

**THE CENTENNIAL OF THE INDEPENDENCE OF
THE THREE SOUTH CAUCASUS STATES:
HISTORICAL BACKGROUND, CONTEMPORARY
DEVELOPMENTS AND PROSPECTS OF
PEACE AND PROSPERITY**

Proceedings of the International Conference Organized by
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**The Centennial of the Independence
of the Three South Caucasus States:
Historical Background, Contemporary
Developments and Prospects of
Peace and Prosperity**

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Introduction

THE CONTEMPORARY SCENERY OF THE SOUTH CAUCASUS REGION

Nigar SHIRALIZADE*

The South Caucasus region, regardless of its territorial scale, has always had a great impact on the international domain due to its geographic position, natural and human resources. The region's fertile land between the Caspian Sea and the Black Sea, extending to the Lesser Caucasian mountains range, provided the populations living here with necessary needs in all periods of history.

This region currently consisting of three independent countries, Azerbaijan, Armenia, and Georgia was a small hub on the historical Silk Road uniting China and Europe since the early ages. Furthermore, the South Caucasus was at the center of clashes among the great powers with conflicting interests starting from Arabic expansion since 7th century, Sassanid, Mongol empires, continuing with Russian, Ottoman, British empires until 20th century. British journalist Thomas de Waal in his "The Caucasus: An Introduction" book described the Caucasus as the "lands in between" both geographically and culturally. Being in the neighborhood of Europe, Asia, and the Middle East, the region comprises different religions and cultures which transforms it into a mosaic of varied identities.

It is estimated that approximately 17 million people presently live in the South Caucasian countries. Azerbaijan is the biggest economy in the region with its 10 million people. After regaining its independence in 1991, Azerbaijan took its place in the international society with great opportunities such as its hydrocarbon resources in the Caspian Sea that attracts transnational corporations of various countries, yet was faced with huge challenges occurring as a consequence of the Armenian invasion of its internationally recognized territories of Nagorno Karabakh and seven surrounding regions. As a newborn country, Azerbaijan was faced with a tremendously destructive humanitarian crisis erupting with a million internally displaced people's flow to the different parts of the country. Azerbaijan, by utilizing its hydrocarbon resources was able to formulate a strategy overcoming

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the humanitarian burden of the war with Armenia and increased its economic welfare in a very short time. Therefore, Azerbaijan enhances its works on transforming the revenues of the hydrocarbon resources to other domains, such as agriculture, education, healthcare, industry, culture and etc.

On the other side of the coin, Armenia is the smallest economy of the region with its 2.93 million people. By violating international law through occupying territories of Azerbaijan, this country has been stuck in self-inflicted isolationism for almost three decades. Having blocked itself from salient regional cooperation projects due to the overt occupation of Azerbaijan lands and territorial claims to its neighbors, Armenia still depends on the donations provided by the Armenian Diaspora and the remittances of Armenians working abroad. Furthermore, despite the fanfare over the “revolutionary transition” that occurred in Armenia in 2018 and brought Nikol Pashinyan into power, it appears that there is still no change in the foreign policy making of this country towards its neighboring states.

Georgia, the second biggest economy of the South Caucasus with its 3.90 million people has also been through crucial periods due to the Ossetia and Abkhazia problems and the 2008 war with Russia. The country effectively participated in the regional energy and transportation projects while successfully utilizing its geographic location for making a financial profit. Currently, Georgia pursues a pro-Western foreign policy by declaring its willingness to join NATO and the EU.

Though there are several internal issues and diverging external perspectives, the countries in the South Caucasus share a common past regarding the independence struggle from Tsarist Russia and the USSR in the early and late 20th century that involve establishing their republics and regaining their sovereignty. Each state in the South Caucasus has its own internal dynamics shaping its current position in the international system. Certainly, external geopolitical and geo-economic dynamics of the region should also be indicated. The impact of the powers in “near abroad” such as Russia, Iran, and Turkey, as well as “far abroad” such as the EU, the USA, and China should be taken into account while evaluating the current situation in the South Caucasus.

Nowadays, the South Caucasus continues to play its historical role as a hub in the East and the West and the South and the North nexus by being a region where the projects such as Baku-Tbilisi-Ceyhan, Baku-Tbilisi-Erzurum, and Baku-Tbilisi-Kars have been realized. This region is also an important part of the revitalized version of the ancient Silk Road through the Chinese-led Belt and Road initiative. Though a number of projects have already been implemented, the South Caucasus may only reach its true potential by overcoming the challenges holding it back, principally through solving the regional conflicts and eliminating their damaging effects.

Considering the salience of the region, the conference titled “The Centennial of the Independence of the Three South Caucasus States - Historical Background, Contemporary Developments, Prospects of Peace and Prosperity” was held in Ankara on 9 November 2018. It aimed to foster collaboration amongst researchers, practitioners, and experts of the South Caucasian region in order to enhance the awareness of the historical background of the current regional problems by opening a floor to discussions on the potential solutions for them. The conference consisted of three sessions. Eleven participants from five countries contributed to the conference. Various subjects such as the historical background of the region, economic cooperation, humanitarian burdens and legal consequences of the conflicts were covered during discussions.

In the first session titled “South Caucasus from the Early 20th Century Up to the Present,” the historical background of the current balance of powers in the South Caucasus was presented. Tutku Dilaver (Turkey), Ali Bilge Cankorel (Turkey), and Nigar Gozalova (Azerbaijan) discussed the situation in the South Caucasus since the early ages by emphasizing the establishment of three independent countries in 1918. The background of Armenia-Azerbaijan Nagorno Karabakh conflict and the role of great powers in the early 20th century were the major issues emphasized by the participants.

In the second session titled “Perspectives on the Conflicts in the South Caucasus,” Matthew Bryza (US), Amanda Paul (UK), Yulia Nikitina (Russia), and Turgut Kerem Tuncel (Turkey) evaluated the role and impact of four different external actors; the US, EU, Russia and Turkey respectively, to the Armenia-Azerbaijan Nagorno-Karabakh, Russian-Georgian conflict over South Ossetia and Abkhazia regions in the South Caucasus. The session’s presentations explained the perspectives of the foreign actors to the conflicts in the region and underlined the international mediation and peacemaking processes.

