasus, such as Azerbaijan Democratic Republic, First Republic of Armenia, Democratic Republic of Georgia, and Mountainous Republic of the Northern Caucasus. These republics, which lost their sovereignty in parallel with the victory of the Bolsheviks in the civil war, continued their existence as an autonomous or member republic within the Soviet Union established in 1922. With the dissolution of the Soviet Union in 1991, the three republics in the South Caucasus (Azerbaijan, Armenia, Georgia) gained their independence like other member states of the union. In this section, the relations of these three republics with the Russian Federation will be discussed.

Azerbaijan-Russia Relations

From being federated to being independent

At the beginning of the second quarter of the 19th century, the Azerbaijani lands were divided into two with the above-mentioned Treaty of Turkmenchay. Azerbaijan, which remained in the north, gained its permanent independence in 1991, while the founded republic has approximately 90 thousand kilometers of land and approximately 10 million people live. Today, Azerbaijan, which has close relations with many different states from Pakistan to Israel, is the most important crossroad of east-west energy and trade lines, although its region has

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a serious power in the Caucasus. However, on the way to independence, Azerbaijan faced many difficulties and suffered both economic, human resources, and territorial losses.

By the end of the 1980s, two important factors were stimulating the enthusiasm for Azerbaijani independence. The first of these was the deepening of the socioeconomic depression that broke out in the last days of the Soviets. The other was ethnic-based attacks and territorial claims against Azerbaijanis in the Caucasus, especially in Karabakh. Nevertheless, the main reason why Azerbaijan, which faced similar problems since the early years of the Soviet Union, reacted differently this time was the consequences of the democratization policies aimed to be implemented in the union in the second half of the 1980s.

The policies of openness and restructuring (Glasnost and Perestroika) initiated by Mikhail Gorbachev since 1985, when he came to power, led to the emergence of a freedom movement unprecedented in the history of the Soviet Union. Citizens of the union were given the right to assemble, demonstrate and march, similar to those in liberal western countries. Initially aiming to make socialism more beneficial to the citizens, Perestroika further deepened the political, social, and economic tensions that already exist in unity. As a result, Perestroika paved the way for the peoples to demand more say in their lands and their independence from unity. In Azerbaijan, which had its share of this freeness environment, both the difficulties brought by the socioeconomic crisis and the territorial claims of Armenia over Azerbaijan, especially Nagorno-Karabakh, triggered the demands for independence. It is clear that the Azerbaijani people who were affected by the events in Nagorno-Karabakh increased nationalism more and a stronger consciousness for full independence developed (Mark 148).

Nevertheless, Azerbaijan faced great difficulties during its struggle for independence. At that time, with the displacement of Azerbaijanis living in their ancestral lands under the control of the Armenian SSR, the number and crowd of demonstrations began to increase throughout the country, especially in the capital Baku (Demirtepe and Laçıner 20). On December 31, 1989, the dismantling of the Soviet-Iranian border fences separating the two Azerbaijan, inspired by the fall of the Berlin Wall happened a month ago, brought demands for independence to another dimension (Kelkitli 134).

Shortly after this incident, on January 20, 1990, on the orders of the Communist Party General Secretary Mikhail Gorbachev, Soviet troops entered the capital Baku and carried out a great and bloody massacre, later known as the "Black January". This massacre carried out by the Soviet Army in Baku further strengthened the struggle for independence in Azerbaijan. The Supreme Soviet of Azerbaijan adopted a Constitutional Act on the Declaration of Independence of Azerbaijan on August 30, 1991, after the failed August Coup against Gorbachev that caused the collapse of the administrative structure of the Soviet Union.

With the dissolution of the Soviet Union, Azerbaijan and Russia took their place in world politics as two neighboring sovereign states. However, the perspective of both countries on each other was different. Russia for Azerbaijan; she was in a negative position as the 'heir to the empire', an invader, a threat to independence, and the patron of the Armenians. For Russia, Azerbaijan was of great importance for achieving such goals as finding a short route to sail from the south to the open seas, preserving the federation's territorial integrity by suppressing national movements in the North Caucasus, obstructing the logistics of alternative sources so that Western states remain dependent on Russian energy sources, preventing the opening of Western states, especially the USA, to Turkistan from the Caucasus (Aslanlı 138).

Mutallibov Period

On October 18, 1991, the Azerbaijan parliament adopted a resolution and declared the independence of Azerbaijan. However, the first president Ayaz Mutallibov's behavior regarding the complete independence of the republic was doubtful. Mutallibov was seen as Gorbachev's man. He was the first supporter of Gorbachev's New Union Treaty efforts to revive the Soviet Union, and therefore, on December 21, he signed the Alma-Ata Protocol to join the Commonwealth of Independent States (CIS) that was established on December 8 by the presidents of Russia, Ukraine, and Belarus (Abilov and Isayev 119).

Due to this pro-Russian attitude, Mutallibov, who took on the hostility of the pro-independence sides in the country, had to leave his post because he did not do the necessary against the Khojaly Massacre on February 26, 1992. As a result, the Speaker of the Assembly, Yakub Mamedov, became the interim president. In Mamedov's two-month provisional presidency, the Russian Federation recognized the independence of Azerbaijan. Although Mutallibov tried to re-establish his presidency, the Azerbaijan Popular Front (APF) forced Mutallibov to flee to Moscow on 14 May. On 7 June, Abulfez Elchibey won the election and became the second president of Azerbaijan (Altstadt *Azerbaijan's struggle* 125).

Elchibey Era

The APF, which came to power, faced serious problems. The conflict between the various armed forces created political anarchy and the country was on the brink of civil war with the inactivity of state institutions. Besides, as the country's essential goods and oil stocks were about to run out, several million dollars were left in the reserve of the country's central bank of seven million. Elchibey, who came to power under these conditions, stated what he would do as basic principles in the election program (Cafersoy 48). Relations with Russia had an important place in the foreign policy of the APF government. This large neighboring country has been the most important factor affecting the existence of Azerbaijan in the historical process.

The APF, which came to power at a time when Russia's efforts to maintain its influence in the region accelerated, relations with Russia encountered great difficulties. Since the main aim of the APF was to liberate the country from the 'invasion' of the Russian empire for two centuries, it was inevitable that this government would confront Russia. In this context, the APF government tried to achieve its policy of getting rid of Russia in military and political terms through several factors. These are the expulsion of Russian soldiers from Azerbaijan, the participation of other actors in the solution of the Karabakh conflict, which Russia uses as a means of pressure, the refusal of membership to the CIS, Russia's political sphere of influence, and the establishment of relations as two independent states with equal rights (Cafersoy 96).

It was understood that the Ambassador's decision to withdraw from the CIS, which was created to halt the loss of Russian influence in the territories remaining from the Soviet Union, in late 1992. However, due to the current military and political conditions of Azerbaijan, the consequences of this policy were severe for the APF government. With the withdrawal from the CIS, the Kremlin's political and military support for Armenia has grown stronger than before, weakening Azerbaijan's hand in the international political system (Cornell *Azerbaijan* 70). Also, while an extremely pro-Turkish foreign policy approach angered not only Russia but also Iran; in the absence of a strong national ideology, excessive emphasis on Turkey caused some ethnic groups in the country has made open to manipulation by Azerbaijan's neighbors (Mehdiyeva 271). As it can be clearly understood, the primary goal of the Kremlin was to remove Elchibey from power by all means possible and to subordinate the Azerbaijani administration to her with complete surrender.

Elchibey pulled Azerbaijan out of the CIS. Later, he tried to drive Azerbaijan out of the ruble zone by creating the manat as a new currency. And he was prepared to sign a major contract with foreign oil companies. And most importantly, he was trying to hold Azerbaijan close to Turkey. Russia's response to these policies was very harsh. In a short time, the Lachin corridor connecting Armenia to Nagorno-Karabakh was occupied by Russian-backed Armenian forces. Subsequently, the revolt started. Self-appointed colonel Surat Huseyinov left his place on the Karabakh front and took shelter with his troops at the last Russian military base in Ganja city. When the Russians withdrew, they left their equipment to Huseinov. On June 4, 1993, he requested Elchibey's resignation (Hill and Jewett 11).

It was the moment of truth for Elchibey. If he defended his seat and power, he would have to confront the rebels settled in Ganja. Although he had been warned by his surroundings to be prepared for the march of the rebels to Baku, he rejected these warnings saying that he would not shed the blood of his citizens. Against this attitude of the Ambassador, Huseynov's forces soon reached the outskirts of the capital Baku. The Elchibey government, which did not defend itself, sought a powerful person who could prevent civil war. The Turkish government, led by Süleyman Demirel, insisted on Heydar Aliyev, who was out of government and in political exile. Although Huseynov's coup was

intended to bring the pro-Russian Mutallibov back to power, Aliyev took good advantage of the current opportunity by moving faster. In early June 1993, Aliyev flew from Nakhchivan to Baku in military plane. It was welcomed in the assembly for the National Council meeting on June 15, which would later become a national holiday. Two days later, Elchibey went to his native village Keleki in Nakhchivan, where he had been forced to stay until Aliyev consolidated his power (Altstadt *Azerbaijan and Aliyev* 7-8).

Senior Aliyev Era

Heydar Aliyev was not a new figure for Azerbaijan. He was appointed as the chairman of the Azerbaijani KGB, which he entered in 1944, in 1967 with the rank of major general. Aliyev, who was the ruling person of Azerbaijan as the First Secretary of the Communist Party of Azerbaijan from 1969 to 1982, later became the Soviet Union's Deputy Prime Minister responsible for transportation and social services until 1987. Then he resigned from the Politburo in 1987, moved to Nakhchivan in 1990, and served as the head of the Parliament of the Autonomous Republic until 1993. Aliyev is an important political figure whose political life involves significant high and low points. Nevertheless, Aliyev emerged as an anti-communist, nationalist leader of his native republic (Sadri 183).

The Elchibey period was a time in which the ideological point of view prevailed in foreign policy. Thus, multi-dimensional and multilateral plans could not be put into practice in the determination of alliances and formation of the foreign policy strategy of the newly independent republic. With Heydar Aliyev becoming President, the ideological role of the foreign policy put into practice was abolished or used as a tool for realpolitik interests. Thus, permanent material factors had a significant impact on the state's foreign policy decisions and alliance choices. It is possible to summarize the Azerbaijani foreign policy carried out by President Heydar Aliyev during his term of office under six headings. So much so that these six characteristics will be continued by İlham Aliyev, who took the presidency in 2003 (Shaffer 56).

The first is to develop a balanced policy with both regional and global powers, rather than being a loyal member of an existing alliance structure. The second is to subordinate ethnic and religious factors in cooperation or alliances with other countries. Third, parallel to the first one, instead of being a vassal of a single country like neighboring Armenia, it is being able to make independent decisions as much as possible. Fourth, parallel to the second, contrary to Elchibey's policy of Whole Azerbaijan, it is to pursue policies that prioritize the interests of Azerbaijanis who are citizens of the republic, not the Azerbaijanis in neighboring countries. The fifth is to ensure that transportation and transport infrastructure agreements become a foreign policy tool for both exporting country resources and becoming an important transfer hub of the east-west trade line. Sixth is the solution of the Nagorno-Karabakh conflict without violating the UN-recognized territorial integrity of the Republic of Azerbaijan (Kurban 46).

As for his foreign policy against Russia, Heydar Aliyev chose to establish good relations with Russia, unlike his predecessor Elchibey. While entering Azerbaijan into the CIS, it embarked on policies that would not anger Russia as the only way out in the current situation. Although Russia opposes Azerbaijan's signing of energy agreements with Western countries, the Russian energy lobby led by the then Russian Prime Minister Chernomyrdin pursued good relations with Azerbaijan. Thus, Azerbaijan signed the agreement called "The Contract of the Century" on September 20, 1994 (Aslanlı 140). As a result of these good relations with Russia, Heydar Aliyev included the Russian oil company Lukoil, with a 10 percent share, in the consortium with Western states to export the country's energy resources (Gül 57).

However, although Heydar Aliyev tried to balance his foreign policy against Russia, some events caused crises between the two countries. The first of these was the Chechnya Question that deactivated Russia in the North Caucasus. With the collapse of the Soviet Union, as in the Russian Civil War of 1917-1922, the Kremlin, which lost its power, could not prevent the independence demands of the North Caucasian peoples. In the First Chechen War, which took place between 1994-1996, Russia claimed that the separatist forces in Chechnya were supported by Azerbaijan. Although this claim was firmly denied by Azerbaijan, in 1994 Russia imposed a three-year embargo on Azerbaijan, which is highly dependent on Russia economically. Although this embargo was lifted with the end of the war in favor of Chechnya in 1996 and the signing of the Hasavyurt Treaty, Russia's claims against Azerbaijan continued. So much so that during the Second Chechen War that started in August 1999, an Azerbaijani village was "accidentally" bombed. With Putin's inauguration in 2000, Azerbaijan's attitude towards the Chechen separatists became harsher (Aras 141).

Another issue that disrupted the relations between Azerbaijan and Russia during the Senior Aliyev period was the decision to donate $ 1 billion worth of weapons and ammunition to Armenia, which passed through the Russian Duma in 1997. With this decision, Azerbaijan's desire to develop security relations with western countries increased. Although it worries Russia, rumors of NATO establishing a base in Azerbaijan started to be heard. As if to confirm these rumors, NATO's information office was opened in Baku in February 2000 and Aliyev paid a visit to the USA in the same month. Nevertheless, after Putin became president in May 2000, Azerbaijan-Russia relations got back on track (Abilov and Isayev 126).

Another controversial issue awaiting resolution between Azerbaijan and Russia in the 1990s was the legal status of the Caspian Sea. Another controversial issue awaiting resolution between Azerbaijan and Russia in the 1990s was the legal status of the Caspian Sea. This problem was solved to a certain extent with the agreement signed at the end of the Heydar Aliyev period. Russia, Kazakhstan, and Azerbaijan shared the Caspian Sea basin, which is in their territorial waters, to a certain extent, with the agreement they signed on

May 15, 2003. As a result of this agreement, Azerbaijan agreed to get 17 percent, Russian Federation 19 percent, and Kazakhstan 27 percent (Kurban 47).

Junior Aliyev Era

With the death of Heydar Aliyev in December 2003, his son Ilham Aliyev became the President of Azerbaijan at the age of 41. During the presidency of Ilham Aliyev, Azerbaijani foreign policy was carried out in line with the balance policy determined by his father. With the election of İlham Aliyev as president in October 2003, Russia's stance was positive. During his first presidential term, which will last five years, Ilham Aliyev continued to maintain the balance policy that his father had set up. He shaped the relations with Russia within the framework of this policy. The Baku-Tbilisi-Ceyhan Pipeline became operational in 2006 and the rising oil prices were the fruits of the balanced foreign policy and billions of dollars have flowed into the state oil fund (Cornell *Azerbaijan* 111).

During his second presidency, which started in 2008, Ilham Aliyev faced political problems affecting the balance politics he inherited from his father. The first of these was the Russian-Georgian War that took place in August 2008. As a result of this war, the West proved that it was unable to respond effectively to a Russian intervention against pro-Western governments in Soviet geography. Although Azerbaijan's refusal to support an important ally turned out to be bad for its image, Azerbaijan did not want to deteriorate relations between the two countries by provoking Russia. The Azerbaijani public, which was sympathetic to Georgia during the war, was disappointed with the defeat of Georgia. This situation led to a significant decrease in the demands for military action to liberate the occupied lands, which was the pressure on Ilham Aliyev's administration (Valiyev *Victim* 270-271).

The other incident which caused changes in Azerbaijan's balanced policy in favor of Russia was Turkey's efforts to normalize its relations with Armenia by ignoring the interests of Azerbaijan. Against this Armenian opening that took place between October 2009 and May 2010, Azerbaijan used Turkish public opinion as well as its energy card. Natural gas, which had been sold for a price of one third, started to be sold at the market price. A natural gas sales agreement was signed with Russia to deliver it to western markets. However, with President Gül's visit to Azerbaijan in August 2010, relations with Turkey started to get back on track (Valiyev *Finlandization* 1). The same month, Russia's agreement with Armenia to extend its military base in Gyumri until 2044 caused Azerbaijan to abandon its policy of shifting the balance towards Russia ("Russia Secures Military Presence in Armenia until 2044").

Another event concerning the relations between the two countries during the third Ilham Aliyev period, which started in 2013, was the cessation of the activities of the Gabala Radar Station, which is under Russian control. The station, which was leased to Russia for a ten-year term in 2002 for a small fee, was removed from Azerbaijani territory due to the incomplete negotiations in 2012. Although the reason for the dispute is presented as economic, the claim

that Russia supported the opposition for the 2013 Presidential Election was raised as the reason. Another important event in the third period was the approach of Azerbaijan during the crisis between Turkey and Russia as a result of Russian warplanes shot down by Turkey in November 2015. Although the Azerbaijani authorities tried to demonstrate a more balanced stance in this crisis, it showed the Azerbaijani side with the statement "we stand by Turkey on every issue" of President Aliyev in December 2015 (Safi and Aslanlı 9).

The biggest event of the fourth period of Ilham Aliyev's administration, which started in 2018, is undoubtedly the Second Karabakh War that broke out in 2020. This war, whose foreshock was felt by the attack of Armenian forces on the Tovuz region of Azerbaijan on July 12, started with the attack of the Armenian forces again on September 27 and lasted for 44 days. Russia, which wanted to provide arms aid to Armenia through Iran since the first days of the war, Russia, which wanted to provide arms aid to Armenia through Iran since the first days of the war, could not provide enough aid because the Iranian administration refrained from the Azerbaijani "minority" in the country.

The Armenian government, which did not receive sufficient support, wanted to expand the war that was limited to Nagorno-Karabakh and surrounding rayons to its lands and thus tried to include the CSTO, whose patronage was Russia, in the war. The Armenian administration, which chose to bomb Azerbaijani cities outside the war zone for this aim, could not carry the war to its territory. Also, despite the anti-Azerbaijani rhetoric in the Russian media during the 44-day war, President Putin did not give the order of intervention requested by Armenia.

Nevertheless, President Ilham Aliyev, speaking to foreign media organizations and the people of Azerbaijan during the war, admitted that they were subjected to threats and pressures to stop the war. Although he did not mention the source of these threats and pressures, he reminded that Turkish F-16s were stationed in his country in response to any military intervention against Azerbaijan.

However, on the night of 9 November to 10 November, a Russian Mi-24 combat helicopter was shot down at the Nakhchivan-Armenia border, and shortly afterward Azerbaijan apologized, announcing that the helicopter was accidentally dropped by them. Shortly after this statement, the presidents of Azerbaijan and Russia announced that they had signed an agreement on the end of the Second Nagorno-Karabakh War. In the early morning, it was announced that the 2.000 Russian peacekeepers were dispatched to deploy along the line of contact.

Georgia-Russia Relations

Pioneer Republic

Georgia has a geopolitical position, acting as a bridge to take the other two states of the South Caucasus, Azerbaijan and Armenia, to the open waters of the

Black Sea. Georgia, the only country in the South Caucasus region with open sea access, has the longest land border with Russia in the region with its 723 km long border, while at the same time it is strategically important in terms of Russia's access to warm seas. Georgia, which is a transit point in terms of trade routes in the Caucasus with its east-west direction and natural harbors, has become one of the areas of interest of regional and global powers, not just today but for centuries. Unlike Azerbaijan, Georgia, which is a mountainous country with no natural resources like Armenia, is an important transfer point for energy source countries on the Caspian Sea (Kantarcı 232-233).

The referendum to restore Georgia's independence took place on 31 March 1991, and with the results approved on 9 April 1991, Georgia became one of the first republics of the Soviet Union to restore its independence. However, Georgia's state-building process was one of the most difficult in the post-Soviet space to form the concept of Georgia's foreign policy. Dynamics, which were influenced by several factors in the structure of domestic and foreign policy, played a role in the development of relations between Georgia and Russia. The Russian Federation and the Republic of Georgia started to establish inter-state relations under very difficult conditions for both Tbilisi and Moscow. During the presidency of Zviad Gamsakhurdia, pro-European sentiments were very strong within the political elite as an alternative to cooperation with Moscow, where Georgia was trying to get away from its influence. As a result, in December 1992, the Georgian parliament acted on the view that it was inappropriate to sign agreements with the Russian Federation (Панков 43). But the unsolved Abkhaz problem and domestic political problems greatly encouraged Georgia to cooperate with Moscow. With this incentive, while Georgia joined the CIS, an agreement was reached on the development of military ties (Милокост 282).

Still, we can say that Georgia-Russia relations are built on bitter conflicts between Moscow and the West. Particularly, NATO's enlargement, the discussions on Kosovo, the future of the Conventional Armed Forces Treaty in Europe, and the multipolar world were some of the existing disagreements. Georgian-Russian relations were defined by the characteristic differences in the appearance of the relationship between the former ruler and the former ruled. National security was a major obstacle to existing Georgian-Russian relations. While Georgia linked its future and its security guarantee to Europe and the enlargement of NATO, which is Euro-Atlantic integration, the Moscow administration saw these policies as a threat to the national interests of the RF (Пхаладзе 14).

Georgia's Double Trouble

As it can be understood, the biggest concern of Georgia's foreign policymakers since its independence was how they would position the country between Russia and Western countries. The way to read Georgia's foreign policy is to understand its relations with its northern neighbor and its efforts to escape from its neighbor's hegemonic desire in these relations. Although Russia

recognized Georgia's political sovereignty and independence, from the early days of its independence Georgia felt vitally threatened by Russia, similar to other Post-Soviet republics. Russia's military intervention in two separatist regions of Georgia (Ossetia and Abkhazia) since 2008 and supporting its search for independence politically after the war confirms Georgia's justification in this perception of threat (Kakachia, Minesashvili, and Kakhishvili 819). For this reason, when examining Georgian-Russian relations, it is necessary to understand these two separatist movements, which have been affected by these relations since independence. For this reason, when examining Georgian-Russian relations, it is necessary to understand these two separatist movements, which have been affected by these relations since independence.

The first one is the Abkhazian conflict. Abkhazia has a larger population than South Ossetia, which will be mentioned later, with a population of around 200,000. Besides, Abkhazia has a port in the Black Sea and some natural resources; it can be argued that Abkhazia can govern itself, with a large number of political parties and semi-competitive elections, as well as non-governmental groups and some so-called independent media organizations. For this reason, the idea of an independent Abkhazia is more appropriate and reflects the desire of most of the current inhabitants of the region. Nevertheless, the existence of Georgian internally displaced persons weakens the Abkhaz argument for independence. During the war that took place between 1992-1993, approximately 250 thousand ethnic Georgians had to leave their lands of Abkhazia. Recognizing the independence of Abkhazia before the problem of the displaced ethnic Georgians is solved means an award for ethnic cleansing for some (Cooley and Mitchell 61-62).

Another one is the South Ossetian conflict. A brief historical overview is needed to better understand the South Ossetian conflict. Modern South Ossetia was annexed by Tsarist Russia in 1801. In 1922, the South Ossetia Autonomous Region was declared a part of the Georgian Soviet Socialist Republic (Zurcher 30). The tension between Georgians and Ossetians began to manifest itself in November 1988 with the measures taken by the Tbilisi administration to promote the Georgian language. In response, the National Assembly of South Ossetia (Ademon Nykhas), a national organization, launched a campaign to unite with the Autonomous Republic of North Ossetia, which is part of the RF (Karagiannis 77).

This conflict between Georgian and South Ossetian forces continued until an agreement was reached in June 1992 on the deployment of Georgia, South Ossetia, and RF peacekeepers (Birch 509). Eduard Shevardnadze, the Vice-President of Georgia, did not succeed, although negotiations with the separatist republic continued for a long time. Despite being determined to restore the territorial integrity of the Georgian state, this talented former diplomat refused to use a military option in South Ossetia. As a result, the South Ossetia problem has become a frozen conflict (Cornell *Small nations* 157).

As the Rose Revolution of 2003 overthrew Shevardnadze, Mihail Saakashvili, who openly declared his intention to pursue a pro-Western foreign

policy, took over. The Kremlin underestimated Saakashvili's determination to restore Georgia's integrity. In 2004, when President Saakashvili was trying to fulfill his promise to bring South Ossetia back to central control, a small-scale war broke out between Georgian and Ossetian forces. The Georgian administration, seeing that it could not maintain authority bloodlessly as in Adjara, had to change its strategy (Ibrahimov 337-338). Relations between Georgian and South Ossetian administrations increased the tension between Moscow and Tbilisi.

The 888 War

After the escalation of tension between the two countries, a war broke out between the two countries, with the Georgian side's insistence on ensuring territorial integrity and the self-confidence created by its over-reliance on Western states. In late April 2008, a Russian fighter jet shot down a Georgian drone flying over Abkhazia. Towards the end of July, the RF conducted its military exercise called Kavkaz 2008 at the Georgian border (Batashvili). The triggering of the events in the ceasefire line in the first week of August resulted in the evacuation of South Ossetian civilians to RF. Seeing the opportunity of then fresh Russian Prime Minister Vladimir Putin to be in Beijing for the 2008 Summer Olympics, the Georgian administration took action to re-rule South Ossetia from Tbilisi.

On the morning of August 8, 2008, after intense artillery and rocket fire, Georgian forces launched an attack against Tskhinvali, the "capital" of South Ossetia. Although the local powers seemingly had to retreat, Moscow's response was harshly received about 12 hours later. Russian soldiers crossed the Caucasus Mountains and started to fight with Georgian troops. On August 9, the Russian army, together with its Abkhaz allies, opened a second front in the Kodori Valley, held by Georgian troops in Abkhazia. Soon, Russian troops entered western Georgia and occupied the port of Poti (Cheterian 159). The war continued until August 12, when the Kremlin declared its end of military operations. But the next day, Russian troops entered the town of Gori, where they would withdraw on August 22 ("Russia Removes Troops From Gori And Military Base In Georgia"). As a result, President Medvedev recognized the independence of Abkhazia and South Ossetia on August 26 ("Russia Recognises Georgian Rebel Russia Defies West By Recognising Georgian Rebel Regions").

The invasion of South Ossetia was from the beginning related to NATO's role in the post-cold war era. Thus, the subject of NATO's enlargement has become the dominant subject of the foreign policy agenda in RF. Especially the elites under the Russian political administration perceived the expansion of NATO as an act of the siege against the RF ("Российско-Турецкие Отношения И Проблемы Безопасности Кавказского Региона"). The decisions taken at the NATO Summit held in Bucharest in April 2008 brought Georgia and Ukraine one step closer to membership. Although they were a little disappointed that the membership talks were postponed to the December 2008 summit, most Georgian officials believed the country would enter NATO membership sooner

or later. A few days after this summit, President Saakashvili said in an interview with the state channel Rustavi 2: "In short, this summit gave us a political and legal guarantee that we will become a NATO member. No country has received such a guarantee in the last 15 years" ("Блок НАТО Разошелся На Блокпакеты").

West: Compass Direction

To better understand this threat perception of Russia, it is necessary to carefully examine the rapprochement efforts of Georgia with the West since its independence. In the 1990s Georgia was a low-priority state for the United States and the European Union. In fact, with the collapse of the Soviet Union, like many other republics, it was a failed and fragmented state in the eyes of the West. Although relations were established during Shevardnadze and Clinton periods, US interest in Georgia only increased after 9/11. In 2002, the United States sent its 200 Special Forces members to Tbilisi to train Georgian troops. Moreover, Georgia did not receive enough attention from the Union as it was far from the sphere of influence of the EU, which was struggling to expand eastward in the 1990s. However, after the Rose Revolution in November 2003, the young and charismatic Saakashvili's becoming President of Georgia greatly enhanced the country's reputation in the eyes of the West. Still, there were differences in the approach of the USA and the EU towards Georgia. For the United States, the Saakashvili administration was a pro-Western government that supported the global "war on terror" strategy and claimed to have common values such as "democratic values". The EU states, on the other hand, looked at this new Georgian government from different perspectives. They had a dilemma about how to take a stand against Georgia, which was exposed to the Western-backed color revolution and further disrupted its relations with Russia. While Germany and France, which have trade ties with Russia, were hesitant to provoke Moscow, Britain and the Eastern European countries that had recently joined the union fully supported Georgia's Western policies (Cooley 342-343). Despite all this explicit or implicit support until 2008, none of the Western states, especially the United States, gave sufficient support to Georgia in the 2008 war. While this war increased hatred of Russia in Georgia, it also deeply damaged confidence in the West. The Georgian state even started to discuss normalization policies with Russia in the hope of minimizing losses.

Post-tussle Scuppered Dealing

In 2012, Georgian President Mikhail Saakashvili offered citizens of the Russian Federation to travel to his country without a visa, in a unilateral initiative to improve relations between the two countries. In his annual speech to parliament, he said his administration wants to establish better relations with Russia. Nevertheless, Saakashvili added that he would continue to fight for the "cleansing of Abkhazia and South Ossetia". But the Kremlin administration reiterated that they will not establish any relations with Georgia as long as Saakashvili remains in power ("Saakashvili In Visa Overture To Russians"). In

2013, Georgia's new government, which overthrew President Saakashvili's party, stated that it wanted to re-establish trade and business links with Moscow. Shortly after this statement, President Putin said he supports the restoration of "full-scale relations" ("Five Years On, Georgia Makes Up With Russia"). Despite all these positive rhetorics, Georgia-Russia relations did not develop significantly. In the occupied territories of Georgia after 2015, Moscow-backed security forces quietly moved the administrative border fence separating the contact line forward. Thus, more Georgian territory was brought under Russian control (Coffey). In 2018, Prime Minister Giorgi Kvirikashvili made a statement that Georgia is ready to normalize relations with Russia ("Moscow Hails Georgian PM'S Intention To Normalize Relations With Russia"). In 2019, a huge protest broke out in Tbilisi. In the 1990s, the crowd wanted to protest the visit of a Russian MP who allegedly fought in Abkhazia to Georgia and wanted to storm the parliament building. The demonstrations that started based on anti-Russian and anti-occupation evolved into anti-government demonstrations ("Georgia: Thousands Protest Ruling Party's Broken Promises").

Thus, bilateral relations between Russia and Georgia have been tense and unstable since the collapse of the USSR. Contradictions arose immediately after the collapse of the Soviet Union. The most critical moment in bilateral relations was the Russo-Georgian War in 2008. With the advent of the new government in Georgia, the vector of relations with Russia also changed: air traffic was restored, Georgian alcohol and mineral products returned to the shelves of Russian stores, and the process of issuing Russian visas for Georgian citizens was simplified. But to fully restore diplomatic relations, it is necessary to find a compromise on the resolution of the Abkhaz and South Ossetian issues. Moscow and Tbilisi have opposite opinions on the status of South Ossetia and Abkhazia. It should be noted that trade and economic cooperation with Russia is extremely beneficial for Georgia. It is important for the Russian Federation that Georgia does not deploy NATO military bases on its territory and reduce cooperation with this military-political organization, which over the past 30 years has greatly expanded and approached the borders of Russia.

Armenia-Russia Relations

After the collapse of the USSR, interstate relations took place in rather difficult conditions. For Armenia, relations with the Russian Federation occupied a special place among the country's foreign policy priorities related to political, economic, and military potential. For Russia, cooperation between Russia and Armenia was necessary not only to maintain stability on the borders of the CIS but also to ensure the existence of the Russian Federation in a region of vital importance to it. Diplomatic relations between Armenia and the Russian Federation were established on April 3, 1992. Later, the countries were tied by relations of allied partnership. More than 200 interstate, intergovernmental

and interdepartmental treaties, and agreements were signed. The main documents were The Treaty between the Russian Federation and the Republic of Armenia on Friendship, Cooperation and Mutual Assistance, signed in Moscow on August 29, 1997. This agreement was a legal action designed to fill the legal vacuum that arose after the Belovezha Accords, signed on December 8, 1991. The Declaration on the Allied Partnership between the Republic of Armenia and the Russian Federation oriented towards the 21st century, signed on September 26, 2000 (Смирнова 30).

In the post-Soviet period, Russian-Armenian relations have been characterized by a high level of bilateral contacts at the highest political level. There are five stages in the evolutionary development of relations between Russia and Armenia in the 1990s:

1. 1991-1993 The period of acquiring and strengthening independence: relations are cautious, partly conflicting;
2. 1993-1994 The period of the beginning of the movement towards stabilization: the relations are normalized;
3. 1994-1997 The period of the most intensive diplomatic ties: the preparation and signing of the main interstate treaties and agreements is underway;
4. 1997-1998 The period of creation of the interstate "infrastructure": relations are developing without significant hesitation;
5. 1998-2000 The period of change of heads of state: new trends in Russian foreign policy, revision of positions and adjustment of priorities. Uncertainty re-emerges in the relationship.

The Armenian-Russian military-technical and military-political cooperation is at a high level. In the city of Gyumri in 1995, the 102nd military base was formed, which is deployed on the territory of Armenia without any monetary compensation. The contract was originally signed for 25 years.

Armenia cooperates with Russia both on a bilateral basis and within the framework of the CSTO. Armenia lays special emphasis on relations with the CSTO (Марабян 83-87). Membership in the CSTO is one of the components of ensuring the security of Armenia. Armenia attaches great importance to the development of the military component of the CSTO and the creation of military formations within this regional organization. Russian and Armenian armed forces jointly guard the Armenian-Turkish and Armenian-Iranian borders, the external borders of the CIS. The airspace of Armenia is also jointly protected. The Air Forces of Armenia and Russia are jointly deployed at the Erebuni Airport near Yerevan. Also, the Armenian armed forces are participating in the combat duty within the framework of the CIS Joint Air Defense System. The Russian military base is equipped with S-300 anti-aircraft missile systems and MiG-29 fighters. A joint Russian-Armenian military group has been formed. It should be added that the training of Armenian officers has happened in the military educational institutions of Russia. Let us emphasize that the military presence of Russia in the Caucasus is of particular importance for the security

of Armenia and as a factor in ensuring the military-political balance in the region ("Военная Доктрина Республики Армении").

The achievements of the two countries in the economic field are significant. Russia plays a key role in ensuring Armenia's energy security. Before the commissioning of the Iran-Armenia gas pipeline in 2007, Russia was the only natural gas supplier to Armenia. This is still relevant now since Iranian gas is processed into electricity and supplied back to Iran. The Iran-Armenia gas pipeline is of great importance due to frequent contingencies on the gas pipeline since gas from Russia enters Armenia through Georgia. The company ArmRosgazprom, which is 80% owned by the Russian Gazprom, operates in the republic's gas sector. It is ArmRosgazprom CJSC (closed joint-stock company) that implements the Hrazdan-5 project. In 2006, an agreement was signed between the Government of the Republic of Armenia and OJSC (open joint-stock company) Gazprom, according to which CJSC ArmRosgazprom acquires the assets of the fifth power unit of the Hrazdan Thermal Power Plant (TPP) with obligations to complete its construction and modernization. According to the CJSC project, ArmRosgazprom will complete the construction of the power unit to a capacity of 440 MW. In addition to paying for the acquisition cost of the assets of the unfinished 5th power unit of the Hrazdan TPP of USD 248.8 million, ArmRosgazprom CJSC made investments in the power unit with a total volume of about USD 150 - 170 million. It is planned that the commissioning of the 5th power unit will provide Armenia with an opportunity to increase the supply of electricity to Georgia. Another example of cooperation between Armenia and Russia in the energy sector is the Metsamor Nuclear Power Plant (NPP), which is completely powered by Russian raw materials. The Russian company Joint Stock Company (JSC) Inter RAO UES is actively working here, which manages the Metsamor NPP. The nuclear power plant is the guarantor of the energy security of Armenia and is also regarded as one of the leading factors in increasing the economic and, as a consequence, the political competitiveness of Armenia in the region.

Armenia today is the only country in the South Caucasus capable of exporting electricity. Besides, Electric Networks of Armenia CJSC is a subsidiary of Inter RAO UES. CJSC "Electric Networks of Armenia" carries out activities for the transmission and distribution of electricity in the territory of the Republic of Armenia. The company is the only operator in the country with which all other legal entities and individuals are entitled to carry out transactions for the purchase or sale of electricity. Thus, in the energy sector, Russia plays a key role in Armenia. The role of Russia is reflected in the National Security Strategy of Armenia: “The Republic of Armenia, having limited natural resources, is in energy dependence. The reforms that have been implemented have reduced this dependence by creating effective relationships in the energy sector both within the country and with the main partner in the supply of energy resources, the Russian Federation ("Стратегия национальной безопасности Республики Армения").

Russian companies are present in almost all spheres of the Armenian economy. Russian Railways is actively working in the transport sector. The state CJSC "Armenian Railway" in 2008 was transferred to the management of CJSC "South Caucasus Railways". According to the agreement, the term of the concession management is 30 years with the right to prolong it for another 10 years after the first twenty years of operation by mutual agreement of the parties. The presence of Russian capital is also significant in the banking sector of Armenia, in the fields of insurance, telecommunications, and aluminum industry. Russian VTB, Areximbank, part of the Gazprombank group, and others operate in the banking sector. VimpelCom and MTS operate in the telecommunications market. By the way, two out of three Armenian mobile operators belong to Russian companies. Russia is Armenia's key trading partner. In 2008, Russia ranked first in Armenian exports with an indicator of 19.7%. It was almost the same percentage in imports, 19.2%. And this indicator brought Russia to the first place among the trade partners of Armenia. In 2011, the trade turnover between Russia and Armenia amounted to USD 1.1 billion. The share of Russia in Armenian exports was 16.7%. According to this indicator, Russia occupies a leading position. Only in 2009, Russia slightly lost its leadership to Germany. And in imports, Russia has been the leader for several years in a row with its share in 2011, it was 21.5%. By the way, the share of China, which ranks second, does not even reach 10% ("Внешнеэкономическая деятельность. Национальная статистическая служба Армении").