In the last session titled “Contemporary Political, Humanitarian and Legal Scenery in the South Caucasus and Conflict Resolution Initiatives,” Ege Gürsoy (Turkey), Milena Sterio (US), Phillip Remler (US), and Fuad Chiragov (Azerbaijan) discussed humanitarian and legal consequences of the conflicts and evaluated the prospects of the peace in the region. The panelists evaluated the humanitarian burden of the conflicts and their potential solutions within the legal framework.

This conference proceedings book brings together the papers presented and written by the participants of the conference. The book is composed of nine chapters. The book does not include the papers of Milena Sterio and Yulia Nikitina who did not submit their papers out of personal considerations. We hope that this book will contribute to the literature on the South Caucasian region by igniting novel ideas and encouraging new researches on the regional issues.



**OPENING REMARK
BY AMBASSADOR (R.) ALEV KILIÇ**

Alev KILIÇ*

November 2018 marks the 100th anniversary of the end of the First World War, also known as the Great War. Commemorations take place throughout the world to remember this devastating war and its lessons for humanity. The war's impact on the world map was significant. It lasted for four years, engulfing all the major world powers and millions of people. It also changed the existing balance of power and the international order. The war resulted in the disintegration and collapse of four major empires namely Tsarist Russian, German, Austro-Hungarian and Ottoman Empires. Consequently, it also resulted in the birth of numerous independent states. These also included the South Caucasus states where Armenia, Azerbaijan and Georgia gained independence in May 1918.

The series of events which led to the emergence of independent states in the Caucasus began with the Russian Revolution of 1917. On 8 March, 1917 (23 February according to old Russian/Julien calendar; hence the name February revolution) public protests started in the Russian Capital of Petrograd (St Petersburg), lasting for eight days which eventually resulted in the abolition of

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the monarchy in Russia. Tsar Nicholas II was forced to abdicate a week later, also removing his son from the succession. The Russian Romanov dynasty came to an end, also spelling the end of the Russian Empire.

The Bolshevik Revolution on 7 November (25 October according to the Julian calendar) hence the “October Revolution” heralded a new era. The Bolsheviks immediately proposed to withdraw Russia from the war and to negotiate terms of peace treaties, met with the central powers in Brest-Litovsk in December 1917. After protracted negotiations the Bolsheviks agreed to sign peace treaties with the central powers that were Germany, Austro-Hungary, Ottoman Empire and Bulgaria in March 1918.

The resulting treaty of Brest-Litovsk officially ended the Russian participation in the war. By the terms of the treaty Bolshevik Russia agreed to withdraw its forces from Eastern Anatolia including the three provinces (Elviye-i Selâse) of Kars, Ardahan and Batum that had been ceded to Russia back in 1878.

Thus the grip of Tsarist Russia in the Caucasus also came to an end briefly. The peoples of Transcaucasia took the matters into their own hands and formed the first Transcaucasian Sejm (parliament) after the Bolshevik Revolution. This parliament declared Transcaucasia as a Federative Republic on 22 April 1918.

However, the turmoil and disunity in the Caucasus and amongst the constituent elements of the new republic made a difficulty for the authorities to sustain the federative structure. Shortly thereafter the Sejm declared itself dissolved. The same day, Georgia declared its independence, establishing the Democratic Republic of Georgia. On 27 May, Azerbaijan did the same by establishing Azerbaijan Democratic Republic. Armenia followed suit and declared its independence on 28 May by establishing Democratic Republic of Armenia. Thus, the three major political, national entities in the Caucasus emerged as individual and independent actors.

However, all three republics were plagued by internal strife and territorial disputes with neighbors. For example, based in Tbilisi, the newly formed Azerbaijani government did not yet take the control over its territories. Baku, the capital city of Azerbaijan, was under Bolshevik rule. Moreover in March, 1918, the Azerbaijanis in Baku were the victims of a grave massacre which was the part of an ethnic cleansing of the Muslims in the region by Armenian forces. The representatives of the Azerbaijani government sought help from the Ottoman Empire. The help came in the form of a special army unit called the “Caucasus Army of Islam” led by Nuri Pasha. In May, 1918, forces under Nuri (Killigil) Pasha started their advance from Ganja to Baku and Baku was liberated on 15 September 1918 in the name of the Azerbaijan Republic.

On 4 June 1918, these three newly born independent states signed the Treaty of Batumi with the Ottoman Empire, recognizing the pre-1878 Ottoman borders.

However, after the victory of the entente powers, the Ottoman army was disbanded in accordance with the Armistice of Mudros on the 30 October. On 17 November 1918, the British Indian army units entered Baku.

Armenians soon reoccupied Aleksandrapol (Gyumri), Kars and started fighting with the Georgians in December over the control of Lori (Borchaly) and Akhalkalaki districts. The fighting continued until January 1919 when a temporary agreement was brokered by the British. Similarly, war against Azerbaijan was launched by Armenia over the control of the Karabakh region and Armenian forces under the command of the Armenian guerrilla leader Andranik Ozanyan invaded Karabakh, destroying all Azerbaijani villages in their path. The border disputes between the republics of Azerbaijan and Armenia continued until the end of their existence about two years later.

The South Caucasus has always been a strategic region for Russia. So it was no surprise for Soviet Russia to flex its muscles on Caucasia again. Using its superior military capacity and Bolshevik sympathizers within these republics, all three South Caucasus Republics were forcefully Sovietized and eventually incorporated into the Soviet Union by 1922. Armenians, Azerbaijanis and Georgians would be able to regain their independence seventy years later with the dissolution of the Soviet Union.

Even though democratic republics of Georgia, Azerbaijan and Armenia were very short-lived, they have left a profound impact in the history and imagination of the Armenian, Azerbaijani and Georgian peoples. To this day, the memory of these short-lived republics continues to serve as a valuable source of experience and inspiration for their policy makers and societies. During this period, they were able to experiment with self-rule for the first time in the modern era. Laws regarding legal and administrative systems, citizenship, defense and language were adopted. Many culturally important and prestigious institutions such as the Baku, Tbilisi and Yerevan State Universities were established during this time period. This early experience in statehood and strengthening of national identities served as major inspirations to regain their independence by the end of the 1980s.

In November 1989, the fall of the Berlin Wall marked the end of the Cold War. Following events brought momentous changes in Europe and beyond. By October 1990, Germany was reunified. Then the world witnessed swift collapse of the other East European regimes.