Mutual trade between Russia and Armenia is complicated by Armenia's isolation. However, in recent years, there has been an increase in economic cooperation in bilateral relations. In 2018, trade between Russia and Armenia amounted to USD 1.97 billion, an increase of 10.8% compared to 2017 (Russian exports to Armenia was USD 1.34 billion, imports were USD 0.63 billion). In January-July 2019, trade between Russia and Armenia amounted to USD 1.14 billion (Russian exports were USD 719.8 million, imports were USD 425.0 million).

The structure of imports is dominated by food products and agricultural raw materials, textiles and footwear, precious metals and stones. State Corporation "Rosatom" is working to extend the life of the Armenian NPP at the expense of a Russian loan. Interregional cooperation is actively developing, in which about 70 constituent entities of the Russian Federation and practically all administrative-territorial units of Armenia participate. The Intergovernmental Commission on Economic Cooperation is working effectively. The 19th meeting of the intergovernmental commission took place in April 2019 in Moscow. Among the largest Russian companies operating in Armenia are OJSC "Russian Railways", OJSC "GeoProMining Gold", OJSC "VTB Bank", UC (United Company) RUSAL. Regular contacts are maintained at the highest level through the EaEU (Eurasian Economic Union), CIS (Commonwealth of Independent States), and CSTO (Collective Security Treaty Organization). Constructive interaction is developing between the governments of the two countries. Gazprom Armenia, owned by Gazprom, supplies gas to the Armenian domestic market. In January

2019, Russia and Armenia signed a contract for the supply of AK-12 assault rifles. In May, Armenia began the process of acquiring Su-30SM multifunctional fighters from the Russian Federation.

In the field of space exploration, an Armenian-Russian agreement on cooperation in the exploration and use of outer space for peaceful purposes was signed in April 2016. In December 2018, a station of the Russian GLONASS Global Navigation Satellite System was opened on the territory of the Byurakan Astrophysical Observatory in Armenia.

One thing can also highlight the cooperation between Armenia and Russia in the cultural and humanitarian sphere. There are branches of Russian universities in Armenia, as well as the interstate Russian-Armenian (Slavonic) University. In December 2017, a branch of the Yerevan Russian Center for Science and Culture was opened. Armenia is also one of the most popular destinations for Russian tourists. Russia ranks first in terms of the number of tourists visiting Armenia. In 2018, 684 thousand Russian citizens arrived in Armenia. According to the Minister of Economy of Armenia Tigran Khachatryan, the annual profit from tourist visits to Armenia is USD 1.2 billion, where 45% is provided by tourists from Russia.

Russian-Armenian relations are characterized by a high level of bilateral contacts at the highest and high political levels. Armenian President (2008-2018) Serzh Sargsyan has visited Russia on several occasions. In October 2011, as a state visit; in March 2017, as an official visit; and also Sargsyan made several working visits to Russia. Russian President Vladimir Putin made state visits to Armenia in August 2010 and December 2013. Vladimir Putin and Serzh Sargsyan also met several times within the framework of the CSTO, the EaEU, and the CIS, as well as on the sidelines of international summits.

On May 8, 2018, Vladimir Putin congratulated the new Prime Minister of Armenia Nikol Pashinyan on his election to this post and held a telephone conversation with him. On May 14, Nikol Pashinyan's first meeting with Vladimir Putin took place on the sidelines of the EaEU summit in Sochi. On June 13, Russian President Vladimir Putin met with Armenian Prime Minister Nikol Pashinyan, who arrived in Russia for the opening of the FIFA World Cup. In 2018, Armenian Prime Minister Nikol Pashinyan also paid working visits to Moscow in September and December. A June 6, 2019, Vladimir Putin met with Armenian Prime Minister Nikol Pashinyan "on the sidelines" of the St. Petersburg International Economic Forum.

But not everything was so smooth in these relations. At the same time, Russia ensured the security of Azerbaijan, which Armenia did not like very much. In October 2020, against the backdrop of the fighting in Nagorno-Karabakh, Azerbaijani President Ilham Aliyev said that the main supplier of weapons to his country is precisely Russia, and not Turkey, which actively supported the territorial integrity of Azerbaijan. That is the fact. Over the past ten years, Moscow has sold Buk air defense systems to Baku, together with other weapons such as, Smerch multiple launch rocket systems and Kornet anti-tank missile systems. All of this caused concern in Armenia since it was obvious

that these weapons could be used against it as well. In 2017, then-President Serzh Sargsyan called the supply of weapons to Baku the most painful aspect of Russian-Armenian relations, which "casts a shadow over a lot." At the same time, he considered the calls to reconsider relations with Moscow dangerous, expressing doubts that NATO is waiting for Armenians "with open arms."

There were other unpleasant moments in the relations between Armenia and Russia, although they were not striking. For example, Yerevan has traditionally supported Moscow in the UN General Assembly when voting on the Crimean issue. Back in March 2014, the assembly adopted a resolution in which it called the referendum on the peninsula on joining the Russian Federation illegal. Armenia voted against the document. Apart from Armenia, only Belarus from the post-Soviet republics did this. The rest voted for, abstained, or did not participate in the voting. At the same time, Armenia did not officially recognize the peninsula as part of Russia. In the summer of 2020, Pashinyan noted that this issue was never raised in negotiations with the Russian authorities. In public speeches, he always tried to get away from this issue.

The coming to power of opposition leader Pashinyan in the spring of 2018 amid a wave of protests as a whole severely cooled Russian-Armenian relations. The fact is that the former political elites and personally former President Serzh Sargsyan had fairly good personal contacts with the Russian leadership. Therefore, after the victory of the "Velvet Revolution", the question arose about the future cooperation between Yerevan and Moscow, because it is no secret to anyone that such scenarios are not liked in Moscow.

At first, everything seemed to go smoothly. Russia recognized the new Armenian authorities as legitimate, and Pashinyan stressed that Yerevan's foreign policy would not change. However, problems soon arose in relations between the two countries. In Armenia, the republic's second president Robert Kocharian, and the current CSTO secretary general Yuri Khachaturov were arrested. Khachaturov served as secretary-general of an international organization led by Russia. Kocharian is the predecessor of the ousted Sargsyan and the defender of his regime because the protests of 2008 were connected precisely with the election of the third president of Armenia, that is, they belong to the same group of political elites, which, in turn, have long been familiar to the Russian elites. Also, Kocharyan has a rather close personal relationship with Vladimir Putin, which the Russian leader himself acknowledged when he congratulated the Armenian politician on the holidays by telephone.

It is not surprising that their high-profile arrest caused a sharp reaction in the Russian Federation. During the events, a recording of a conversation of high-ranking Armenian security officials appeared on the network, who said that Pashinyan was ordering to "arrest" Khachaturov, but "the Russians are in the way." As a result, Khachaturov was quickly released on bail. Over the past two years, Kocharian has been released from custody and arrested again. There are also fewer loud, but no less serious reasons for discontent in Russia. For example, the criminal case initiated by the Armenian Prosecutor General's

Office on the fact of alienation of state property from the concession assets of the SCR (South Caucasus Railway). In April 2020, Russian Foreign Minister Sergei Lavrov said that some Russian companies in Armenia were "in a difficult situation" and expressed the hope that the courts "would be settled without any attempt to bring things inappropriate to allies there." ("Лавров Надеется, Что России И Армении Удастся Урегулировать Вопрос С ЮКЖД"). However, with all this, the parties continued to declare their commitment to strong friendship. As Lavrov stated back in November 2019, with such extensive ties as Russia has with Armenia, disagreements may arise on certain issues, but this is no reason to question the relationship.

The war in Nagorno-Karabakh has become another test for Russian-Armenian relations. Russia, like other countries, has called for a ceasefire. Pashinyan has called Putin and other foreign leaders on more than one occasion. Immediately after the outbreak of the conflict, the question arose whether Russia would provide military assistance to its ally, which is part of the CSTO. Putin stated that Russia "has always fulfilled, is fulfilling and will fulfill" its union obligations, but today military operations are not being conducted on the territory of Armenia. In Yerevan, they argued that there was no question of military assistance from third countries, but if necessary, you could turn to Moscow for new supplies of weapons ("Кремль Разграничил Карабахский Конфликт И Обязательства Перед Арменией").

Although Armenia did not officially turn to Russia for military assistance (at least publicly), the top officials of the republic and the leadership of the unrecognized “Nagorno-Karabakh Republic (NKR)” essentially called on Moscow to intervene in the conflict under the pretext of fighting international terrorism - almost like in Syria. The Armenian side insisted that it was fighting not with Azerbaijan, but with Turkey, which allegedly directly “participates in hostilities” and “supplies terrorists” from the Middle East to the conflict zone. The leader of the separatists Arayik Harutyunyan called for the formation of an international anti-terrorist coalition to prevent Ankara's plans to "turn Azerbaijan into a den of terrorism in the South Caucasus." He addressed an open letter to Putin, in which he stated that relations between “Artsakh” and Russia have a centuries-old history, and asked for direct personal intervention in the situation ("Необходимо Помешать Планам Турции Превратить Азербайджан В Логово Терроризма На Южном Кавказе"). Russia, for its part, made every effort to resolve the situation, but took an emphatically neutral position in the negotiations, corresponding to the status of a mediator in the settlement of the conflict.

The results of the hostilities in Nagorno-Karabakh ended in a national tragedy for the Armenians. As a result of trilateral agreements, which were promptly concluded between Moscow, Yerevan, and Baku on the night of November 10, Azerbaijan retained all occupied positions and took the territories of all occupied regions. Mass protests demanding the resignation of Pashinyan, who is accused of betrayal, do not be subsided in Armenia. Russia was also under fire. In the media and social networks, one can find in abundance

the statements of Armenians that Russia is not at all a real ally, it did not come to Armenia's aid in difficult times, moreover, it contributed to the victory of Azerbaijan. They recalled Moscow's many years of arms deliveries to Baku.

In the last years, the relations between Russia and Armenia have undergone major changes. The Armenian society believes that Russia should have fought on the Armenian side, send its troops to defend Karabakh. Moscow in the current conflict has taken a more neutral "equidistant" position and tried to bring the parties to the negotiating table. "The position of Russia was based on the fact that nothing threatens the territory of Armenia. From a legal point of view, it is so, but from the point of view of public perception, the Armenians believe that Russia has betrayed them ("У Армян Хватает Наглости Обвинять Россию В Предательстве После Провала В Карабахе").

Pashinyan's opponents want to play on these sentiments. Now the likelihood that the power in Armenia will change is very small. However, experts note that, judging by the latest street actions, a negative scenario is more likely. Perhaps, Pashinyan will be replaced by forces that will blame Russia for the defeat and want to turn their backs on it. Moreover, the administration of the new US president Joe Biden will flirt with Yerevan: The Armenians will be convinced that Russia is an unreliable ally, therefore it is not profitable to remain in the CSTO and the EaEU. On the other hand, the West essentially ignored the latest conflict in Nagorno-Karabakh and did nothing to help Armenia. The OSCE Minsk Group, co-chaired by France and the United States along with Russia, has not shown itself. Before that, negotiations on the resolution of the Karabakh issue lasted for many years but were ineffectual.

And, perhaps, that is why even now in Armenia, the opposition calls for even closer cooperation with Russia. Many are convinced that Azerbaijan is using the current ceasefire just as a respite to try to take control of the entire Nagorno-Karabakh with Turkey's help after a while. Thus, protection against future attacks is again seen in relations with Russia. Besides, some experts openly call the territory of Karabakh occupied by Russian peacekeepers a "Russian protectorate", since Russia has taken over the supply of people living there with water, food, and heat. In their opinion, Armenia has no other options but to maintain relations with Moscow ("Российский Протекторат Над Нагорным Карабахом")

Because of the armistice agreement in Nagorno-Karabakh, Azerbaijan gained control over the territories occupied during the hostilities, as well as over the Aghdam, Gazakh, Kelbajar, and Lachin regions. As a result, the unrecognized "NKR" no longer has a common border with Armenia. Now they are connected by only one highway - the Lachin corridor, guarded by Russian peacekeepers. Even those hypothetical forces that may come to power on the wave of protests understand that revising agreements is not the best solution. This will mean a new escalation of the armed conflict, for which Armenia simply does not have the resources. The last Karabakh war changed the status quo. Yerevan has lost all strategically advantageous positions that it had before

September 27, and in the event of a new conflict, it will no longer be able to shoot back in the mountains with minimal losses.

In Russia, however, they believe that peace and security for the Armenian population, primarily in Karabakh, is now ensured only thanks to Russian peacekeepers. Speeches against Russia mean the end of the peacekeeping mission, and not a single force in Armenia has its resources to fulfill these tasks. Therefore, even in the event of a change of power in Yerevan, they will continue to "be friends" with Moscow. This is what Russian President Vladimir Putin said about Russia's policy in the region: "As for the Transcaucasus, Russia has never intended to leave here. On the contrary, we are going to strengthen our positions in the Transcaucasus." It seems that this statement also implies certain actions ("Выступление На Заседании Российско-Армянского Межрегионального Форума").

In general, Armenian-Russian relations have been developing up to now. The further prospects of relations will largely depend on the extent to which the political elites of the two countries will be able to use the positive experience of interaction at the bilateral and multilateral levels, concentrate on resolving issues on the current agenda, and also improve the fundamental documents of the Armenian-Russian cooperation.

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Relations Between China and The Caucasus Countries Through The Belt and Road Initiative

Serdar YILMAZ*

Introduction

After the collapse of the Soviet Union, internationally recognized independent states of Azerbaijan, Armenia and Georgia emerged in the South Caucasus region. These three states have wished to develop both their cooperation in the international arena and to expand their relations with Russia, western countries and other important actors like Japan, India and China. They are eager to be involved in international investments and projects introduced by a variety of countries. In this context, South Caucasus countries perceive China's Belt and Road Initiative (BRI) as an important opportunity and seek ways to be included in this initiative to develop major investments and projects.

China's President Xi Jinping announced in September 2013 a significant initiative called Belt and Road Initiative (BRI) aiming at setting a new phase for China's foreign policy towards Asia, Europe, Africa, the Caucasus and the Balkans. BRI consists of two parts as Belt connects China with South Asia, Central Asia, Russia, and Europe. The other part of BRI a maritime Road links Chinese ports with those in the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN), India, Pakistan, Bangladesh, Sri Lanka, Africa, the Middle East, and Europe. The main aims of the Chinese government are to facilitate trade, investment, and people-to-people exchange via a vast network of ports, railways, pipelines, highways and communication infrastructure stretching from Asia to Europe and Africa.[1] Both parts establish 'the Belt and Road Initiative', which is an extensive global trade project and encompass over 65 countries with 4.4 billion people.[2]

In 2015, China declared six economic corridors and pledged a huge amount of investments that are funded by new financial institutions such as the New Silk Road Fund, Asian Infrastructure Investment Bank, China Development Bank. China also announced to make reciprocal diplomatic commitments to those countries who act with the six proposed routes of BRI. These six corridors refer to the China-Mongolia-Russia Economic Corridor (CMREC), the New Eurasian Land Bridge, the China-Central and Western Asia Economic Corridor, the China-Pakistan Economic Corridor (CPEC), the China-Indochina Peninsula

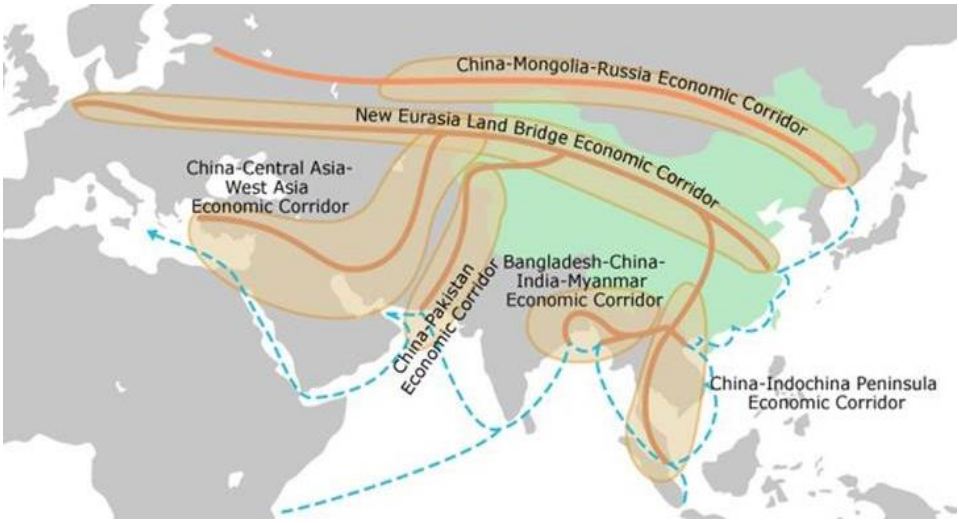
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1 Michael Clarke, "The Belt and Road Initiative: China's New Grand Strategy?", *Asia Policy*, Number 24 (July 2017), XX–XX, p.2.

2 Amy He, "Silk Road connects China to the world," *China Daily U.S.A,* March 31, 2015, http://usa.chinadaily.com.cn/us/2015-03/31/content_19965235.htm. (10.10.2020)

Economic Corridor, the Bangladesh-China-India-Myanmar Economic Corridor (BCIMEC).[3]

Figure 1: BRI and the Six Corridors



Source: china- trade-research.hktdc.com/business-news/article/The-Belt-and-Road-Initiative/ The-Belt-and-Road-Initiative/obor/en/ 1/1X000000/ 1X0A36B7. htm (16.10.2020).

Since the BRI was announced in September 2013, China has spent billions of dollars of foreign direct investment to the partner countries' infrastructure systems. Albert Park states two debates about China's grand strategy. The first debate is about China's intentions and practices have been polarized as China is searching for politically and economically weak and corrupt governments to exploit and create dependency. Second debate represents some contrast views that BRI project seeks to foster development, growth and shared wealth.[4]

Seven years have now passed since the beginning of BRI and there have been little systematic academic works of which Caucasus countries have attracted more investments from China, what soft power materials China is using in the region to bring mutual economic and political relations closer. The study will also try to answer these questions below. What are China's interests in the South Caucasus countries? What do South Caucasus countries expect from the BRI project? Will the BRI project help solve the problems in the South Caucasus or will the problems in the region be an obstacle to this project? A better understanding of these questions can help shed light on the real purpose of China in the South Caucasus region.

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3 Serdar Yılmaz, Bir Kuşak Bir Yol Projesi, Kavramlar, Aktörler, Uygulamalar, Astana Yayınları, 2019, p.12

4 Albert Park, "Which Countries Have Benefited the Most from China's Belt and Road Initiative?", *BELT and ROAD*, 08 April 2020, https:// beltandroad. hktdc. com/ en/ insights/which-countries-have-benefited-most-chinas-belt-and-road-initiative (16.10.2020).

Two projects pass through the South Caucasus and have the potential to be involved in BRI. The first of these, starting from China, Kazakhstan, the Caspian Sea, Azerbaijan, Georgia and Baku-Tbilisi-Kars (BTK) railway passing through Turkey using Middle Corridor route which is also known as the Trans-Caspian International Transport. This option provides an opportunity to transport products from China to Europe. The second one is the Persian Gulf-Black Sea Transport Corridor, also known as the North-South Corridor, which envisions connecting Iran to Europe via Armenia and Georgia. One of the most important issues of this route is the modernization of the transport infrastructure connecting Armenia with Iran and Georgia. Another important issue is the economic blockade on Armenia implemented by Turkey and Azerbaijan.[5]

Figure 2: The South Caucasus Countries



Source: http:/ /openazerbaijan.org/en/topics/analytics/gurcustan-v-erm-nistandak-hadis-l-r-az-rbaycana-hans-mesajlar-verdi/ (17.10.2020)

Azerbaijan

Azerbaijan, which declared its independence on October 18, 1991, with the disappearance of the Soviet Union, is the most important country in the South Caucasus region in terms of strategic, economic and geopolitical aspects. Having a coast on the Caspian Sea, Azerbaijan is very rich in natural resources such as oil and gas, and therefore she has been a country of interest to many global and regional actors from ancient history to the present.[6] She is located in the middle corridor (see Figure 1- the China-Central and Western Asia Economic Corridor) of the BRI project. Within the framework of this economically viable corridor, a freight train set out in 2015 through China, Kazakhstan, Azerbaijan, Georgia to measure the travel between South Korea

5 Benyamin Poghosyan, "China's OBOR initiative: Opportunities for the South Caucasus", *Emerging Europe,* 03.07.2018, https://emerging-europe.com/voices/chinas-obor-initiative-opportunities-for-the-south-caucasus/ (17.10.2020).

6 Feride Inan and Diana Yayloyan, "New Economic Corridors in the South Caucasus and the Chinese One Belt One Road", *TEPAV,* 2018, p.64.

and Istanbul. The 15 days of the experiment revealed that this route takes much less time than the sea route.[7] This line is an alternative to Russia's Trans-Siberian route.

Another corridor planned to be included in the BRI project of Azerbaijan is the North-South Transport Corridor. The purpose of this Corridor is to increase the commercial link between major cities such as Mumbai, Moscow, Baku, Astrakhan, Tehran, Bandar Abbas and Bandar Anzali.[8]

Figure 3: North-South Transport Corridor (NSTC)



Source: https:// www.silkroadbriefing.com/news/2018/06/27/baku-city-watch-chinas- belt-road-divides-caucasus, (14.10.2020).

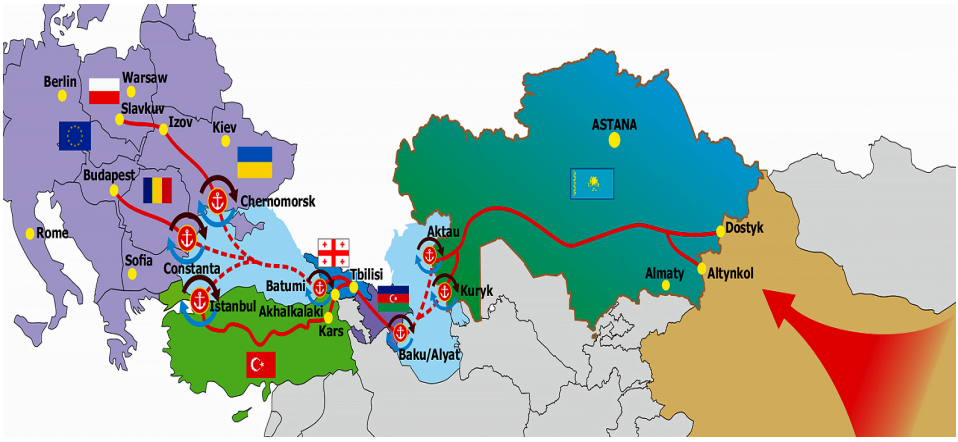
The basis of China's interest in Azerbaijan stems from its efforts to develop a safe railway line from China to Europe as well as Azerbaijan's natural gas resources and power in the region are instrumental in China's focus on this land of fire.[9] Azerbaijan is the main country located on the Trans-Caspian International Transport Route (TITR) which is critical to the middle East-West corridor of the economic Belt.

7 Inan and Yayloyan, ibid. p.65.

8 Azerbaijan's President Ilham Aliyev seeks investment during China visit, *Ports Europe*, 25.04.2019, https://www.portseurope.com/azerbaijans-president-ilham-aliyev-seeks-investment-during-china-visit/, (11.10.2020).

9 Poghosyan, ibid.

Figure 4: Trans-Caspian International Transport Route (TITR)



Source: http:// www.wallonia.com.kz/en/news/international- association-trans-caspian-transport-r oute-kz (19.10.2020).

The TITR is intended for the supply of goods both from China to Europe through the territories of Kazakhstan, Azerbaijan, Georgia and Turkey.[10] TITR is a realistic choice for China as she will enjoy reliable and safe transit route.

BRI Projects in Azerbaijan

Baku-Tbilisi-Kars railway (BTK) was established by Azerbaijan, Georgia and Turkey in 2008 and finalized in 2017 with a total length of 838.6 km. It was later included in the BRI project. It costs $ 220 million for Turkey, and the total cost amounted to 600 million dollars.[11] 76 km of the project passes through Turkey, 259 km from Georgia and 503 km pass through Azerbaijan.[12] Baku, geopolitically, remains between Russia and Iran's strategic policies. The midline created with the BTK has provided Azerbaijan with an alternative opportunity by overcoming this effect. BTK also provides a new opportunity with Azerbaijan to balance the impact and influence of Russia and Iran.[13]

With the completion of the BTK railway, the line reaches the Turkish Republics in Central Asia and China after Baku and joins Marmaray via the Ankara-Istanbul route, and then reaches Bulgaria, Serbia, Hungary, Austria,

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10 Katherine Schmidt, "Azerbaijan's Port on China's Road", *1NEWS.AZ,* 5 Sep 2019, www. 1news.az/news/azerbaijan-s-porton-china-s-road (20.10.2020).

11 CPC Special Brief: An Economic Perspective for the Baku-Tbilisi-Kars Railway, *Caspian Policy Center,* 2017. https://www.caspianpolicy.org/cpc-special-brief-an-economic-perspective-for-the-baku-tbilisi-kars-railway/ (19.10.2020).

12 Nurettin Akçay, "Turkey-China Relations Within The Concept Of The New Silk Road Project", *Bölgesel Araştırma Dergisi-ANKASAM*, 1(3), 2017, p.82

13 Dinmuhammed Atabek, "Yeni İpek Yolu Jeopolitiğinde BTK Demiryolu Hattının Önemi", *Ankasam,* https: // ankasam.org/ yeni-ipek- yolu- jeopolitiginde- baku- tiflis- kars-demiryolu- hattinin-onemi/ (13.10.2020).

Germany, Switzerland, France and the Chunnel Tunnel to England. As a result, there is London at one end of the railway line and Beijing at the other.[14]

Another important point is the Chinese investors in Azerbaijan. Approximately 50% of China's trade with the South Caucasus is with Azerbaijan. More than 100 Chinese companies are operating in trade, service, industry, construction and other fields in Azerbaijan. Chinese companies in Azerbaijan prepare reports on possible projects to be carried out within the framework of BRI, and Chinese entrepreneurs increase their investments within the framework of these reports.[15] China Triumph International Engineering Group, a Chinese state-owned construction firm, was the first Chinese company to complete major construction projects in Azerbaijan. Due to these investments by Chinese investors, Azerbaijan is generous in giving broad interest rate and tax cuts to commercial and policy-oriented Chinese banks compared to other Central Asian countries.[16]

To strengthen cooperation in education between Azerbaijan and China, there are two universities established by the Confucius Institute in Azerbaijan. Confucius Institute at Azerbaijan University of Languages is one of these institutions.[17] This institution has been operating for a long time and has become an important bridge in Azerbaijan-China relations.[18]

Ilham Aliyev participated in the "Advancing the Belt and Road Initiative: China`s Trillion-Dollar Vision" session in Davos on January 22, 2019, and he stated that

> "I firmly believe that any transport project connecting countries has a geopolitical basis. These projects have a positive impact on the geopolitical situation, stability and foresight. These projects create mutual dependence. We cannot be a transit country without our neighbours. Our neighbours cannot be a transit country without their neighbours. Therefore, this is a chain of countries. We are investing in infrastructure inside the country to build roads, highways, airports, for gasification and power generation. We have also invested in transport infrastructure. We go from east to west and from north to south. That's why we

[14] Âdem Üzümcü and Sıdıka Akdeniz, "Yeni İpek Yolu: TRACECA ve Bakü-Tiflis-Kars Demiryolu Projesi", *Avrasya Etüdleri*, 2014, p.193.

[15] Inan and Yayloyan, ibid. pp.65-66.

[16] China's Strategy in the Caucasus, Çin'in Kafkasya'daki Stratejisi, Kafkasyam, 07.04.2019, https://kafkassam.com/chinas-strategy-in-the-caucasus.html, (13.10.2020).

[17] Azerbaijan University of Languages, Confucius Institute at Azerbaijan University of Languages, https://adu.edu.az/en/adu-haqqinda/institutlar/300.html (17.10.2020)

[18] BDU alimləri Anxoy Universitetinin nümayəndə heyəti ilə birgə seminar keçiriblər, *Youth portal,* 25.04.2019, https://youthportal.az/az/news_details/bdu-alimleri-anxoy-universitetinin- numayende-heyeti-ile-birge-seminar-kechiribler, (17.10.2020).

> create a more predictable future by uniting continents and countries."[19]

If we look at the documents signed between Azerbaijan and China within the framework of the BRI, Azerbaijani Energy Minister Parviz Shahbazov attended the BRI Energy Ministerial Conference in China and signed the BRI Partnership Declaration. In 2015, Caspian international transport route of the coordination committee has met in Baku and an agreement was reached to intensify the container service between China-Kazakhstan-Azerbaijan-Georgia and Turkey. Azerbaijani authorities have stated that by 2020, approximately 300-400,000 containers can be transported in this way, bringing billions of profits to its participants.[20] In December 2015, Aliyev visited China and signed a memorandum of understanding for the creation of the economic belt. On December 10, 2015, a cooperation agreement in the field of education and railway were signed between the governments of both countries.[21]

Aliyev met Xi Jinping in Beijing on April 24, 2019, and stated his support to the BRI by declaring that political relations between both countries of "high-level" importance. The trade turnover between the two countries has reached $1.3 billion in 2019.[22] Azerbaijan managed to establish the shortest connections between China and Europe in a short time. One of the major economic projects initiated within the framework of BRI is the development of Alat Port, which is directly linked to the development of the international maritime trade port in Baku. Apart from this, Azerbaijan's international airport, Caspian fleet, Baku Cargo Terminal, modern cargo ships in the Caspian and BTK railway are among Azerbaijan's contributions to the BRI project.[23]

Potential Benefits of Azerbaijan from the BRI Project

From the BRI perspective, China envisages Azerbaijan as a geographic hub and strategic transportation (Alat port, BTK) country from the East to the West. As for Azerbaijan, TITR and NSTC projects will not only make Azerbaijan a logistical hub between but also will bring foreign direct investments and technical assistance from China. If the Middle Corridor route is used actively, Azerbaijan will be able to gain economic opportunities from the Europe-China

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19 Ilham Aliyev attended Advancing the Belt and Road Initiative: China`s Trillion Dollar Vision session in Davos, *Prezident.az,* 2019, https://en.president.az/articles/31598, (19.10.2020).

20 Anar Valiyev, "Can Azerbaijan Revive the Silk Road?", *Ponars Eurasia,* Policy Memo No. 382*,* Baku, 2015, pp.1-4.

21 Azerbaycan Cumhuriyeti Çin Halk Cumhuriyeti Büyükelçiliği, 26.05.2019, http:// beijing. mfa. gov .az/content/3, (18.10.2020).

22 Fariz İsmailzade and Bahruz Babyev, "Azerbaijan's Contribution to the Chinese Belt & Road Initiative", *GCRF COMPASS Policy Brief,* 15 May 2020. pp.3-4. file:/// C:/ Users/ aidata665/ Downloads/COMPASS-ADA-Paper-on-BRI-Fariz-final.pdf (18.10. 2020)

23 Azerbaijan's cooperation with China within BRI has great prospects, *Belt & Road News*, 2019, https:// www.beltandroad.news/ 2019/10/09/azerbaijans-cooperation-with-china- within-bri-hasgreat-prospects/, (19.10.2020).

trade traffic, which is 600 billion dollars annually. Establishing logistic centers and free trade areas, especially in the ports of Azerbaijan, will contribute to the development of Trans-Caspian cooperation and will deepen the win-win cooperation between countries.

The BRI project benefits both China and Azerbaijan as they are very keen on further cooperation. However, in order for the Middle Corridor to be used actively, it is necessary to complete the infrastructure investments in the ports of Azerbaijan, Kazakhstan and Turkmenistan. It is also significant to sign transit and fee agreements between countries, to eliminate the technical deficiencies in the railway network, to increase the logistics capacity, regional peace and economic development. Moreover, the occupation of Karabakh, the territory of Azerbaijan, by Armenia and issues between Armenia and Turkey are obstacles to the BRI Project.

Georgia

Due to her strategic location in the South Caucasus, free-trade agreements with leading economies and competitive market, Georgia is an important and worthy BRI participating country.[24] Georgia, one of the most important transit countries of Southern Caucasia, declared its independence on 9 April 1991. She has a coast to the Black Sea and a reliable transit route and capacity for energy projects as Armenia is having problems with Azerbaijan and Turkey. Baku-Tbilisi-Ceyhan Pipeline, Baku-Tbilisi-Erzurum Natural Gas Pipeline and Baku-Tbilisi-Kars Railway are examples of Georgia's transit capacity.[25]

Georgia is located in the Middle Corridor of the BRI project. It is planned to use Azerbaijan's Alat and Baku ports in the Caspian Sea, Kuryk and Aktau ports of Kazakhstan and Turkmenbashi port of Turkmenistan on the sea leg of the Middle Corridor. Thus, the Middle Corridor will become more advantageous in terms of both time and cost than the corridors from the north of the Black Sea via Russia and from the south of Iran to overseas. The estimated cost of the investments to be made in the Middle Corridor is planned to reach 8 trillion dollars. It has been stated that the amount reserved only for transportation infrastructure will reach 40 billion dollars.[26]

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[24] Gia Mosashvili and Ketevan Chumbadze, "China's Belt and Road Initiative and Georgia as a Participating Economy", *11th GEP-China Conference,* University of Nottingham, 2019. p.7

[25] Gürcistan ve "Bir Kuşak Bir Yol", Embassy of China, 26.01.2017, http://ge.china-embassy.org/eng/xwdt/t1434029.htm (17.10.2020).

[26] The New Silk Road Chain Is Only as Strong as Its Weakest Link, Georgia Today, 15.01.2015, http://georgiatoday.ge/news/1569/The-New-Silk-Road-Chain-Is-Only-as-Strong-as-Its-Weakest-Link, (17.10.2020).

Relations between Tbilisi and Beijing in the Light of the Belt-and-Road Initiative

Georgia has free-trade agreements with CIS countries of Kazakhstan, Kirgizstan, Ukraine, Belarus, Moldova, Uzbekistan and Turkmenistan; with the EFTA States of Switzerland, Iceland, Lichtenstein and Norway; and with the EU member states. Moreover, the USA, Canada and Japan have preferential trade rules with Georgia as she is planning set up free-trade with India.[27] Customs-exempt trade enabled Georgia to became the 6th easiest destination for doing business amongst 190 economies.[28]

The fact that Georgia is a Western ally and has signed an Association Agreement with the European Union increases China's interest in Georgia. The partnership agreement is important for China as it will both improve Eurasian trade and increase the likelihood of Chinese investors to connect with the EU and other markets.[29]

Georgian President Giorgi Kvirikashvili said in a speech at the Davos Summer Forum: "With the BRI project, Chinese companies will gather in Georgia. Thanks to the agreements Georgia has, it will be a new opportunity for China to export her goods to European countries without tariff or non-tariff barriers."[30] Besides, Georgia has another strategic location in terms of reaching Europe via the Black Sea. Thanks to Georgia's location, Chinese companies will go abroad and start exporting goods to Europe both by sea and by rail.[31]

60 countries came together in Tbilisi at the Belt and Road International Cooperation Forum on 27-29 November 2017 and in his speech at the forum, Georgian Prime Minister Kvirikashvili stated that the route that will pass through Georgia within the framework of the project is one of the fastest routes. He continued as follows: "We believe that Central Asia and South Caucasus route can be very competitive. Georgia has one of the most positive business atmospheres not only in its region but worldwide. Our country may become the transit and logistics center of the region."[32] With this forum, Georgia became the first country outside of China to host the forum.

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27 Franziska Smolnik, "Georgia Positions Itself on China's New Silk Road", *German Institute for International and Security Affairs. SWP Comment 13*. 2018. pp.2-4

28 World Bank Group, Doing Business 2019. A World Bank Group Flagship Report. 16th edition. Washington DC. 2019. p.5

29 Inan and Yayloyan, ibid. p.68

30 Büyük İpek Yolu Projesi "Tek Kuşak Tek Yol", Newsday, 15.09.2015, http://newsday .ge/new/index.php/ka/component/k2/item/6841%E1%83%90%E1%83%91%E1%83%A0%E1%83%94%E1%83%A8%E1%83%A3%E1%83%9B%E1%83%98%E1%83%A1-%E1%83%92%E 1%8 3%96%E1%83%90, Erişim Tarihi: 22.04.2019.

31 Boris Ajeganov, EU–China trade to bolster security in the South Caucasus, Caci Analyst, 23.06.2017.http://www.cacianalyst.org/publications/analytical-articles/item/13423-eu%E2%80 %93 china-trade-to-bolster-security-in-the-south-caucasus.html, (23.10. 2020).