In the corresponding period, the world also witnessed significant development and turmoil in the South Caucasus. On the 12 July 1988, separatist elements within the local legislator of Nagorno-Karabakh of Azerbaijan declared their intention to secede from Azerbaijan, which resulted in the sending of Soviet troops to the region. Tensions between Armenia and Azerbaijan intensified. Demands for

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independence in the South Caucasus states would soon follow. Azerbaijan was at the forefront of this endeavor. Soviet troops stormed Baku in 1990, killing hundreds of Azerbaijanis demanding independence. Then, on December 1991, the leader of the Soviet Union Mikael Gorbachev announced his resignation. The Soviet Union, one of the most influential states of the 20th century, shortly thereafter collapsed. With it the Warsaw pact disappeared. Seizing this opportunity, Azerbaijan, Georgia and Armenia declared their independence.

A neighboring country to all these three South Caucasus states, Turkey became the first state to recognize independence of the Azerbaijan Republic on November 1991. Turkey was also among the first countries to recognize the independence of both Georgia and Armenia on 16 December 1991. Since then, Turkey has developed very good relations with both Azerbaijan and Georgia.

Turkey's relations with Azerbaijan are deep rooted, multifaceted, and strategic at the same time. Turkey's relations with Georgia are also at a strategic level and enjoy strong economic ties. Turkey contributes to the efforts aimed at the resolution of the Nagorno-Karabakh conflict within Azerbaijan's territorial integrity and sovereignty through peaceful means. Turkey also strongly supports the territorial integrity of Georgia. In this sense, since 1990s, Turkey has unwaveringly been trying to strengthen the independence and sovereignty of the countries of this region, supporting cooperation for political and economic stability of the region.

Unfortunately, it is not possible to speak of Turkey-Armenia relations in such a positive light. The occupation of Nagorno-Karabakh and adjacent Azerbaijani provinces by Armenia, Armenia's hostile and disconstructive policy towards Turkey based on distorted historical events and grudges create obstacles to the desired good neighborly relations and to the establishment of peace, stability and cooperation in the South Caucasus.

In the light of the foregoing, I can confidently state that since the independence of the three South Caucasus states, Turkey has followed a policy that seeks stability based on the sovereignty and territorial integrity of these three countries. Also, Turkey has neither attempted to impose regime changes and ideologies, nor has it acted with neo-imperialistic ambitions. From my perspective, this forthright and fair approach makes Turkey distinct and distinguishes her from other actors involved in the region.

To conclude, after a very long introduction, I would like to thank to our distinguished panelists and to all those who worked selflessly and ceaselessly for the organization of this conference and this book. I hope such publications will inspire new researches related to the region and subsequently contribute to strengthening peace and prosperity in the South Caucasus and beyond.

A HISTORICAL OVERVIEW OF THE CONFLICTS IN THE SOUTH CAUCASUS AND RUSSIAN POLICY IN THE REGION

Tutku DİLAVER

Center for Eurasian Studies (AVİM)



The Caucasus region throughout its history has been a borderland. It has been an area over which empires have competed; an area in which civilizations and religions met; it has served both as a bridge and a barrier to contacts between north and south, and east and west.¹ This critical position of the region has caused to attract attention of the great powers such as Russian Empire, Soviet Union, Ottomans-Turks, Iran and also the West from the very beginning of the history. Nevertheless, when we look at the history of the conflicts, we can say that the 19th century had been a milestone.

In 1801 when Russian Empire occupied the Kingdom of Kartli-Kakheti (Eastern Georgia)², the first signals of the change in the South Caucasus were already emerging. In this era, Russian Empire began its expansion to the South Caucasus. One of the reasons behind the expansion was mainly to take control of transportation routes. By this way, Russian Empire would have gained the

1 Svente Cornell, "Small Nations, Great Power: a study of etnopolitical conflict in the Caucasus," *RoutledgeCurzon*, 1999.

2 Alexander Mikaberidze, "Conflict and Conquest in the Islamic World: A Historical Encyclopedia," *ABC-Clio*, Volume I, 2011.

capability to move freely in the Black Sea and the Caspian Sea which was the most important transportation routes of that era. The other reason was to become a competitive power against great powers as Great Britain and France. Great Britain and Napoleon's France had been competing over trade routes that connected Europe to India.



Transcaucasia in the early XIX century

Even Great Britain made an alliance with Qajar Shah against France that excluded it from commercial activities in Persian Gulf in exchange of Britain's protection³. However, Shah sensed Britain's ambivalence about upholding its agreement.⁴ So he made an agreement with France that did not last long. France was getting closer with Russian Empire, so Britain and Shah renegotiated their alliances. In 1812, when Napoleon's France attacked the Russian Empire, Britain reconciled with Russia and not keep its previous promises to Shah.

The major strategy of Russian Empire to establish permanent presence in this region could be attained by cutting the ties between the indigenous peoples of the Caucasus with Persia and the Ottomans.⁵ After the death of Nadir Shah in 1747, South Caucasus lands were divided into khanates which had autonomy and ruled by Qajar dynasty mostly.⁶ But there was internal strife between these khanates.

3 Thomas R. Mattair, "Global Security Watch—Iran: A Reference Handbook: A Reference Handbook,"

4 Ibid.

5 Cornell, "Small Nations, Great Power: a study of etnopolitical conflict in the Caucasus," p.53.

6 Cornell, "Small Nations, Great Power: a study of etnopolitical conflict in the Caucasus," p.17.

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For Russian Empire such strife created an opportunity to manipulate the local leaders in conformity with its “divide and rule” policy. The Russian experience in the North Caucasus was that the unity between the local rulers and tribes could hinder Russian expansion. Also the external interventions could string out the process of taking under control. The Tsar enacted a decree that ordered to increase Russian influence on the khanates that had not already have any connection with Qajar Iran.⁷ Khans of Revan, Sheki, Shirvan, Ganja, and Baku began to worry about their future and got close with the Shah of Iran.⁸ They were under military protection of Iran. On the other hand, Khan of Karabakh, İbrahim Khan made an agreement of Treaty of Kurekchay with Russia in 1805 and recognized Russian authority.⁹ By this way, Russian Empire strengthened its influence in Karabakh and embraced the policy of resettlement of Christians, especially Armenians, to the region. In fact, after that time, most of the Armenians who fled the Ottoman-Russo War and Qajar-Russo War and took refuge in Russia were gradually settled in the Karabakh region.