32 Yeni İpek Yolunun Önemli Durağı Gürcistan, Euronews, 05.12.2017, https://tr.euronews. com/ 2017/12/05/yeni-ipek-yolu-nun-onemli-duragi-gurcistan (24.10.2020).

Baku-Tbilisi-Kars Railway (BTK): BTK project was commissioned in 2005 at a ceremony attended by the prime ministers of Turkey, Azerbaijan, Kazakhstan, Uzbekistan and Georgia. Once the railroad has become fully operational, BTK is expected to carry up to 17 million tonnes of freight and three million passengers yearly.[33]

Figure 5: Baku-Tbilisi-Kars Railway



Source: https://www.silkroadbriefing.com/news/2018/06/27/baku-city-watch-chinas-belt-road-divides-caucasus/, Erişim Tarihi: 22.04.2019.

An alternative route to Russia was created with this project while all the railways from China to Europe were passing through Russia before BTK. Apart from this, the distance has been shortened by about 7 thousand kilometres, thus BTK reduces the cost. With BTK, travel time has been reduced to 15 days for Chinese goods to reach Europe by rail from London to Beijing without interruption. Due to the advantages BTK provides, this railway is referred to as the heart of the iron silk road.[34]

The other focal point of Georgia is Anaklia Port, the first freight (cargo) port to be established on the Black Sea coast within the framework of BRI. "The new port will reach the capacity of handling 100 million tons of cargo annually and will take the world's largest container ships." Georgian government wishes to make Anaklia port the BRI trade route between China and Europe and to develop the port infrastructure of Georgia.[35] However, at the beginning of 2020, Georgia government cancelled the Anaklia deep-sea port Project. According to Eter Glurjidze and Soso Dzamukashvili, Anaklia port has the potential of becoming another conflict between Georgia and Russia as the port does not comply with the Kremlin's privileged interests. Georgian government would

33 Smolnik, ibid, p.3

34 Yavuz Soydan, "İpek Yolu Projesi ve Türkiye", *Netgaste,* 28.12.2017, https://www. netgaste .com /ipek-yolu-projesi-ve-turkiye-2492yy.htm, (24.10.2020).

35 Iza Gigauri. "The Important Role of Silk Road Initiatives for Georgian Economy", *International Journal of Economics, Business and Management Research*. Vol. 2, No. 02. 2018. p.423.

like to see warm relations with Russia since the 2008 Georgia-Russia War. So, Georgia might have seen this project as an instrument of another aggression played a pivotal role in the government's decision.[36]

While China was the third largest trading partner of Georgia in 2014, it became the largest investor in 2018 within the framework of the BRI project. Chinese investors are interested in the construction of sectors such as hydropower, infrastructure, energy, mining, health, transportation, finance and agriculture. Hualing Corporation, a private company in Xinjiang province, is the largest foreign investor in Georgia and invested heavily in infrastructure development in Tbilisi, including the New Town and Youth Olympic Village.[37] China was the largest foreign investor in Georgia in 2019 as well.

After the BRI project was announced, the Free Trade Agreement between Georgia and China was signed in Hong Kong on 13 May 2017 and started on January 1, 2018. The greatest importance of this agreement for Georgia is that Georgia is the first country with which China signed a free trade agreement in the region.[38] Xi Yenchi, the Ambassador of China to Georgia, stated that more than 140 cooperation documents were signed between the two countries within the framework of BRI in a short period of five years.[39]

Multiple Confucius Institutes have been opened to contribute to the cooperation and to increase mutual understanding between China and Georgia in the field of culture and education within the framework of the BRI Project. In this framework, universities and secondary schools were opened in the Confucius Institute, and more than a thousand Chinese language experts were trained. Irine Abuladze, the Deputy Minister of Education, even stated that mutual agreements were signed on the facilitation of Chinese language teaching and the implementation of Chinese as a second foreign language in Georgia.[40] Language courses are offered in 26 universities and secondary schools in Georgia. Both countries signed an agreement on popularizing Chinese language studies in Georgia on February 15, 2019.[41]

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36 Eter Glurjidze and Soso Dzamukashvili, "The Anaklia Port: A Venture the Georgian Government Can Not Risk?", *Institute for a Greater Europe, 17 June 2020. https://www. institutegreatereurope .com/post/2020/06/17/the-anaklia-port-a-venture-the-georgian-government-can-not-risk (26.10.2020)*

37 Barış Adıbelli, "Bir Kuşak Bir Yol Girişimi: Çin'in Yeni Dünya Düzeni", *Yorunge Dergi,* http://www.yorungedergi.com/2018/05/bir-kusak-bir-yol-girisimi-cinin-yeni-dunya-duzeni/, (27.10.2020).

38 Gürcistan ve Hong Kong arasında Serbest Ticaret Anlaşması İmzalanmıştır, Forbes,2018. https://forbes.ge/news/4198/G%C3%BCrcistan-ve-Hong-Kong-aras%C4%B1nda-serbest-ticaret-anla%C5%9Fmas%C4%B1-imzalanm%C4%B1%C5%9Ft%C4%B1r (25.10.2020).

39 Bir Kuşak – Bir Yol Girişim, İpek Yolu Ruhunu Teşvik Etmeli, *GHN,* 18.06.2018, http:// www.ghn.ge/com/news/view/217758, (25.10.2020).

40 İbid.

41 Nurlan Aliyev, "China's Soft Power in the South Caucasus", *The Central Asia-Caucasus ANALYST*, 2 March 2020, https://www.cacianalyst.org/publications/analytical-articles/item/13604-chinas-soft-power-in-the-south-caucasus.html (28.10.2020).

Benefits of Georgia from the BRI Project

Thanks to this project, Georgia will accelerate the international integration process by having transportation, telecommunication and energy networks covering Asia, Europe, the Middle East and partially Africa.[42] With the opening of the BTK, which will play an active role in the project, Georgia has increased its share of freight in the corridor and gained the chance to have a say on the corridor. Georgia will benefit financially thanks to the railway and trade and tourism will be stimulated due to the construction and trade centers established around the railway. In addition, Georgia aims to get rid of Russia's pressures to some extent with this project.[43]

Since many investments will be made in the region with the project, these investments will provide job opportunities for the people of the region.[44] China does not want security threats to the BRI project to exist. In September 2008, the Minister of Foreign Affairs of China expressed his concerns about the latest development in South Ossetia and Abkhazia and supported Georgia's territorial integrity, with particular reference to Russia's decision to recognize the regions of Abkhazia and South Ossetia as independent republics.[45]

Armenia

Armenia declared its independence on September 21, 1991, with the collapse of the Soviets. Nagorno-Karabakh conflict and Armenia's closed borders with Turkey due to Karabakh issue has made Armenia an isolated country. Thus, Armenia has been left out of important projects in the region. Today, Armenia has two border gates with Georgia in the north and Iran in the south. In this context, Armenia, unlike other countries in the South Caucasus, has the position of a terrestrial country with limited trade and transportation connections and limited economic interaction in the region, and therefore it has become highly dependent on Russia over time.[46]

The route of the North-South corridor, including Armenia in the BRI Project, is as follows: It is envisaged that goods will be transported from Iran's Persian Gulf ports to the Iran-Armenia border to the territory of Armenia by railways and highways, then via Armenia to the Black Sea ports of Georgia and then to Europe via the ports of Bulgaria and Greece.[47]

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42 Joseph Larsen, "Georgia: The Black Sea Hub for China's Belt and Road", *The Diplomat,* 2017. https:// thediplomat. com/ 2017/05/georgia-the-black-sea-hub-for-chinas-belt-and- road/, Erişim Tarihi: (29.10.2020).

43 Emel Şahin, "Bir Kuşak Bir Yol Projesi ve Güney Kafkasya", *Bir Kuşak Bir Yol Projesi: Kavramlar, Aktörler Uygulamalar*, (ed), Serdar Yılmaz, Astana Yayınları, 2019. p.112.

44 Vladimer Papava, "One Belt One Road Initiative And Georgia*", Georgian Foundation For Strategıc and International Studies,* No: 93, 2017, p.9.

45 Joseph Larsen, "Georgia-China Relations: The Geopolitics Of The Belt And Road", *Georgian Institute, Of Politics,* Tbilisi, 2017, p.10.

46 Inan and Yayloyan, ibid. pp.13-18.

47 Inan and Yayloyan, ibid. pp.40-43.

China's Geopolitical Interests in Armenia

The fact that China is one of the first countries to recognize Armenia's independence has contributed to the positive development of bilateral relations. In his congratulatory message to Prime Minister Nikol Pashinyan, Chairman of the State Council of the People's Republic of China Li Keqiang used the following statements regarding bilateral relations:

> "Armenia is a traditional partner of friendly cooperation for China. Bilateral relations have continued an active trend since the establishment of diplomatic relations. Bilateral political trust and cooperation in different fields are increasing. I am ready to establish a good working relationship with you to bring Armenian-Chinese relations to a new level of development through joint efforts. The Chinese side is ready to continue the BRI initiative with your country's development strategy, so the results of bilateral relations and cooperation will further benefit the people of the two countries."[48]

Investments Made in Armenia with the BRI Project

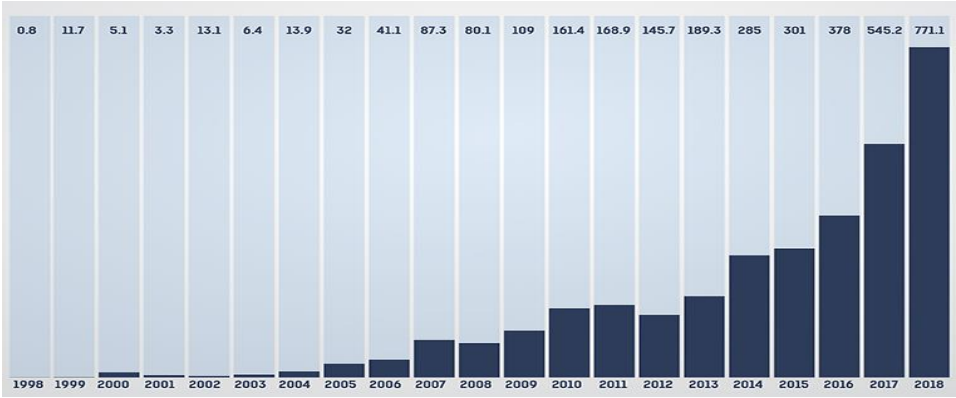
Relations between China and Armenia have gained momentum since 2012. Beijing reported that it sent 37 million dollars of economic aid to Armenia in six years. The number of institutions providing Armenian education in China increased and Chinese students started to travel to Armenia and study in the country. The main reason for this trend stems from the potential investments of Chinese companies in Armenia.

The trade volume between the two countries is gradually growing. While the trade volume between the two countries reached approximately 300 million USD in 2017, this figure corresponds to a 35 per cent increase compared to 2016. Relations between Armenia and China are developing in areas such as trade, education and culture, as well as defence technologies. The first signals in this field were revealed during the period of Serzh Sargsyan, and during this period, China signed an agreement to send 1.5 million US dollars to Armenia within the framework of military aid.[49]

Figure 6: Armenia-China Economic Relations (1998-2018)

[48] Siyaset, Panorama, 12.05.2018, https://www.panorama.am/am/news/ 2019/ 05/ 15/ %D5% 93% D5%A1%D5%B7%D5%AB%D5%B6%D5%B5%D5%A1%D5%B6-%D5 %80 %D5% A1%D 5%B5%D5%A1%D5%BD%D5%BF%D5%A1%D5%B6/2114647, (01. 11.2020).

[49] Alin Ozinian, "Çin- Ermenistan ilişkileri güçleniyor", *Agos,* 31.05.2019, http://www.agos. com.tr/tr/yazi/22509/cin-ermenistan-iliskileri-gucleniyor, (03.11.2020).



Source: The Atlas of Economic Complexity, http://atlas.cid.harvard.edu/, (15.11.2019)

China values stability and security along its trade routes, and the South Caucasus is no exception.[50] A mutual visa exemption agreement was signed between China and Armenia on May 25, 2019. According to the agreement, citizens of the two countries will be able to benefit from the visa exemption for a maximum of 90 days within 180 days.[51]

The first of the Confucius Institute, financed by China, was opened in Yerevan in February 2009 for the first time in the South Caucasus region. The Chinese government spent 12 million dollars in Armenia in 2018 to built a Chinese School with 650 students, that was the first that China has not done in other Caucasian countries. The mission of this institution is to develop friendly relations, to promote the Chinese cultural perception in Armenia and to become a cultural and educational center for the spread of the Chinese language.[52] China, whose largest embassy building is in Moscow, is building the second largest embassy building in Armenia. The construction of this embassy building, a sign of China's growing economic and diplomatic roles in Armenia, will, above all, deepen the level of political relations.[53]

China's main goal in its Belt and Road Initiative is to develop infrastructure and thus, she plans to build a transport corridor from Iran through Armenia to Georgia which is called Armenia-Iran railway. This railway project is not a part of BRI but later it has been included in BRI as Chinese Civil Engineering Construction Corporation in 2018 announced its interest in the project.

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50 Daniel Shapiro, "US Should Keep an Eye on Rising Chinese Investment in the South Caucasus", *Russia Matters*, October 01, 2020, https:// www. russiamatters. org/analysis/us-should-keep-eye-rising-chinese-investment-south-caucasus (03.11.2020).

51 Alin Ozinian, ibid.

52 Bir Kuşak Bir Yol. Çin neden Ermenistan'la "baştan çıkarıcı"?, *Dalma News*, 19.12.2017, http://dalma.news/am/mek-goti-mek-chanaparh-inchou-e-chinastane-hayastanov/, (06.11.2020).

53 New Embassy Is Sign Of Strengthening Chinese-Armenian Ties, *Lobelog,* 29.08.2017, https://lobelog.com/new-embassy-is-sign-of-strengthening-chinese-armenian-ties/, (06.11.2020).

However, it is a very expensive project (3.5 Billion Dollars) and has a long way to go before completion as there has been little progress on the ground.[54]

Another area where China has invested in Armenia is in metals and heavy industry like copper, cement and glass.[55] To increase tourism, Air China has announced that it will offer direct air service between Yerevan and Beijing. China also participates in various energy projects. Among these, 80% of the repair of Hrazdan Thermal Power Plant is carried out by China. Also, in February 2019, the Chinese company Dalian Guoming Group announced its intention to invest about $ 100 million to create an industrial zone in Armenia.[56]

With the North-South Corridor of the BRI project, Armenia gained the possibility of being included in the project by bypassing the borders of Turkey and Azerbaijan where it has problems. Another possibility is the peaceful solution of Armenia's problems with neighbouring countries thanks to the BRI project.[57] According to Armenia, the regional economic integration that will occur through BRI is perceived as an opportunity for Armenia, as it will connect Armenia to the world economies and markets. Closed borders, administrative borderlines and frozen conflicts in the region prevent the development of economic corridors.[58]

Armenia's involvement in the project of China will enable Armenia to develop its relations in the international arena. Therefore, this situation will enable the country to gain positive momentum in terms of economy, politics, culture and social. With the project, the increase in foreign investments in the country, the development of the country's tourism sector, the development in regional and economic integration and the increase in the level of welfare will also reduce Armenia's dependence on Russia.

However, Armenia attracts the least investment from China compared to Azerbaijan and Georgia due to the conflitcs with Turkey and Azerbaijan. The Karabakh issue that Azerbaijan is now so decisive to take back her territory seems to be a significant reasons for China to omit investments in Armenia. The most important one is Armenia's growing dependence on Russia and Russian influence over politics and economy. Thus, the BRI investments have remained limited.

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54 Shapiro, ibid.

55 Raffi Elliott, "Is Armenia Playing a Dangerous Game with China?", *Armenian Weekly,* 03.01.2019, https://armenianweekly.com/2019/01/03/is-armenia-playing-a-dangerous-game-with-china/, (07.11.2020)

56 Andranik Hovhannisyan, "Armenian-Chinese Relations", *Orbeli Center*, http://orbelicenter.am/en/post/214/2019-05-22/Armenian-Chinese+relations, (08.11.2020)

57 Inan and Yayloyan, ibid. pp.62-65.

58 Inan and Yayloyan, ibid. pp.68-69.

Conclusion

According to the Chinese state, the BRI initiative is a new driving force that lays a solid foundation for the healthy and rapid development of friendly relations and supports the prosperity and development of the global economy. I assume that the BRI project is a part of the Chinese government's global domination strategy in the 21st century as the coming two decades are likely to see a further rise in Chinese power mostly on her immediate neighbourhood and then in the world.

South Caucasus countries, which have actively supported the BRI initiative from the very beginning, have already been trying to integrate into the global market, as well as reaching diverse economies for many years. The main expectations of Azerbaijan, Georgia and Armenia from the BRI project are political cooperation, the creation of a network of structural links, the elimination of trade barriers, financial integration, increased trade and tourism, the opportunity to strengthen cooperation with European and Asian countries in different fields, transport, telecommunications and energy networks, and to achieve greater international integration and economic development.

In this study, within the framework of the BRI project, the steps are taken in the South Caucasus, the advantages of the project to the countries and some possible results have been mentioned. It can be argued that the South Caucasus region will be a place for the various sphere of influences in which China will take a prominent place among others in the coming ten years.

It seems that Azerbaijan, Georgia and Armenia are yet far from falling under Chinese economic or political influence as three countries have different geopolitical issues and priorities. Geopolitical imperatives of Georgia’s pro-western and pro-USA stance, Armenia’s political and economic dependence on Russia and her landlocked status, Azerbaijan’s adoption of fully independent foreign policy approach, her determination of taking back Karabakh and establishment of energy supply security would hinder Chinese economic or political influence in the South Caucasus region. However, there are some more obstacles for South Caucasus countries to take part in the project. The issue of Georgia's South Ossetia-Abkhazia and the tension experienced by Russia in this context, the conflict between Turkey and Armenia, and Nagorno-Karabakh conflict between Armenia and Azerbaijan seem to be the most important obstacles encountered in the region. At the same time, these obstacles raise the possibility that the BRI project can become a key to solving the problems experienced by the related countries.

Presumably, regardless of imperatives and problems in the region, it seems that the Chinese political and economic presence in the South Caucasus is likely to be more tangible in the coming decade.

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The Caucasus States' Relations with the EU (1991-2020)

Füsun ÖZERDEM*

Introduction

The global importance of the EU and the Caucasus is constantly increasing after the "Cold War". The EU continues to be one of the most important centers of attraction with the political, economic, legal and humanitarian values it offers. While the EU, as it was called the European Community at that time, was in a self-contained and club-like atmosphere with its member countries. After the collapse of the Soviet Union, the relationship of the EU with the Caucasus showed itself in the field of security, due to the problems and conflicts in the region. The EU tries to maintain a certain standard by putting political and economic values and criteria in front of the countries it has relations with due to the power gap that exists in the region.[1]

On the other hand, the increasing importance of the Caucasus in global competition and the fact that this region is among the priority geographies for the EU together with other powers have accelerated the EU's policies towards the region. As it is known, the Caucasus is one of the most important regions of the new global struggle, due to its own characteristics and being one of the more convenient ways for the West to reach Central Asia. As which has started to become one of the most important centers of global competition with the Caucasus and perhaps even more. For the EU, it is important to have an activity in the Caucasus, especially in the context of the natural gas trump card used by the Russian Federation on EU members, the events in the Middle East, Iran policy and similar issues.