The invasion of the Khanates located in the north-western neighborhood of Iran by Russia lasted from 1804 to 1813, as the Caucasus region became a secondary problem for Russian Empire in the face of the threat posed by Napoleon. In 1812, When Russian armies were struggling with France; Qajar Iran attacked Russia through the Caucasus. But, this attempt failed and ended up with signing the Treaty of Gulistan in 1813. According to this treaty, Karabakh Khanate and Yelizavetpol province (former Ganja Khanate), Khanates of Sheki, Shirvan, Derbend, Guba, Baku and Talish (together with the province of Shuragol) İmperiya, Guriya, Mingrelia and Abkhazia, and all the properties and lands in the Caucasus became a property of Russian Empire.¹⁰ Iran kept Revan and Nakhchevan khanates while the west part of Circassia and east of Dagestan kept their autonomy from Russia.

After the Treaty of Gulistan was signed, the head of Russian army of the Caucasus Alexey Petrovich Yermolof was appointed as the proconsul of the Caucasus. According to his point of view, Treaty of Gulistan gave too much authority to the Muslim khans of the region.¹¹ As a result of his repressive policies, some of

7 Elena Andreeva, “Russia and Iran in the Great Game: Travelogues and Orientalism,” *Routledge*, 2007.

8 Zekeriya Türkmen, “XIX.Yüzyıl Başlarında Rusya’nın Güney Kafkasya Politikası, (The South Caucasus Policy of Russia at the beginning of 19th century)” XIX. ve XX. Yüzyıllarda Türkiye ve Kafkaslar, Sekizinci Askeri Tarih Semineri Bildirileri, c. I, *Gnkur: ATASE Bşk.lığı Yay.*, Ankara 2003, s. 21-36.

9 Araz Aslanlı, “Karabağ Sorunu ve Türkiye-Ermenistan İlişkileri (Karabakh Conflict and Turkish-Armenian Relations)” 2015.
https://www.academia.edu/36161398/Karabagin_ismi_ve_tarihi_Karabag_Sorunu_ve_Turkiye_Ermenistan_iliskileri_kitabindan.

10 Article III, “Treaty of Gulistan”, *Republic of Azerbaijan Ministry of Foreign Affairs* 1813.
<http://www.mfa.gov.az/en/content/809>.

11 Aslanlı, *ibid*.

Muslim khans took refuge in Qajar Iran.¹² Yermelov applied “russification” policies in the Caucasus region while increasing Russian pressure created a resistance of local people and that helped slow down Russian Empire’s march to the south for a while.

In the following decade, Russian influence in the region increased. At the beginning of 1826, the Shah tried to counter this influence through the khans of Azerbaijan at a time when the Russians were having a hard time in their own borders such as the Decembrist uprising in St. Petersburg. On July 16th, 1826 Shah Abbas Mirza announced withdrawal from the Treaty of Gulistan, therefore, people of Karabakh and Lenkeran rose against Russian rule, and Iranians laid siege to the fortress of Shusha.¹³ But there has been an unexpected resistance from the local population against Iran, in Ganja, Shamahi and Shaki, the khans of which were in fact fighting on the side of Iran. This is one of the most important signs of the success of russification and colonization policies of Russia in the region. The exile of Turks and Muslims from the region, and the strategy of resettling Christian population mainly composed of Armenians in the region paved the way for Russian success. Iran lost the control of Nakhichevan and Revan while Russia took the control of Etchmiadzin.¹⁴ This was also a very important development because Armenian Apostolic Church - the Mother Cathedral of Holy Etchmiadzin - located within the territories of Yerevan, ranked as the highest authority of the Armenian Church fell under the control of Russia. After that time, Russia’s influence on the Armenians has gradually and inevitably increased.

In the Treaty of Turkmenchay, Qajar recognized that all the lands located between the borderlines and between Caucasus and Caspian Sea including all migrants and other people living on those territories to be the property of the Russian Empire.¹⁵ That treaty ended Iran’s rule over the Caucasus.

Gulistan and Turkmenchay treaties were the starting point for the new political realities in the region. They are the manifestation of a new geopolitical order. In order to strengthen Russian authority in the region, the administrative structure, demography and ethno-political order were needed to be changed. Russia fastened its resettlement policy of Christians - Cossacks, Georgians and Armenians - which aimed to break physical contact between Muslim population of the region with Ottoman empire and Iran.

12 George Bournoutian, “Demographic Changes in the Southwest Caucasus, 1604-1830: The Case of Historical Eastern Armenia,” *Forum of EthnoGeoPolitics*, Vol.3 No. 2 Autumn 2015, <http://www.ethnogeopolitics.org/download/ForumEGPVol3No2articles/ForumEGPVol3No2GeorgeBournoutianDemographicChangesSouthwestCaucasus1604-1830EasternArmeniapp27-35.pdf>

13 Serkan Keçeci, “The Grand Strategy of the Russian Empire in the Caucasus against Its Southern Rivals,” PHD Thesis, *London School of Economics and Political Science*, October 2016, London.

14 Keçeci, p.121.

15 “Treaty of Turkmenchay,” *Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Republic of Azerbaijan*, <http://mfa.gov.az/en/content/810>

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Therefore, Russians implemented a redesigned special administrative system of rule in the Caucasus. The names of provinces were changed and as of 1835, Caucasus was reorganized into 14 provincial units. Georgia, Imereti, Guriya, Ahiska province, Armenian Oblast, Djaro-Belokani Oblast, Talish Province, Muslim Provinces, and South Dagestan directly adjoined to the central administration. Shortly after, in 1840, another regulation divided the region into two administrative units: Caspian Oblast which included Georgia- Imereti governorate and Shirvan, Karabakh, Sheki, Talish, Baku, Derbend and Kubin. Also, Armenian Oblast was abolished. As it can be predicted Russia started to implement a centralization policy in the Caucasus. 1846 saw another reorganization of that structure with the establishment of Transcaucasian Krai while Tbilisi, Kutais, Derbent and Semahi were turned into a guberniya.¹⁶

For these administrative units, there have been a number of consequences of becoming a part of the Russian central administration. Russification was only one of them. For example, Abkhazians, Circassians' native languages were banned. Secondly, as a result of the demographic changes, many of the relative communities were separated from each other like Azerbaijan (the territories of the current Republic of Azerbaijan) and Azerbaijan province located in the northern part of Iran. Also, inter-ethnic clashes began to erupt in the region. The violence between Armenians and Muslims spread all around the South Caucasus. Thus, the events beginning with the clash of the two great powers in the Caucasus region saw the seeds of the problems of today. Third, the administrative regulations changed the structure and alliances in the region; while the Shite Muslims were the favorites in the Iranian era, the Orthodox Christians became the favorites of the Russians.

After the October revolution of 1917, the first government of an independent Transcaucasia was established in Tbilisi. There was a Civil War between Mensheviks and Bolsheviks. And the Transcaucasians did not accept the Bolshevik Revolution. In February, 1918 the Transcaucasian Council ("Sejm") started its work in Tbilisi, and this was the first serious step towards complete independence of the Caucasian nations. The treaty of Brest-Litovsk stipulated the independence of Transcaucasia.¹⁷ However, that climate vanished in a short time. Short-lived independence of the Caucasus republics taught these countries a lot, but then the system that paved the way for its creation has also lead to the loss of this independence to the Soviet rule in the end.

16 Şahin Doğan, "1849 Rus Kafkas Yılığına Göre Kafkasya'da Çarlık Rusya İdaresindeki Yerleşim Yerleri (Tsarist Russian Settlements in The Caucasus According to 1849 Russian Caucasus Yearbook)," *Gaziantep University Journal of Social Sciences*, issue 12 vol 3, 2013, p. 701. <https://dergipark.org.tr/download/article-file/223258>

17 Didem Aksoy, "Soviet Transcaucasus 1917-1945: Nations In Transition," Unpublished Masters's Thesis, *Bilkent University*, 2013, p. 34. <http://www.thesis.bilkent.edu.tr/0007087.pdf>

The policies conducted in the Caucasus under Soviet rule had differed in accordance with the leaders' approach at the time. But a general look at the Soviet policy reveals that the historical fears of unity of Muslims against central rule was still the main concern of Soviet Russia. The borderlines in the Caucasus region are a clear reflection and a result of such concern.

From 1917-22, Stalin headed the Commissariat for Ethnicities of the Soviet Russia. He was actively involved in the reformation of South Caucasus. Stalin's perception about national minorities as his use of 'nativization' (korenizatsiia)¹⁸ process of the 1920s to increase central power and diminish the actual power of the autonomies is the indicator of his impact on the region. There were two strategies that aimed to achieve this. The first was quite simply to ensure that the autonomous administrative units were given no actual autonomy or real political power, meaning that their authority being restricted to the cultural and social spheres. Hence, actual power remained in Moscow; the autonomies, so to speak, never became autonomous. The second strategy was to use national delimitation to create sources of dissent among the Caucasian people in particular, whom Stalin saw as the most disloyal in the union—a perception later exemplified by the deportations of the Second World War.¹⁹

In the North Caucasus, the most flagrant example is the delimitation between the Turkic Karachai/Balkar peoples on the one hand and the Circassian Kabardin/Cherkess on the other. Settlement patterns would logically have indicated a division of the region inhabited by these peoples along an east—west axis, and would have united the Karachais and Balkars, who are in fact one people speaking a common language; and the Kabardins and the Cherkess, both Circassian peoples speaking closely related languages. Hence two republics, 'Karachai-Balkar' and 'Kabardin-Cherkess' would have been the logical solution. However, Stalin chose to divide the area along a north-south axis, which, although still dividing these peoples into two republics, united the Karachais and the Cherkess in one, and the Kabardins and the Balkars in the other.²⁰

In the south Caucasus, Nagorno-Karabakh and Nakhchevan were the two main issues. At this point, the political struggle for Karabakh began, and lasted long, as it took the Soviet leadership three years to settle the issue. Initially the pendulum seemed to swing in favor of Armenia when on December 2, 1920, Stalin announced that Karabakh, Zangezur and Nakhichevan were all transferred to Armenian control, a decision to which Azerbaijani leader Narimanov agreed but

18 Cornell, "Small Nations, Great Power: a study of etnopolitical conflict in the Caucasus," p.27.

19 Andrej Kotljarchuk and Olle Sundström, "Ethnic and Religious Minorities in Stalin's Soviet Union New Dimensions of Research," *Elanders*, Stockholm, 2017, <https://sh.diva-portal.org/smash/get/diva2:1164774/FULLTEXT02.pdf>

20 Cornell, "Small Nations, Great Power: a study of etnopolitical conflict in the Caucasus," p.28.

later denied.²¹ Four months later, the pendulum swung back when the USSR and Turkey signed the ‘Treaty of Brotherhood and Friendship’ that included a provision that both Nakhichevan and Karabakh were to be placed under the control of the Azerbaijani SSR.²² Stalin saw Turkey as a potential ally at the time. Finally, a decision was taken to give the region the rank of an autonomous Oblast, and a decree from Baku on 7 July 1923 established this state of affairs. In addition, Nakhichevan received the status of an Autonomous Republic (ASSR) in 1924 within the Azerbaijani SSR.²³ The Armenians were disappointed with this situation because of the Soviet promises previously given about Nakhichevan and Nagorno-Karabakh.

In 1957, after Stalin's death, Khrushchev started what is called de-Stalinization process and many of the groups that had been exiled were allowed to return to their homelands. This created trouble in the region because of the administrative regulations made by Stalin as the people who returned from exile faced with serious social, political, economic and ethnic problems. Many of the groups choose to stay in their current residential. But the tensions remained between the people during the whole Soviet era. For example, in 1963, with the more open climate created by Khrushchev's destalinization, a petition signed by approximately 2,500 Karabakh Armenians was submitted to Khrushchev. In the petition Armenians protested the Azerbaijani attitude towards the region and claimed that Azerbaijanis intentionally neglected the Nagorno-Karabakh autonomous oblast economically.²⁴ Moscow kept its silence, and unrest erupted in Karabakh, leaving eighteen casualties. Alike troubles broke out in 1968 as well.

Growing tension between the societies became a massive movement during the Glastnost. Besides other tensions, Armenian-Azerbaijani, Abkhaz-Georgian dissociation became evident even more. Demonstrations quickly transformed into political, nationalist demonstrations. Past policies and strategies of the Tsarist and the Soviet rule aimed towards attaining and maintaining control now resulted in an uncontrollable conflict.²⁵

The history of the people within the region is complicated. Until the dissolution of the USSR, the region has been subject to repressive policies that had social, political and economic consequences for the post-Soviet era. Under the influence of Turkish, Russian, Iranian and other powers, the region underwent several interventions, invasions and designs with long-lasting effects.