Aware of the fact that Europe's stability and future is closely related to the security of the surrounding regions, the EU has initiated studies for the expansion of EU influence by including the Balkans and the Caucasus on the axis of "Common European House from Atlantic to Urals" in order to support and facilitate regional cooperation.

The perception of "security" has been questioned again after the September 11 incidents, which is the basis for the EU to restructure its policies and to make attempts to ensure cross-border security in addition to candidacy criteria. Within the framework of this perception, the EU, which is directed towards economic, social and political problems in the neighboring regions, wants to move its influence and control to the extensions of its new borders in the east with the waves of enlargement. It desires to find permanent solutions to the

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1 Vedat Gürbüz, *Kafkasya'da Siyaset Çatışma Ortamı ve Taraf Güçler*, Ankara: Kadim Yayınları, 2012, p.420.

conflicts / problems that arise or are likely to occur in the Caucasian countries - Azerbaijan, Armenia and Georgia - which are located in the extensions of the new borders of the EU, and to restructure these sensitive regions in terms of democracy and economy.

Developments in the international arena in the last two decades have led to the conclusion that faster steps should be taken towards the integration of Europe. With the removal of the Iron Curtain and the end of the "Cold War", an opportunity that has not been captured for many years has come to the fore for Europe to unite and integrate in peace and freedom. European statesmen do not want to miss this historic opportunity. The globalization of the world economy has accelerated the competitive pressure in Europe. The completion of the Common Market and the transition to the common currency, the Euro, accelerated this process even more. Nation states have had to delegate many powers to the EU organs, which are the supreme authorities.

In this study, the enlargements experienced by the EU until today are briefly mentioned in terms of determining the framework of the study. In this context, the theoretical framework of both the EU's formation process and its enlargement has been put forward. In addition, short attention has been drawn to the subject of where the final borders of the EU can rest after possible enlargements. Besides, the New Neighborhood Policy, which the EU has started to implement since 2004, has been analyzed, and then the Eastern Partnership policy, which started in 2008, has been analyzed, and the basic economic, social and political problems that the Union may encounter in the future have been evaluated within the framework of this policy.

The European Union's Approach to Caucasia and The Importance of the Region

After the end of the Cold War, a geopolitical power vacuum occurred in the Caucasus region, as in many other regions. In this period, the EU started to focus on policies towards newly independent states and by taking some initiatives in this regard, it tried to have a say in the gap that emerged in the region. The EU has taken some steps within the framework of Partnership and Cooperation, especially considering that the former Soviet countries have significant accumulation. The EU supported the political reforms and efforts made in transition to the market economy in the former Soviet geography and started to apply the policy of spreading the basic human values such as free market economy, human rights, democracy and the rule of law to these countries. In this context, the foundations of the EU's policies towards the Caucasus were first laid with the Maastricht Treaty. In the European Security Strategy adopted by the European Council in December 2003, it was emphasized that "building security in neighboring regions" is one of the three most important strategic goals of the EU. Following this Treaty, the EU has become an increasingly independent and powerful structure. This process, which started with the granting of European Neighborhood Policy membership opportunities. As a

result of negotiations with the Caucasian countries, the "Wider Europe" initiative was expanded to include the Caucasian states.[2] It has chosen to develop cooperation with the EU on a more equal basis, in four areas (economic, freedom, security and justice; external security; research and education). Finally, 16 countries in Eastern Europe, the South Caucasus and the Southern Mediterranean were included in the EnP.

The three South Caucasian states Armenia, Azerbaijan and Georgia have been widely regarded as a single regional group by external actors, including the EU. However, the argument has been put forward that such a regional perception has outlived its usefulness and can become counterproductive, by not recognizing neither long-standing nor recently renewed differences among these states. In addition, this regional labeling, clearly based on a geographical approach to the area, does not reflect the considerably distinct realities of each country in political, economic and security terms. Caucasus is a place where Caspian, Black Sea and bordering with three major regional power in Russia, Iran and Turkey. This region is a historical bridge between cultures and civilizations. In addition to being the pioneer of the modernization process in the East and South, it is also an important region in terms of military and as an energy producer for the EU.

The main purpose of the EU's policies towards the Caucasus, as democratization, technology transfer, human rights, and in accordance with the priorities of the economic policies of the Union, has been to offer the energy markets of the Caucasus to the use of Western European private and public sector companies in the medium and long term.[3] When the attitude of the EU towards the ethnic conflicts in the Caucasus and the rich natural resources of the region is examined, especially the researchers who conduct field studies claim that the EU is interested in the Caucasus but does not have any policy. However, contrary to these claims, after the dissolution of the USSR, the region was perceived as a new market for the security of Europe with its expanding borders and the development of trade, and took its place in EU policies.[4]

The positive approach of the Caucasus towards the West and the desire of to survive with policies that are partially or completely independent from the Russian Federation have accelerated the process of economic and political cooperation with Western countries. As a concrete indicator of this process, it is shown that the countries that have attempted full membership to the Council of Europe were accepted to the Parliamentary Assembly of the Council of Europe after waiting for a while due to the instability in the region. This initiative, which is important for the Caucasus, has been seen by the EU as an

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2 Sait Sönmez. "Avrupa Birliği'nin Komşu Bölgelere Yönelik Siyasal Açılımı: Avrupa Komşuluk Politikası", *Mustafa Kemal Üniversitesi Sosyal Bilimler Enstitüsü Dergisi*, 2010, pp.113-122.

3 Rövşen Şahbazov, *Yeni Küresel Sistemde Avrupa Birliği ve Güney Kafkasya Genişleme ve Komşuluk Politikası Ekseninde*, Ankara: Ekoavrasya, 2015, p.101.

4 Hainz Kramer and Friedemann Müller. "Relations with Turkey and the Caspian Basin Countries", R. D. Blackwiill (Ed.) *Alliees Divided*, MIT Press Ltd 1997, p.192.

indicator of democracy and economic developments and concrete policies have been developed for the region.[5]

The Caucasus region, including the Caspian region, has the third largest oil and natural gas reserves in the world after the Gulf region and Siberia. The amount of oil reserves of the region is estimated at approximately 100 billion barrels. This is a figure obtained as a result of researches carried out in the region with the help of modern technology after the collapse of the Soviet Union.[6] The importance of the region is increasing in direct proportion to the natural gas reserves of Azerbaijan and Turkmenistan, as well as the amount of natural resource reserves that other countries have.[7]

The importance of the policies of EU towards the Caucasus is in the same proportion to the wealth of the region in terms of oil and gas resources. The European Union and its member countries are in favor of democratization and economic restructuring of the Caucasus in order to create a stable environment in the region. However, it is not difficult to see that this approach of the West remains only in word. As a matter of fact, it is not possible to see their willingness and effort especially towards democratization. In an environment where the world's natural resource reserves are getting scarce and consequently expensive, EU and member countries mostly want to take advantage of the economic opportunities offered by the Caucasus in the form of cheap energy.[8]

Caucasus countries have strong European identity. This fact is clearly expressed by the politicians and non-governmental organizations of all three countries. After the collapse of the Soviet Union, these countries faced important security problems due to the conflicts, Russian pressure and the competition of regional powers.

Although Georgia seems to be the pioneer of the European and Euro-Atlantic integration in the region, Azerbaijan has undertaken an important mission in the region by drawing the attention of European countries and the United States to the Caspian Sea. In 1992, harmonization progress with the European and Euro-Atlantic integration was determined as the priority of Azerbaijan's foreign policy. Despite facing significant security problems, Azerbaijan is the first country among the 15 former Soviet republics to allow the Soviet Army to leave its territory. This situation has been effective in consolidating the country's

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5 Licinia Simao and Maria Raquel Freire, ''The EU's Neighborhood Policy and the South Caucasus: Unfolding New Patterns of Cooperation'', *Caucasian Review of International Affairs*, 2008, pp.225-239.

6 During the Soviet Union, the amount of reserves was set much lower than this figure.

7 US Energy Information Administration. Overview of oil and natural gas in the Caspian Sea region, https://www.eia.gov/international/analysis/regions-of-interest /Caspian _Sea (Erişim Tarihi: 18.02.2020).

8 Natalia Bekiarova, ''South Caucasus As a Region of Strategic Importance'', *International E-Journal of Advances in Social Sciences*, 2019, p.101

independence and Euro-Atlantic cooperation.[9] Azerbaijan faced important security problems, especially in the first years of its independence. The worst of these problems was the attack of Armenia and the forced removal of nearly one million Azerbaijanis from Armenia and Azerbaijani territories occupied by Armenia. In addition, more than 30,000 Azerbaijani citizens lost their lives in the Armenia-Azerbaijan war, including the Khojaly genocide. Despite the 4 different decisions taken by the UN Security Council on the subject, the Armenian occupying forces have still not left the Azerbaijani territories they occupied.[10]

Later, in 1994, a cease-fire agreement was signed between Azerbaijan and Armenia, which started to follow a new foreign policy towards the middle of the 1990s. Following this, in the same year, with the oil agreement made with 11 foreign companies, mainly Western companies, called the "Contract of the Century", a new era began in Azerbaijan's foreign policy, which takes regional powers and neighboring countries into account. Despite the pressure of the North, the said agreement opened Azerbaijan to the West and the West to Azerbaijan, and had an impact on the balances in the region. As a matter of fact, the new period has created new cooperation opportunities and transportation alternatives based entirely on economic interests for the region and most importantly, it has contributed to the restructuring of post-colonial Eurasia by offering regional and interregional cooperation alternatives.[11]

As strengthening their independence in terms of political, economic and security, Azerbaijan and Georgia, two important countries of the South Caucasus, have united under the roof of GUAM with the other two countries, Ukraine and Moldova, in regional cooperation. Georgia and Azerbaijan, which have the same security approaches and whose most important common principles are to ensure land integrity, are the countries of the Caucasus that follow Western policies without leaving their identity and without compromising their security. In addition, Armenia maintains its character as a Russian base in the South Caucasus, with a significant number of Russian soldiers. This situation, contrary to Russia's aid and support to Armenia, still confronts Georgia and Azerbaijan, the two countries with unbalanced support of the West, with security concerns in their relations with regional powers.[12]

It is possible to see that the Caucasus as a region is divided into two blocs in terms of security and conflicts and in terms of foreign policy direction. On one side as security and regional conflict issues Russia, Iran and Armenia were getting closer, on the other hand Turkey, Azerbaijan and Georgia, as well as

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9 Mitat Çelikpala and Cavid Veliyev, *Azerbaijan-Georgia-Turkey: An Example of a Successful Regional Cooperation*, İstanbul: Kadir Has Üniversitesi, 2015, p.4

10 Rahime Behlül Dadaşova, ''Armenia's Military Aggression Against Azerbaijan: Violation of the Rights of Captives and Hostages'', *Avrasya İncelemeleri Dergisi*, 2020, p.5.

11 European Parliament, *EU relations with Armenia and Azerbaijan*, Belgium: European Parliament, 2017, p.26.

12 Mamuka Tsereteli, *Azerbaijan and Georgia: Strategic Partnership for Stability in a Volatile Region*, Stockholm: Silk Road Paper, 2013, pp.33-35.

close cooperation between the West-oriented with European partners rather than Caucasian identities appear to follow a similar foreign policy. The mentioned blockade and the different approach and attitude of both blocks continue to develop as time goes on. In addition, Armenia's attitude towards Russia constitutes incompatibility with the Western relationship that it spontaneously tries to develop, and this situation raises concerns in protecting Moscow's confidence. Russia's relations with Azerbaijan, which are closer to Georgia, are partly due to the fact that Azerbaijan is the largest and most influential country in the Caucasus region, as well as having important natural resources, strategic location in terms of transportation, energy transfer and starting to generate significant revenues from this transfer can be explained.[13]

The foreign relations of the Caucasian countries, in short, reflect the geopolitical realities. Relations with Europe are arranged in a dilemma of "identity and geography". While the Caucasus countries think that integration with the West will bring them a great benefit, the West cannot be unifying in its relations with these countries as in the example of Central and Eastern Europe and Baltic countries. Each of the countries is faced with problems of different dimensions in their relations with regional actors on different issues. While Georgia's relations with Russia are tense, Azerbaijan has always been trying to pursue a more balanced foreign policy in the region. It also tries to develop its relations with Russia and Iran carefully within certain limits.

Caucasia Policy of The European Union

At the center of the EU's policies towards the Caucasus is the factor that this region is a very large oil and gas industry center. Western Europe's interest in the new independent states emerging in a region extending from the Black Sea to the borders of China started from the moment these countries gained their independence. The Caucasus is also located in the region that includes these countries.[14]

Due to its geo-strategic location, rich natural resources, ethnic richness, and various cultural and religious traditions, the entire Caucasus, along with Central Asia, is at the center of attention of regional powers, especially Russia, which is a strong neighboring state. The interest of other world states in the region started especially after the collapse of the Soviet Union. While sorting all of these countries, the US, Turkey, Iran, China, Pakistan and EU member countries as Britain, France and Germany, Organization for Security and Co-operation in Europe (OSCE), North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO), the United Nations (UN) and other international organizations[15].

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13 Mustafa Aydın, ''Geopolitics of Central Asia And The Caucasus; Continuity and Change Since the End of the Cold War'', *The Turkish Yearbook*, 2001, pp.201-202.

14 Edmund Herziq, *The New Caucasus: Armenia, Azerbaijan and Georgia*, London: The Royal Institute of International Affairs, 1999, p.17

15 European Report, *EU-Caucasus: EU Gives Conditional Support to the Region*, Brussel: Europe Information Service, 1999.

At the time, the Council of the Western European Union (WEU) made statements to support the efforts of the OSCE and the EU to end the ongoing conflicts in the context of the Karabakh and Chechnya problems. The document named "Europe's Security: Joint Initiative" adopted by the WEU in November 1995 referred to Europe's economic interests in the world by the WEU Council.[16]

The political interests of Western European countries towards the Caucasus region have generally paralleled those of the USA. The majority of Western European and US policies towards the Caucasus are economic practices. The strict competition for getting a share from the consortium for the use of Azerbaijan's energy resources causes Western countries to act with different attitudes.[17]

In the post-Soviet period, the EU started to provide economic assistance to the region under the name of energy, Historical Silk Road Revitalization and New Neighborhood Policies within the context of the Caucasus region. The Partnership and Cooperation Agreements signed by the EU with the countries of the region in 1996 also constituted the legal beginning of the relations between the EU and the countries of the region. In addition to trade and economy, developments in security have also played an important role in these relations. For this reason, at the Madrid Summit in 1995, the EU established the European Political Agenda to stop the conflicts.[18]

In 1996, the Council of Europe implemented the Joint Action Plan for Russia and the Caucasus. This plan dealt with the policies of the EU and member countries towards the region in a general way. The Joint Action Plan included the priorities of the EU's strategy for the region. In the Action Plan, policy preferences in line with the 4 main priorities of the EU were determined. The policy priorities set by the Commission should ensure the security of important energy deals made in the Caucasus and help to evaluate the opportunities presented.[19]

On December 2, 1999, an agreement with a total value of 122.2 million ECU[20] and covering 32 cooperation areas was signed between the EU and the countries of the Commonwealth of Independent States in Brussels. With this agreement, it is foreseen that the money will be spent on very lucrative energy

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16 Western European Union, *Report on Central Asia and the Caucasus*, Brussels: Western European Union, 2000.

17 Mitat Çelikpala and Cavid Veliyev, *Azerbaijan-Georgia-Turkey: An Example of a Successful Regional Cooperation*, İstanbul: Kadir Has Üniversitesi, 2015, pp.4-6.

18 European Parliament, Madrid European Council 15 and 16 December 1995 Presidency Conclusions, https://www.europarl.europa.eu/summits/mad1_en.htm (Erişim Tarihi: 02.01.2021).

19 Neil Winn & Christopher Lord. EU Foreign Policy Beyond the Nation-State. Leeds: University of Leeds, 2001, p.161.

20 ECU (European Currency Unit) was used as the account unit of the European Community as defined by the EC Regulation of the Council of the European Union dated 22.12.1994 and numbered 3320/94 and was abolished after the introduction of the Euro.

projects. It should also be noted that the main objective of the Commission and the member states of the EU on policies towards the Caucasus has been to eliminate the USA and Russia significantly by creating a long-term political and economic impact in the region.

Another factor shaping the EU's policies towards the Caucasus is that it sees the region as a new market for the development of trade. In line with the EU's desire to create a safe market where European goods will be sold, it is aimed to renew the institutions in which the former Soviet sovereignty is felt and provide the necessary infrastructure to ensure the integration of the region with the capitalist world economy, despite the independence of the Caucasian republics.[21]

The eastern dimension of the EU's enlargement policy has ended in the near term after the last waves of enlargement in 2004 and 2007, the EU has started to feel the need to put new tools into use for its "Europeanization" policy. For this reason, he pointed out that the EU maintains close relations with the countries of Eastern Europe and the South Caucasus and this is continued within the framework of the European Neighborhood Policies (ENP).[22] The EU, which revised the security of its borders with the participation of members from Central and Eastern European countries in May 2004, supports the peace quests carried out under the supervision of the UN and OSCE in ending ethnic conflicts in the Caucasus. It supports these efforts by harmonizing the regional policies of international actors, who have an active role in ensuring the security of the Caucasus, with EU interests. It aims to contribute to economic and political developments so that pro-Western policies can become operational and democratic institutions can be established in the region. Therefore, the EU deems it appropriate to pursue a US-led foreign policy as it is afraid of limiting and controlling the dominance of the Russia in the region on the one hand, and on the other hand, the Iran-backed Islamic motif to become operational.[23]

The policies and goals pursued by the EU for the Caucasus; With Technical Assistance to the Commonwealth of Independent States (TACIS), Interstate Oil and Gas Transport to Europe (INOGATE), Europe, Caucasus, Asia Transport Corridor (TRACECA) projects and the Wider Europe-New Neighborhood policy, gaining a concrete meaning. When we examine more closely these projects, which are a concrete indicator of the EU's presence in the region, the geopolitical importance of the region, which attracted the post-Soviet attention, becomes clearer.

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21 Ali Resul Usul, "Avrupa Birliği'nin Orta Asya Politikaları: Sessiz ve Derinden'', M. Aydın (Ed.) *Küresel Politikada Orta Asya*, Ankara: Nobel Yayıncılık, 2005, p.195.

22 Sönmez, "Avrupa Birliği'nin Komşu Bölgelere Yönelik Siyasal Açılımı: Avrupa Komşuluk Politikası", p.117.

23 Svante E. Cornell, ''NATO's Role in South Caucasus Regional Security'', *Turkish Policy Quarterly*, Number 3, 2004, p.123.

Technical Assistance to CIS (TACIS)

The EU, trying to make its influence felt in the region in line with the economic interests that constitute the main starting point of the EU's policy towards the region and to ensure the continuity of the security of Europe, has developed a program aimed at integrating the Caucasus with the world economy. Under the name of Technical Assistance to the Commonwealth of Independent States, whose short name is TACIS, it is aimed to settle and ensure the continuity of liberal democratic regimes and institutions based on a Western-style free market economy from Soviet-type socialism.[24]

The TACIS program, which took shape at the meeting of the EU Council in Rome in December 1990, partnership with various projects involving Azerbaijan, Belarus, Georgia, Armenia, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Mongolia, Moldova, Uzbekistan, Russian Federation, Tajikistan, Turkmenistan and Ukraine, it has evolved into a major program targeting cooperation (with an aid of 3.138 million Euros for the period 2000-2006). Within the scope of the TACIS program, education, energy, transportation, food production and distribution, and support for industrial and commercial enterprises have been identified as priority areas.[25]

Azerbaijan, which is the largest oil and gas producer in the region, received EU aid amounting to a total of 26.9 million ECU under TACIS between 1997-1998. Support to gas and oil pipe arches is also included in this amount. Apart from this, Georgia received 16 million ECUs under TACIS alone, as well as 6.5 million ECU for rehabilitation, 12.2 million ECU for humanitarian aid and 42 million ECU for food security. Based on the framework decision of the General Affairs Council, in 1997 it was exceptionally financial assistance in the amount of 255 million ECU was provided to Armenia and Georgia, Azerbaijan, the other South Caucasus country, was excluded from this aid. Between 1997-1998, a total of 20.5 million ECU was provided to 3 countries including Azerbaijan, Georgia and Tajikistan.[26]

TACIS Programs are realized within the framework of national country programs, regional programs and small projects. There are activity programs that determine the projects to be supported in the national country programs targeting applications for the priority areas of the country. With regional programs, activities are carried out to strengthen the connections between countries, to improve cooperation and to improve transportation networks. With small project programs, projects in specific areas such as education, trade and the promotion of EU investment are carried out. In addition, PHARE / TACIS Democracy Program was initiated in 1992 in connection with the TACIS program to support the development of liberal democracies of the Central and

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24 Esra Çayhan, ''The European Union's Central Asia Strategy'', *Bilig*, 2003, pp.14-15.
25 Usul, "Avrupa Birliği'nin Orta Asya Politikaları: Sessiz ve Derinden" p.196.
26 Winn and Lord, "EU Foreign Policy Beyond the Nation-State", p.165.

Eastern European Countries and the newly independent former Soviet countries.[27]

It is possible to collect the goals of the TACIS program under three headings. The first of these titles includes supporting the transition to democracy and free market economy and supporting efforts to build a society based on political freedom and economic prosperity. The second topic is the development of economic, political and cultural dialogue between the EU and these countries. It covers the creation of a more comprehensive, harmonious and long-term cooperation. The last heading aims to accelerate the adaptation process of the countries that have recently gained their independence to the world economy and political order.[28]

In short, the EU is trying to establish pro-Western regimes in the Caucasus and to guarantee its own security by contributing to the modernization of the country with the TACIS program. The experience and lessons learned from the TACIS application are taken into account in the EU New Neighborhood Policy implemented today. As a matter of fact, the EU determines the needs and priorities of the countries and follows the strategy, plan and project development method in accordance with these needs and priorities. Country administrations are included in this process in accordance with the political framework and responsibilities determined within the framework of the New Neighborhood Policy.

One-by-one country-based Action Plans were prepared in 2006 for the countries covered by the New Neighborhood Policy. Today, the implementation of the country-based independent Action Plans of the New Neighborhood Policy continues, especially taking into account the lessons learned from the TACIS program and the experiences gained.

There are two main project fort he region. The first one is the EU's Interstate Oil and Gas Transport (INOGATE) project for the region, which will ensure the safe transfer of the region's underground resources to Europe, is also an indicator of how closely the EU is interested in the region. Another project that the EU is trying to implement to improve its commercial relations with the Caucasus is the Europe, Caucasus, Asia Transport Corridor project, whose short name is TRACECA.

Interstate Oil and Gas Transport to Europe (INOGATE)

The increasing need for energy reserves of the EU with each new member, whose enlargement process continues, has brought to the agenda the implementation of the Interstate Oil and Gas Transport to Europe project within the framework of the TACIS program. The EU aimed to keep its communication with the Caucasus alive and to have a say in the use and distribution of the energy resources of the region with INOGATE, which

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27 Demet Şefika Acar, ''Kafdağı'nın Ardında Saklı Kalan Komşuluk Avrupa Birliği ve Güney Kafkasya'', Karadeniz Araştırmaları, 2009, p.32.

28 Rıdvan Karluk, *Avrupa Birliği ve Türkiye*, İstanbul: Beta Basım, 2007, p.345.

includes the technical assistance program for the modernization of the oil and natural gas transportation systems.[29]

INOGATE Program is an international energy cooperation program between the European Union and the Black Sea, Caspian Sea and neighboring countries. This program has four main objectives:[30]

- To create energy markets based on the EU's internal energy market principles, taking into account the characteristics of the countries covered by the program;
- To ensure energy security by addressing energy import and export, supply diversity, energy transition and energy demand;
- To ensure sustainable energy development, including increasing energy efficiency, creating renewable energy resources and establishing demand-side management;
- Promoting investments in energy projects that serve common regional goals.

The INOGATE Program started with the support of TACIS and TACIS countries, and today it has been opened to Europe and Mediterranean countries on the basis of the Umbrella Agreement. These countries can apply for technical assistance in line with the purposes of realizing the INOGATE Program. Under the program, the EU, the Commonwealth of Independent States, is situated in close cooperation with the fifty states, including European countries and Turkey. An important part of the INOGATE Program also constitutes corporate issues. The main legal arrangement made in line with the program is the Umbrella Agreement.[31]

The INOGATE Program has contributed positively to the Caucasian countries as well as to the EU countries. Examples of these are the development of universal values, ensuring political stability, reducing Russia's influence on the Caucasian countries, and improving the relations between the countries of the region and the regional economies. When considered in terms of all participating countries, the benefits of the INOGATE Program can be summarized as follows:[32]

- Establishing continuous dialogue and mutual information exchange between countries;
- Identification of new strategic transport routes for oil and gas networks;
- Assistance in defining and creating projects for making investments;

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29 Inogate, About Inogate, http://www.inogate.org/ (Erişim Tarihi: 02.01.2021).

30 Ertan Efegil, ''Avrupa Birliği'nin Orta Asya Politikasının Analizi: Proje Bazlı Yaklaşımdan Stratejik İşbirliği Anlayışına Geçiş'', *Akdeniz İ.İ.B.F. Dergisi*, 2008, pp.73-74.

31 Antonio Marquina. The European Union Policies Towards the Caucasus. The Turkish Yearbook, 1999, pp.164-165.

32 Inogate, Inogate Programme, Belgium: INOGATE Programme, 2015.

- Compliance with the common rules of the Umbrella Agreement in cooperation areas;
- Reducing risks to standard business risks using the Umbrella Agreement;

Assisting potential investors by providing financing to avoid safety, security or environmental risks arising from small projects;

- Helping investors to connect with the right people in participating countries to develop their investment potential;
- Helping investors in limiting uncalculated risks.

Europe, Caucasus, Asia Transport Corridor (TRACECA)

TRACECA is one of the sub-programs of within the scope of the TACIS project, is an economy-based project and its foundations were laid in 1993. This transportation-centered project is a program focused on economic activities in the field of land, sea and railroad. TRACECA Project is a EU program that finances projects for the revitalization of Silk Road, one of the oldest trade routes in the world. This program starts from Eastern European countries such as Bulgaria, Romania and Ukraine; Taking into the Black Sea via Turkey through the Georgian ports of Poti and Batumi are spread over a large area using the transport networks of the South Caucasus.[33]

This project, which aims to intensify the relations of the former Soviet republics with the West, has formed an important step for Central Asia and the Caucasus to meet international markets and supported the political and economic development of the regional states. TRACECA, which carries out work on the development of trade in Central Asia and the Caucasus and on land, rail and sea routes, met with the Black Sea Economic Cooperation Organization (BSEC) in Tbilisi in 1997 at a meeting held by the EU to establish a link between the Black Sea Region and the TRACECA route. There is consensus on the matter. Thus, it is possible to say that the historical Silk Road is tried to be revitalized by the Black Sea Region being included in this transportation corridor and that cultural richness will make this corridor meaningful as well as trade.[34]

Neighborhood Policy as the Last Stage in European Union – Caucasus Relations

The European Neighborhood Policy (ENP) is an important step in the policy formulation process as it brings a new vision to the EU's relationship with neighboring countries. However, after the Eastern enlargement in 2004, the member countries were worried that the Union might lose its capacity to act effectively with the continuous enlargement of the EU. After the fifth

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33 Beril Dedeoğlu, *Dünden Bugüne Avrupa Birliği*, İstanbul: Boyut Yayın Grubu, 2005, pp.369-372.

34 Trececa, *Objective and purpose of the Project*. http://www.traceca-org.org/en/technical-assistance/traceca-civil-aviation-safety-easa/objective-and-purpose/ (Erişim Tarihi: 15.02.2020).

enlargement process of the EU, it has developed a new policy under the name of "Wider Europe-New Neighborhood" in order to further strengthen its relations with the new joining countries and to get to know the countries bordering these countries more closely. Within the scope of this policy, while Russia, Ukraine, Moldavia, Belarus, Algeria, Egypt, Israel, Jordan, Lebanon, Libya, Morocco, Palestinian Authority, Syria and Tunisia were closely marked, after the Council of Europe Summit in June 2004, Armenia, Azerbaijan and Georgia has included in this policy.[35]

Within the scope of its neighborhood policy, the EU has aimed to work with its southern and eastern neighbors in order to support stability, security and prosperity in the countries closest to its borders, and within this framework, to ensure the closest possible political cohesion and the highest possible economic integration. Within the framework of this policy, comprehensive cooperation was proposed to sixteen neighboring countries that form the new borders of the EU and it was aimed to strengthen their ties with the EU within the framework of common values. In the declaration, it was stated that the EU aims to create a "ring of friends" consisting of countries with close and peaceful relations and cooperation in its vicinity through the European Neighborhood Policy. Thus, Neighborhood Policy, as a value-oriented approach towards neighboring countries, has constituted a strategic response of the EU to new problems.[36]

The EU carried out the process of preparing the most comprehensive enlargement process in its history and the policy making process for its new neighbors in parallel. In this sense, neighborhood policy has emerged as a "side effect" of the enlargement process. The relationship between these two processes has affected the nature of both neighborhood and partnership relations. As a matter of fact, the basic tools, principles and transformation mechanisms of the neighborhood and the partnership policy initiated later were "borrowed" from the enlargement process. This policy provided a model of cooperation to compensate for the impossibility of admitting more members after enlargement and to gain influence over neighboring countries without geting them inside the union.

This policy focuses on eliminating the problems that may arise between the EU and neighboring countries and ensuring political, security, economic and cultural cooperation. Various action plans have been prepared in order to realize this policy of the EU. In these action plans, it is aimed to provide opportunities for participation in EU programs that include education, research, environment and audiovisual issues. In addition to efforts to prevent cooperation in border management, migration, human trafficking, organized crime, money laundering, financial and economic crimes, cooperation and dialogue on issues such as strengthening ties with the EU in the fields of energy,

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35 Acar, "Kafdağı'nın Ardında Saklı Kalan Komşuluk Avrupa Birliği ve Güney Kafkasya", p.34.

36 Thilo Bodenstein and Mark Furness, *The Edges of External Governance Europe and its Mediterranean Neighbours*, GO-EuroMed Working Paper, 2006, p.2.

transport and information technologies, combating terrorism and preventing the proliferation of weapons of mass destruction It is aimed to increase.[37]

When the Action Plans signed with the Caucasian Republics are examined, it is seen that the plans are shaped within the framework of similar provisions as a procedure. However, different approaches draw attention in applications. For example, in the ethnic-based conflicts in the region; In the Armenia Action Plan for the problem, the EU stated that it supports the peace studies based on international principles and rules within the scope of the principle of self-determination, while in the Azerbaijan Action Plan, it negatively opposed the desire of Azerbaijan to include territorial integrity in the solution of the problem. Upon criticizing this approach of the EU, the principle of territorial integrity in terms of the course of the relations was mentioned in the Azerbaijan Action Plan. However, a provision (not included in the Armenia and Georgia Action Plans) that the Action Plan will be suspended if one of the parties breaks international principles and rules.[38]

The success of the Action Plans varies according to the political, social and economic structures of the countries. While the Saakashvili administration, which took important steps towards democratization and liberalization, brought Georgia closer to the West with insistent steps towards NATO and EU membership, the Action Plans could not keep Armenia and Azerbaijan away from Russia-oriented policies.[39]

These countries included in the scope of the ENP have made a commitment to harmonize their laws and various policy areas with EU standards. The development of EU rules and policies within national policies is achieved through intergovernmental dialogue with EU member states through reform programs such as Technical Assistance and Information Exchange (TAIEX) and Twinning. These programs were originally designed to help candidate countries align their legislation with the EU acquis as part of the accession process, but were later expanded towards ENP countries.[40]

The implementation of a neighborhood policy similar to the countries on the eastern border of the EU and the North African countries on the Mediterranean border has caused some practical problems in the continuation of the ENP as expected. As a matter of fact, the fact that the countries involved in the neighborhood policy have different historical, cultural, political and socio-economic experiences has initiated an important discussion about the extent of the ENP's geographical scope. The broad membership of ENP and the fact that

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37 European Commission, *Communicatıon From The Commission European Neighbourhood Policy Strategy Paper*, Brussels: Commission of the European Communities, 2004.

38 European Parliament, *EU relations with Armenia and Azerbaijan*, Belgium: European Parliament, 2017, pp.20-21.

39 Nicu Popescu, ''ENP and EaP: relevant for the South Caucasus?'', Friedrich-Ebert-Stiftung (Ed.) *South Caucasus 20 Years of Independence*, 2012, pp.319-321.

40 Mario Damen and Kirsten Jongberg, ''The European Neighbourhood Policy'', https:// www.europarl.europa .eu/factsheets /en/sheet/170/the-european-neighbourhood-policy (Erişim Tarihi: 10.01.2021).

it handles the countries in different geographical areas as a whole has led to the understanding that the ENP falls short of meeting the expectations and new proposals have emerged in the following years.[41]

However, over time, the EU, which acknowledged the ineffectiveness of the neighborhood policy designed to unite the countries located in completely different regions and separated by serious differences under a single policy framework, as a holistic cooperation framework, the EU has launched various sub-regional cooperation frameworks in its neighborhood policy. One of these has been the Eastern Partnership initiative, which constitutes the eastern leg of the neighborhood policy, and has become the EU's main policy framework for post-Soviet countries in Eastern Europe and the Caucasus.

Black Sea Synergy (BSS), one of the suggestions put forward upon the failure of ENP to meet its expectations, was launched in 2007. The BSS initiative has been specifically designed as a multilateral and regional program to cover all Black Sea coastal states and non-riparian states. The BSS has functioned as a strategy that will focus on politics at the regional level and strengthen ongoing cooperation processes, thus "complementing existing policies".[42] Since the BSS is the EU's "first attempt to create a regional policy for the Eastern Neighborhood", hopes and expectations among partner countries are quite high at first. However, it soon became clear that BSS, like ENP, could not meet the expectations of its Eastern partners. Upon the inadequacy of ENP and BSS, the EU continued to formulate a new policy for Eastern partners, leading to the initiation of the EU Eastern Partnership Project (EaP) proposed by Poland and Sweden in 2009.[43]

Eastern Partnership Programme (EAP)

The Eastern Partnership, which includes six former Soviet Union countries including Azerbaijan, Georgia, Armenia, Ukraine, Belarus and Moldova, aims to "develop political dialogue, deep economic integration, mobility and strengthened sectoral cooperation" between the EU and these countries. The main purpose of the Eastern Partnership as a foreign policy tool is "create the necessary conditions" to accelerate the political unity and economic integration between the EU and partner countries. In this context, processes such as further economic integration, facilitation of the visa regime, effective governance and energy security are projected.

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41 Ali Onur Özçelik and Sopiko Zandaradze, ''Avrupa Birliği Doğu Ortaklığı Projesinin Gürcistan'a Etkisi'', *Marmara Üniversitesi Siyasal Bilimler Dergisi*, 2020, p.176.

42 European Commission, ''Communication From The Commission To The Council and The European Parliament Black Sea Synergy - A New Regıonal Cooperation Initiative'', https://eeas. europa.eu/archives/docs/enp/pdf/pdf/com07_160_en.pdf (Erişim Tarihi: 09. 01.2021).

43 Loredana Maria Simionov, *Setbacks and Achievements in Managing the Eastern Neighbourhood*, Econstor, 2013, p.114.

The joint declaration signed at the first EaP summit in Prague in 2009, the EU and six partner countries stated that the partnership initiative is designed as a comprehensive regional transformation framework based on "democracy, the rule of law and respect for human rights and fundamental freedoms, as well as a commitment to core values such as a market economy and good governance". In this context, the initiative provides a framework of support for economic, political and structural reforms in order to bring these six countries closer to European standards on the basis of fundamental values. EU support is based on the principle of conditionality, which stipulates the adoption of core values by partner countries and their allocation appropriately to the achievements and progress achieved in the reform / transformation process. Therefore, the Eastern Partnership, which was developed in parallel with the bilateral cooperation between the EU and third countries, adopted the "more-for-more" approach within the scope of the neighborhood policy. Accordingly, the pace of reform determines the intensity of cooperation.[44]

In other words, based on the success rate partner countries have achieved in implementing the necessary reforms, they are able to obtain close political cooperation with the EU, gradual economic integration and greater EU financial support. In addition, the relations between the parties are based on the principle of differentiation, which enables the wishes, needs and transformation capacities of the individual partners to be taken into account more effectively. Based on the objectives and principles stated above, the Eastern Partnership has four main priority areas.