21 Cornell, “ Small Nations, Great Power: a study of etnopolitical conflict in the Caucasus,” p.60.

22 Cornell, “ Small Nations, Great Power: a study of etnopolitical conflict in the Caucasus,” p.61.

23 Cornell, “ Small Nations, Great Power: a study of etnopolitical conflict in the Caucasus,” p.62.

24 Cornell, “ Small Nations, Great Power: a study of etnopolitical conflict in the Caucasus,” p.63-64

25 Cornell, p.65.

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ESTABLISHMENT AND INDEPENDENCE OF THE THREE SOUTH CAUCASUS STATES IN EARLY TWENTIETH CENTURY OTTOMAN-TURKISH INVOLVEMENT

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Historical Background

The three Caucasus states first declared independence on 27 and 28 May 1918. Although short-lived, this event sparked dramatic developments to follow throughout the 20th century.

The Caucasian lands, particularly Azerbaijan, have been the focus of interest for Western powers for two main reasons. The first reason is oil resources. The Nobel Brothers first invested in Baku oil in 1875 and in 1901 achieved practically half of the world's oil production, to be joined by the Rothschild family later. It should be noted that around 65% of the world's oil reserves lie in the Middle Eastern and Caucasian neighborhood of Azerbaijan and Turkey, although this was not entirely known at the time.

The second important reason is the strategic situation of Caucasia in geopolitics. Indeed, one of the critical priorities behind the pre-war competition among European powers was access to the economic riches of the Far East. The fast

economic development rate of Germany had led to imperialist ambitions to challenge British rule in India. This could only be achieved through domination of the routes to Far East, as this has also been the major incentive behind the German project Baghdad railroad extending from Berlin through Ottoman territory to the Persian Gulf. The project was launched in 1888 by the concessions the Ottoman Sultan gave to a German company. Plenty of blood would be shed for the protection of this railroad during the war and it would never reach its destination. But the extension of transport lines would have to continue beyond Ottoman territory also in the Caucasus which required the German control of this region. The German strategy was to take advantage of its alliance with the Ottoman Empire holding the status of the spiritual leadership of the Muslim World; the Khalifate. While Great Britain would fight back to protect her domination against such designs, Russia would resist both before and after the Bolshevik Revolution against any foreign domination of that region which was under her sovereign power. It was under these circumstances that the other neighboring imperial power, the Ottoman Empire, would enter the picture in the name of its interests and upon the Azerbaijanis' appeal for support against aggression.

The First World War Breaks Out and the Ottoman Empire Enters the War

The First World War was then to a great extent about European competition on controlling Caucasia as much as it was about partitioning Ottoman territory by European powers. The peoples of the Caucasus were consequently put under increasing pressure to urgently organize themselves for protection against both European and Russian aggression as well as against regional hostilities in that chaotic environment particularly after the Bolshevik Revolution. This fight for survival in various fronts and the shifting alliances eventually resulted in declaration of their independence.

The war in Southern Caucasia broke out when the Russian army attacked Eastern Anatolia on 1 November 1914, days after the Ottoman Navy under German command bombarded Odessa and Sevastopol and the Ottoman Empire entered the war. The Ottoman Army launched a counter attack on 10 November and pushed the Russian forces back. The Minister of War Enver Pasha, however, pressed by German Headquarters to advance further, ordered the Ottoman Third Army to launch the Sarikamış attack on 20 December that resulted in a disastrous defeat and caused the loss of some 50 thousand soldiers mainly as a result of bad planning. Enver Pasha, however, did not stop there but commanded his uncle Halil Pasha to launch an operation against the Russian occupation in Southern Azerbaijan. The seizure of Tabriz on 14 January 1915 by the 37th and 38th Divisions of the Ottoman Eastern Army sparked some uprisings of independence in and around Ganja. The Russian Caucasia Army however was far superior to the Ottoman 3rd Army, the Russian fighting force numbering 197,000 against

50,000 Turkish soldiers and the number of Russian canons doubling the Turkish firing force, not to mention the Russian military infrastructural superiority. The Russian Army consequently took back Tabriz in two weeks and started the occupation of Eastern Anatolia, jointly with the Armenian forces. By the end of July 1915, Erzurum, Muş, Bitlis, Trabzon and Erzincan provinces would fall to the Czar's armies. The following Sykes-Picot Secret Agreement of 3 January 1916 between Russia, Great Britain, and France would in fact leave the Eastern Black Sea coast and eastern Anatolia to Russian rule, in addition to Istanbul and the Straits.

Independence Movements in Caucasia

Meantime, the independence movement already ignited in Northern Azerbaijan came to life and the representative of the Azerbaijani Turks' secret organization DIFAI Amir Arslan Khan asked Enver Pasha in a meeting back in February 1915 Turkish support for the idea of establishing an independent confederation comprising Baku, Ganja, Yerevan, Terek, and Daghestan. Enver agreed, provided that Russian intervention can be avoided. This initiative is known to be the first ever move towards independence of the Caucasus peoples.

The Armenians, on the other hand were designing ways and means of exploiting opportunities against Ottoman territory and interests. As a matter of fact, even before war broke out, the Ottoman-Russian Protocol signed on 8 February 1914 under the pressure of European Powers called for the initiation of "reforms" to protect the interests of the Christian local population in Eastern Turkey. Those reforms would be run under the supervision of two regional governors to be appointed by European governments. In a subsequent letter dated 5 August 1914 sent by the Armenian Catholicos of Etchmiadzin to the Russian Governor General of the Caucasus Vorontsov-Dashgov, the Armenian spiritual leader suggested the annexation of the "Armenian" eastern Anatolian provinces to Russia and putting those provinces under the rule of an Armenian regional governor. The Russian bureaucrat turned down the suggestion but told the Catholicos that the policies pursued by Russia would continue to serve Armenian interests regardless. Russia would in fact increase violence against the Turkish and Muslim populations in the region thereafter. But the Czar's regime was categorically against an independent Armenia outside Russian boundaries, as also confirmed in a Note Verbale of 17 March 1916 delivered to the British and French Ambassadors in St. Petersburg. France, too, was far from being sympathetic to Armenian projects of establishing a "Great Armenia" comprising the whole of eastern Turkey and even ancient Cilicia.

Under this mounting Russian-Armenian pressure, Azeri patriots pursued their efforts in getting organized to inform the public in Istanbul and some European

cities about the problems facing them. Among many such organizations, the more widely known are the Ganja National Committee, Caucasus Society of Benevolence (*Hayriye*), Azerbaijan Youth Organization, Social Democrat Charity (*Himmet*) Party established in 1904 under the leadership of Nariman Narimanov and the Musavat Party established in 1911. The Caucus of the Caucasian Moslems was convened by the Moslem National Council between 15 and 20 April 1917, to be followed in Moscow by the First Congress of All Moslem Populations of Russia.

Bolshevik Revolution

Political developments flamed up with the Russian people's uprisings of March and October 1917. The Russian army and administration totally disintegrated, and the region fell into anarchy. The interim Russian Prime Minister Prince Lvov turned over the Czar's authority to the five-member Transcaucasia (*Maverai Kafkas*) Committee representing Russian, Azerbaijani, Georgian, and Armenian nationalities but this committee never managed to live up to the pressing challenges. The Russian interim government decreed on 9 May 1917 to appoint Armenian governors to rule the eastern Anatolian provinces of Van, Bitlis, Erzurum, and Trabzon under Russian occupation. Further encouraged by those developments, Armenians declared at a Congress convened in Tbilisi in October 1917 their decision to establish "the Greater Armenia" comprising the Caucasus and Eastern Anatolia, and they instituted an "Armenian National Parliament" as well as an "Armenian Council". Contrary to their claims, however, the localities inhabited by a majority of Armenian population at the time were limited to Etchmiadzin, Novo Beyazid, Gyumri, Zengezur, and Susha.

Lenin's 7 November 1917 declaration of the "Russian Peoples' Manifest" calling for self-determination encouraged the people of the Caucasus to establish their own states but this call would soon be reformulated to leave no room for independence outside Soviet territory. Under those circumstances, the problem of developing independent relations among the Caucasian nations became a more urgent issue while the continued advance of the Ottoman forces in the Region would become an increasingly relevant element to follow. While tendencies grew in Azerbaijan to further close ranks with the Ottoman administration, the Ottoman authorities also considered the important role which could be played by the Turkish-Muslim people of Caucasia in defending Ottoman interests against Russian and British imperialistic plans. Those aspirations were also shared by the German authorities from the point of view of their own interests.

On 28 November 1917, the Transcaucasian (*Mavera-i Kafkas*) Committee transformed itself into the independent Transcaucasian Commissariat following the Bolshevik Revolution.

Meanwhile, military clashes had already been suspended between Ottoman and Russian armies by the Erzincan Armistice Treaty of 18 December 1917 upon the advance of the Turkish forces.

However, the vacuum created by the withdrawal of the Bolshevik forces from the stage was now being filled by Russian-British supported Armenian and Georgian forces. A British-French Mission in Tbilisi was engaged in a plan to put together an Armenian-Georgian Army Corps to replace Russian soldiers who had deserted the front, as well as two divisions of South Caucasian Russians and Greeks. At those times when Armenians were widely told to be preparing for an imminent major massacre, national independence activities speed up as the Muslim population's self-defense requirements became an increasingly more urgent issue. On 17 December 1917, national local militia disarmed the Russian soldiers in Ganja and pushed them out. The Ganja National Committee sent a military delegation to the Commander of the Third Ottoman Army Halil Pasha in January 1918 to formally ask for help and started preparations for the formation of a national army. However, the Armenian-backed Bolshevik massacre in Baku on 31 March and 1 April resulted in the loss of some ten thousand Azerbaijanis. The Administration of Baku by then was entirely seized by the Bolsheviks and Armenians so the Azerbaijani population started a mass exodus to northern Azerbaijan, mainly Ganja, which they declared as the new capital tentatively replacing Baku.

Brest-Litovsk Treaty: Russia Withdraws from the War

The landmark development during the First World War was the Brest-Litovsk Treaty of 3 March 1918 whereby the Soviet Government declared its decision to withdraw from the war, dissolve its armed forces and start peace talks. The new Russian position would radically alter the balance of powers in the region as well as rise the momentum for search of national solutions. The formation of the Ottoman Muslim Army of Caucasia also took place during those developments. Enver Pasha decreed on 5 April 1919 the establishment in Azerbaijan of an Army Corps consisting of three infantry divisions of three regiments each. He first offered commander of the Second Army Corps General Kazim Karabekir to take command of this new formation but Karabekir declined in the face of the urgencies dictated by his current responsibilities in freeing Eastern Anatolia from Russian and Armenian occupation. The new Army would then be commanded by Enver's younger brother Captain Nuri who would be promoted to the rank of general. The Ottoman strategy was to make a move for the establishment of a neighboring friendly bumper state so as to distance itself from Russian presence. The Administration also considered this occasion as a timely opportunity to gain influence in the Caucasus perhaps in partial compensation of the vast Ottoman Arab territory just lost to European powers.

An important development to follow would be the self-liquidation of the Transcaucasian Commissariat on 22 April 1918 to declare the formation of the new independent, democratic federative Transcaucasian Government. The first task of this government would be to revitalize the peace talks with the Ottoman Administration which had already started on 14 March in Trabzon within the framework of the Brest-Litovsk Treaty, but which was being undermined by Armenian and Georgian delegations' dragging their feet.

Declarations of Independence

It was under such hectic circumstances that Georgia declared independence on 27 May 1918. Azerbaijan and Armenia followed suit on 28 May. The Federative Transcaucasian Republic was thereby liquidated. The first independent Azerbaijan coalition government formed under the non-partisan Feth Ali Khan Hoisky decided to be annexed to Turkey but the Turkish representative in Tbilisi Justice Minister Halil (Menteşe) explained that "such a move would be recognized neither by friendly nor hostile parties, although Turkey would always be prepared to assist the new independent Azerbaijan in any way possible." The Ottoman-Azerbaijani Friendship Treaty signed on 4 June 1918 indeed contains a most-favored nation clause and rules Ottoman armed assistance to Azerbaijan upon the request of that country. Having thus enjoyed the first diplomatic recognition, the new Azerbaijan Government immediately requested armed assistance. The Government and the Turkish-Azerbaijan National Council moved from Tbilisi to Ganja on 16 June.

Advance of the Ottoman Forces into Caucasia

In the meantime, Ottoman forces under General Karabekir's command had liberated Erzincan, Erzurum, Sarıkamış, and Kars from Russian-Armenian occupation. Karabekir was instructed on 3 May to launch simultaneous operations against British-supported Armenian occupation of Tbilisi and Tabriz. The advance of the Ottoman army in this operation necessitated controlling Gyumri which was *en-route* and where wide-spread ethnic-cleansing and atrocities had lately been committed against Turkish-Muslim population. Karabekir took Gyumri and its vicinity on 16 May. But he received instructions dated 1 and 4 June to the effect that at the Batumi peace negotiations already started in line with the Brest-Litovsk Treaty of 3 March, an agreement had been reached with the three South Caucasian states for peace, therefore he should stop advancing further but instead proceed to negotiations with the Armenian administration in Gyumri for the execution of the Batumi agreement. Negotiations with the Georgians resulted in the maintenance of the territory already acquired by the advancing Ottoman forces in addition to other concessions to be given to the Ottoman Government including the transportation of oil from Baku via Batumi.