The first priority area is "strengthening institutions and good governance" In this context, the Partnership initiative provides comprehensive support to partner countries in matters such as the rule of law, judicial independence, fight against corruption, public administration reform, development of a holistic approach to border management, cooperation in the field of common security and defense policy in order to overcome the structural challenges faced by the countries in the region. "Mobility and ensuring communication between people" is the second priority of the Partnership. In this context, it is aimed to strengthen the mobility of citizens in a safe and well-managed environment. Within the scope of the priority of developing "market opportunities", it is aimed to strengthen trade and economic cooperation between the EU and partner countries through Association Agreements and Deep and Comprehensive Free Trade Agreements. Finally, under the priority of developing "interconnections", ensuring energy security, increasing energy efficiency and developing infrastructure in the energy sector is a central element of cooperation between the EU and partner countries.[45]

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44 Council of the European Union, "Joint Declaration of the Eastern Partnership Warsaw Summit", Brussels: Europe Union, 2011, p.2.

45 European External Action Service, Eastern Partnership, https://eeas.europa.eu /head quarters /headquarters-homepage/419/eastern-partnership_en (Erişim Tarihi: 04.01. 2021).

The Eastern Partnership represents democracy and the rule of law, representing a stronger European commitment and mutual interests with the EU's eastern partners; respect for human rights and fundamental freedoms; The signing of partnership agreements with the EU on the basis of common values such as market economy and sustainable development has been deemed as a contractual relationship. Deep and comprehensive free trade areas are foreseen for a gradual transition to the EU economy. A full visa-liberalization for easier travel to the EU is among the long-term goals. Cooperation on energy security and regional development programs on the basis of the EU Cohesion Policy are among the tools that will facilitate and deepen this cooperation.[46]

Despite all the positive principles it contains, EaP should not be considered as a solution to all problems in Eastern European countries. As a matter of fact, the proposals prepared for partner countries that sit on the table individually before the EaP is presented contain at least three elements that, if realized, will significantly change the relations between the EU and partner countries: Association Agreement (AA) to be signed with the EU, Deep and Comprehensive Free Trade Agreement (DCFTA), full visa freedom, energy Community membership.[47]

When the process of "Eastern Partnership" is examined, it is seen that problematic issues, which are reflected in today, are present from the very beginning. First of all, it should be underlined that there is no consensus and discourse on neighborhood policy within the EU. In 2008, when taking the "European Neighborhood Policy" a step further was discussed, France pressed for the "Union for the Mediterranean" initiative, which covers regions more critical to its national interests, and took a stand against the "Eastern Partnership". Poland and other Eastern European countries carried out a lobbying activity highlighting the "Eastern Partnership" initiative for the same reason. Germany, which initially took a stance against the "Union for the Mediterranean" initiative that France wanted, gave limited support to the "Eastern Neighborhood" initiative provided that it remained within the borders of the "European Neighborhood Policy".[48]

This separation within the EU can be evaluated as a result of the differentiation of interests between the old-new / west-eastern Europe, whose reflections are still seen today; Although it is a union, serious differences of opinion may arise among EU countries on issues concerning national interests. Secondly, while insisting that Old/West Europe's, European Neighborhood Policy, Eastern Partnership and Union for the Mediterranean initiatives should be a framework for non-EU countries and not offer a direct EU membership perspective to partner countries, it seems that the East/New Europe has a view

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46 Füsun Özerdem, Avrupa Birliği Doğu Ortaklığı Programı ve Program Ülkelerinin Algıları: Üyelik Olmadan Asla. Elektronik Siyaset Bilimi Araştırmaları Dergisi, 2012, p.18.

47 Özçelik and Zandaradze, ibid., p.177.

48 Euroactiv. Hello Neighbour! A new EU policy from Morocco to Azerbaijan, https:// www.euractiv.com/section/global-europe/opinion/hello-neighbour-a-new-eu-policy-from- morocco-to-azerbaijan/ (Erişim Tarihi: 12.01.2021).

that the "Eastern Partnership" will eventually achieve this result. The fact that the presidents of some EU member states, including the presidents of France and the United Kingdom, did not attend the "Eastern Partnership" founding summit held on May 7, 2009 can be considered as an example of the tensions experienced and their reactions against this initiative.[49]

As mentioned above, "Eastern Partnership" is an initiative shaped to deepen the relations of the EU with its neighbors within the scope of the "European Neighborhood Policy". This initiative discussing highlights one neighborhood policy hearing request in different sizes from each other on relations with sixteen countries of the EU within the scope of the issues and performance become the show, however relevant to the different demands and level of differentiation with performing countries and depth in the idea of developing relations are prominent. This idea was expressed in the 2009 Prague Summit Statement as the "principles of differentiation and conditionality".[50]

The last point to be mentioned is that despite the insistence that the "Eastern Partnership" of Old / Western Europe should not be perceived as a gateway to EU membership for the partner countries, the new / eastern Europe's constant messages to the partners, moreover, especially For Ukraine, Eastern Partnership is insisting that the direction of the need to have such a nature. All these issues, briefly mentioned, are issues that have been on the agenda for eleven years under the "Eastern Partnership".

The EaP is a common policy of the EU and six countries, and the responsibility for implementing the initiative lies with both parties. The European Commission and the European External Action Service (EEAS) are the main actors responsible for Partnership on the EU side. The most important element in terms of the execution mechanism of the initiative is the Eastern Partnership Summits, which are high-level meetings and are held every two years. Summits are held with the participation of EU institutions, member state representatives and the heads of state or government of the six partner countries. Until today in Prague on 7 May 2009, Warsaw on 29-30 September 2011, Vilnius on 28-29 November 2013, Riga on 21-22 May 2015 and Brussels on 24 November 2017. The last summit of the Eastern partnership was held in 2020. In addition, the 10th year anniversary of the Eastern partnership was celebrated with this summit. It is also possible to hold annual meetings of the foreign ministers of the EU member states and partner countries. These annual meetings, chaired by the High Representative of the European Union for

[49] Euroactiv. EU launches Eastern plan in Russia's backyard. https://www.euractiv.com/section/ global-europe/news/ eu-launches- eastern- plan-in-russia-s- backyard/ (Erişim Tarihi: 12.01.2021).

[50] European Council, ''Joint Declaration of the Prague Eastern Partnership Summit'', Brussels: Council Of European Union, 2009.

Foreign Affairs and Security Policy, review progress and provide for the development of a more detailed political guide on the Eastern Partnership.[51]

The sixth of the "Eastern Partnership" summits was supposed to be held in 2019, as the 10th year anniversary of this initiative. However, due to the intense agenda and perhaps the chaos caused by the Brexit process, the European Parliament elections held in May 2019 and the changes in the staff of the European Commission and the Council of the European Union, a summit could not be held in this year and was postponed to 2020. It can be thought that even this postponement in itself indicates on the one hand the turmoil within the EU in the current period, and on the other hand, the remaining place and importance of the "Eastern Partnership" on the EU agenda. In addition, the joint declaration, which was expected to be published at events organized for the tenth anniversary of the "Eastern Partnership" on May 13, 2019, could not be published due to the objections of Azerbaijan to the content of the declaration. Instead, the text of the declaration was made public only with the signature of the High Representative of the EU for Foreign Relations and Security Policies, Federica Mogherini.[52]

This text was not found satisfactory by Georgia and Ukraine. It is clear that the failure to present a joint declaration in its symbolic tenth year and the fact that the presented text did not please the two most enthusiastic partners of the "Eastern Partnership" was not a positive development in terms of the reputation and image of this initiative. This incident raises doubts about the claims of the success of the "Eastern Partnership".[53]

The reason why Georgia and Ukraine do not find the text published by Mogherini satisfactory is that there is no emphasis on the aspirations of Georgia, Moldova and Ukraine to join the EU. Azerbaijan objected to the joint declaration because it did not refer to the principle of territorial integrity, one of the basic principles of international law, regarding the protracted conflicts in the region. While the EU has a relatively clear attitude about the conflicts in Georgia, Moldova and especially Ukraine, which are directly involved in Russia, its rather ambivalent attitude towards the ongoing conflict due to the occupation of a part of the internationally recognized country of Azerbaijan by Armenia is the reason for the reaction of Azerbaijan. In fact, this double-standard attitude of the EU is an important example that shows how the discourse of defending "Western values" such as the rule of law has a practical equivalent.

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51 European Council. Eastern Partnership policy beyond 2020, https://www.consilium. europa .eu/ en/policies/eastern- partnership/ eastern -partnership-policy-beyond-2020/ (Erişim Tarihi: 13.01. 2021).

52 European Council, "Eastern Partnership Foreign Ministers meeting", https:// www. consilium .europa. eu/en/meetings/international-ministerial-meetings/2019/05/13/ (Erişim Tarihi: 06. 01.2021).

53 RFERL EU, Eastern Partners Downgrade Anniversary Statement Due To Objections From Baku, https:// www. rferl. org/ a/ eu- eastern -partners- downgrade- anniversary-statement- due-to objections-from-baku/29938053.html (Erişim Tarihi: 20.02.2020).

The Eastern Partnership Summit, which was postponed to 2020 due to the reasons mentioned above, was held on June 18 by teleconference due to the Covid-19 outbreak. However, it is noteworthy that at this summit, unlike previous summits, a joint statement or other text did not appear, and there were not enough explanations, news or comments about the summit on the official websites and press of the EU. The only concrete result of the summit was the announcement in March 2021 that a summit will be held in Brussels, where the five priority issues stated in the document "Eastern Partnership Policy Beyond 2020" will be confirmed and a joint declaration will be published.[54]

The document titled "East Partnership Policy Beyond 2020" was submitted to the relevant bodies of the EU in March 2020. In this document, which claimed that the "Eastern Partnership" in its tenth year gave concrete and positive results, five priority areas for post-2020 are specified. These are: 1) Sustainable and integrated economies, 2) Accountable institutions, rule of law, security, 3) Environment and climate, 4) Digitalization and 5) Fair and inclusive societies. In this document, emphasis is placed on the concept of resilience, which has taken a central place in the EU jargon recently, and it is stated that reinforcing resilience is the central element of the new policy of the "Eastern Neighborhood".[55]

Despite its liberal internationalism and some sort of idealist global philanthropy emphasis, the main goal of the EU's neighborhood policy and its eastern dimension, the "Eastern Partnership", is to create a ring of friendly countries around the EU, which is not within but at hand to reach, and thus it appears to be to realize its political-strategic and security-related interests. While it is true that neighborly policy has led to some progress in good governance in partner countries, it is also true that this policy is ultimately the result of a neo colonial approach based on some kind of center-periphery relation rather than being internationalist.[56]

The attitudes of the partner countries of the "Eastern Partnership" is another problematic area. Regarding this, the first thing to note is that the six partners have different perspectives on the nature and goals of this initiative. Georgia, Moldova and Ukraine insist on accepting the "Eastern Partnership" as a step towards EU membership. For Azerbaijan, which does not have an EU membership perspective, "Eastern Partnership" is important in terms of developing economic and commercial relations with the EU. It can be said that

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54 European Council, ''Eastern Partnership leaders' video conference'', https:// www. consilium. europa.eu/en/meetings/international-summit/2020/06/18/eu-moldova% 20 relations/ (Erişim Tarihi: 09.01.2021).

55 European Council. Eastern Partnership policy beyond 2020, https://www. consilium .europa.eu/en/policies/eastern-partnership/eastern-partnership-policy-beyond-2020/ (Erişim Tarihi: 13.01.2021).

56 Michael Bolle, ''Resilience of the EU and Leverage of the European Neighbourhood Policy: Good News and Bad News'', G. Rouet (Ed.) *Resilience and the EU's Eastern Neighbourhood Countries*, Switzerland: Palgrave Macmillan, 2019, pp.193-217.

the "Eastern Partnership" for Armenia, whose possibility of EU membership ended after becoming a member of the Eurasian Economic Union in 2015, meant developing relations with the EU as much as possible within the framework of the foreign policy approach called the policy of complementarity.[57]

Embracing the image of a country that has made a pro-Euro-Atlantic choice and is therefore annoyed by Russia and strives to carry out painful reform processes in the name of harmonization with the EU, it has adopted the "Eastern Partnership" and the discourse of the Western choice in general, the EU's economic it is seen that he instrumentalized it in order to get the greatest share possible from its aid. It can be said that Armenia also has such an attitude. The sincerity of these countries is questionable and it is seen that these attitudes have caused reactions among EU countries. As a matter of fact, there are comments in the EU press that these countries, especially Ukraine, only state that they have a tendency to "declarative Europeanization" and complain that they do not intend to carry out reforms despite all the support of the EU.[58]

However, an important development in 2020 overshadowed the Eastern Partnership Program. With the 2nd Nagorno-Karabakh War that started on September 22, 2020, it has become increasingly difficult to establish a regional cooperation again. It is possible to argue that the statements of Ukraine and Moldova emphasizing the territorial integrity of Azerbaijan are important. The emphasis on the principle of territorial integrity of these countries suffering from similar conflicts in the same region means a common defense of the international norm that already exists on this issue. On this issue, there may be a possibility of a stronger solidarity between these countries and Azerbaijan. Besides, it is also an important issue that these two countries, together with Georgia, Azerbaijan, Belarus and Armenia, are partner countries of the Eastern Partnership initiative of the European Union. Within the scope of the Eastern Partnership, Ukraine and Moldova signed an "Association Agreement" with the EU with Georgia and thus these countries took a step towards creating a "Deep and Comprehensive Free Trade Area".

In addition, these countries are making efforts for EU and NATO membership. Among the countries in the region, the pro-Azerbaijani attitudes of these countries with the strongest Euro-Atlantic tendency may have a slight reflection in the Euro-Atlantic capitals. When this picture is taken into consideration, it would be possible to say that Armenia has become a lonely country compared to Azerbaijan in the international arena. For that reason the Eastern Partnership progress would be much harder.

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57 Anna Zygierewicz, ''Association agreements between the EU and Moldova, Georgia and Ukraine'', Brussels: European Parliamentary Research Service, 2018, pp.34-35.

58 Isabella Facon, ''Russia's national security strategy and military doctrine and their implications for the EU'', Belgium: European Parliament's Sub-Committee on Security and Defence, 2017, pp.19-20.

To solve this problem, the United Nations, the European Union, the OSCE and NATO made similar statements regarding the conflict. These statements included calls for restraint and dialogue that did not accuse any of the parties. It has also been observed that these actors refer to the role of the OSCE Minsk Group in carrying out the dialogue process.[59]

Conclusion

The European Union and the Caucasus are among the most important agenda items of the new global system that emerged after the "Cold War". The EU is not only a center of attraction in terms of the values it offers and the integration process, it also reflects the potential of the new pole of the global system. In the Caucasus, it increases its importance in the global system in terms of its strategic location, new resource, new market, important transition point and similar features, and is among the priorities especially for the EU. The more intensive use of energy as a tool in Russian foreign policy, the increase in the importance of the Caucasus in terms of the new global security perception after the September 11 events in the energy policy of the European Union, which is overly dependent on Russia, is the EU's Common Security and Foreign Policy is causing this region to occupy more and more places in.

The EU, which gives weight to common foreign policy and security issues in the politicization process, wants to make its weight felt in global problems as one of the dominant powers of the international system. The EU has turned to geographies outside the continent in order to ensure the security of its expanding borders and to meet the basic needs of both the member states and the countries to be accepted in the future.

Like other actors in the international system, the EU has been in a new quest for the remnants of the USSR, which dissolved after the Cold War. Especially the unknown oil and natural gas reserves of the Caucasus made these searches more attractive.

Despite the general repercussions of the EU's lack of a policy towards the Caucasus, the objectives of the financial and technical assistance for the region have been examined with concrete projects. As a result of the investigations, it has been observed that the necessary initiatives have been initiated to achieve the goals such as minimizing the dangers that may come from the former Soviet republics, ensuring the establishment and continuity of democratic institutions in the region, and opening the region's underground resources to international markets safely. In these initiatives, the EU has taken into account the harmony of the interests of both states and international actors while including the region in many projects.

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[59] Euronews, ''AB Dış İlişkiler Yüksek Temsilcisi Borrell: Dağlık Karabağ için askeri müdahale söz konusu olamaz'', https://tr.euronews.com/2020/10/07/ab-den-dagl-k-karabag- uyar-s-d-s-aktorler-yalan-haberlerle-savasa-cekilmeye-cal-s-l-yor (Erişim Tarihi: 09.01.2021).

As a result, security concerns, the need to protect its expanding borders and meeting the depleted energy supply have led the EU to new geographies. The EU follows a balanced and moderate policy, taking into account the other actors of the international system and the national interests of these actors in its policies in the Caucasus. As the EU approaches its goal of political unity, it will maintain its continuity as a global actor in the international system by establishing strong connections with the countries that are hidden behind Kafdağı.

As the neighborhood policy formulated by the EU in the mid-2000s is the product of a period in which the Eastern Bloc vanished, declared the Euro-Atlantic's global victory, the idealistic and imaginative globalization theses were in demand, and NATO and the EU were going through significant expansion processes. Hence, it was shaped by the political and ideological conception prevailing during this period. But these years are also a time when the post-cold war era gradually began to give way to the post-Cold War era. Such that; The 2008 Georgia-Russia War, which broke out about a year before the "Eastern Partnership" was implemented in 2009, can be considered as the symbolic turning point of the transition to the post-Cold War era. This period, during which the post-Cold War era began to take shape, was a period in which many political and ideological acceptances on which the neighborhood policy were based began to lose their validity to a certain extent. One of the important reasons for the congestion caused by the contradictions it creates and the problems in its execution can be shown that the Eastern Partnership is a policy that was created according to the thinking system of the post-Cold War period, but is tried to be carried out in the reality of the post-Cold War era.

The drowsiness and problems experienced by the EU in adapting its foreign policy with its different dimensions according to the new realities are an important reason why the neighborhood policy cannot get rid of this obstruction. The intellectual inertness of the EU causes the inability of neighboring states and peoples to grasp the real concerns, expectations and priorities, instead of imposing their own reality. These issues stand before us as the most important reason for the problematic relations of the EU with the surrounding geographies.

Especially since the late 2000's, some problems in the EU have negative effects on the neighborhood policy. After the 2008 economic crisis, after the "Arab Spring" that broke out in 2011, the migrant issue, which came to the agenda with the return of the southern neighboring regions of the EU to a complete fire, in the process extending to the present day, is "isolationist" in the EU It has caused views to gain supporters. The slowdown in economic progress in the EU has a similar result. There is a possibility that the Covid-19 pandemic process we are living in will strengthen the "closure" trends. In addition to these, the differences of opinion between "old / western Europe" and "new / eastern Europe" on various issues within the EU also show themselves on the nature and goals of the "Eastern Neighborhood". Both groups attribute different meanings to the eastern neighboring region due to their own historical

experiences and short, medium and long term interests. This division in the EU results in different messages to the partners and other countries about the "Eastern Partnership". This situation has become a factor undermining the EU's consistency and reliability.

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