General Karabekir signed an equally advantageous agreement with the Armenian authority on 13 July. Through those agreements Ottoman frontiers had been advanced to the pre-Brest-Litovsk and 1878 war boundaries and even beyond in the case of Batumi, Meskhetia (Ahiska) and Ahilkelek, all left to the Ottoman Empire. Georgian and Armenian governments, however, claimed that those agreements were signed under duress and appealed to Germany for help, which was received favorably. Russia also objected to the Ottoman annexation of Batumi. The actual formation of the Ottoman Muslim Caucasian Army took place during that period.

Armenian Aggression Intensifies

Meanwhile in Azerbaijan, Armenians had formed a 600-men battalion in Ganja and started threatening the Muslim population, prompting the Second Army-Corps of the Ottoman-Muslim Caucasian Army to intervene. Supported by the Ottoman Eastern Army, the joint Ottoman-Azerbaijani forces disarmed Armenian Battalion in Ganja on 13-14 June, took Tabriz on 12 June, Orumiyeh (Urumiye) on 31 July, Baku on 16 September, and Karabakh on 8 October. The Ottoman Army lost 1,000 men in the battle for Baku against the Bolshevik-Armenian forces.

Having faced an unexpected defeat in Ganja, Karabakh, and Baku, Armenian pressure and atrocities grew in the south which was practically defenseless. The Dashnak Armenian General Antranik had organized a force of 15,000 men and has been attacking Ottoman forces while Karabekir was still negotiating a peace agreement in Gyumri where his Armenian counterparts also complained from the undisciplinable terrorist activities of the Dashnak militia. The Dashnaks would next cross the northern boundaries of Nakhichevan and start committing atrocities in Muslim villages. Once finished with negotiations in Gyumri, General Karabekir was then ordered in late July to enter and control the area south of Yerevan all the way down to Nakhichevan, as well as Tabriz again which was facing a new threat from Armenian militia supported by a nearby British battalion.

Nakhichevan is an Azerbaijani province physically detached from mainland Azerbaijan and surrounded by Armenian and Iranian territory. It also has a narrow border-crossing with Turkey. Terrified by the Armenian assaults, the Turkish-Muslim National Committee established in February 1918 constantly appealed to the Ottoman Eastern Command for help against a determined Armenian plan to cleanse Nakhichevan of all Muslim elements. General Karabekir sent letters of warning dated 27 and 29 June to the Commander of the Armenian Army Corps General Nazarbekov but in the absence of a reply, he dispatched a small artillery-infantry force that crossed the Sorsu Bridge at the salt mine hills (*Duzdağ*) north of Nakhichevan and repelled the Armenian aggression. Karabekir then moved his headquarters from Gyumri to Nakhichevan and personally arrived there on 7

August. Karabekir's next move was to intervene in Tabriz and liberate that city from Armenian-British occupiers after a two-day battle.

Ottoman forces then returned to Nakhichevan where peace was secured, economic and cultural activity was coming back to life in a happy environment. The national army was being organized and a Turkish military assistance program was put into effect involving the military education of hundreds of young Nakhichevan men in Turkey, as well as deliveries of arms, ammunition, vehicles and military wear from Turkey. But Nakhichevan intellectuals also wanted to have their own independent republic. Under such celebratory circumstances and highly encouraged by the liberation of Baku and Karabakh, they declared at the end of October the Nakhichevan-Aras Turkish Republic, formed their first government under Emin Bey Nerimanbeyov and instituted a National Legislative Council. The new government would later on 30 November join the Kars South-Western Caucasian Republic.

Mudros Armistice and National Resistance Movements

However, these optimistic prospects would not last long. General Karabekir and his force would have to leave in line with the provisions of the Mudros Armistice Treaty of 30 October 1918 upon the defeat of the Central Powers of Europe at the First World War. According to the Treaty, Ottoman territory was partitioned among Great Britain, France, Italy, and Greece; Ottoman military and treaty acquisitions in the Caucasus were abolished; and the Ottoman Army was largely disarmed and reduced to 50,000 men. Mudros would be followed by the Sèvres Peace Treaty of 10 August 1920 signed between the Istanbul Government and the Allied Powers, basically confirming the Mudros provisions. The reaction to Mudros would be the break-out of the Turkish Independence War under Mustafa Kemal's leadership and some short-lived local independence movements, namely, announcements of the Meskhetian Independent Interim Government (28 October), the Nakhchivan Aras Turkish Republic (3 November), and the Kars South-Western Caucasian Government (18 January).

Karabekir's force in Nakhchivan was also abolished and ordered to leave. Nevertheless, Karabekir left 400 troops and some 30 officers behind. Dashnak gangs immediately resumed their assaults on the Muslim villages but were pushed back by Ottoman-Azerbaijani forces. Recognizing they would not be able to take Nakhichevan by force, Dashnaks appealed to the Armenian communities in France, US, and Britain for support. From January 1919 onwards, British generals start frequented Nakhichevan and reminded the local community about the change of the regime dictated by the Allied Powers to go under their rule. They interfered with the government's local administration and pressed for the departure of the Turkish troops. Local people resisted and Turkish soldiers remained. In May 1919,

British General Davie with a battalion of his Indian soldiers arrived to announce that Nakhchivan had been turned over to Armenian rule. This was followed by the arrival of Armenian forces sent from Yerevan who seized government buildings. The local community put up a fierce resistance and the British general left with his battalion and the Armenian gangs. Then, a US Congressional Delegation headed by General Harbord visited Nakhichevan and sent a relatively objective report to the US Congress. But the resistance would not last long and the Bolshevik Red Army would arrive in Nakhichevan in July 1919, declaring the new Nakhichevan Soviet Socialist Republic on 28 July. The remaining Turkish force left Nakhichevan and the Nakhichevan Khans moved to Iran. Similar developments took place in Baku and Ganja, too. Azerbaijan thus became a Soviet republic.

Shortly after the departure of the Turkish force from Nakhichevan, Armenian Dashnak gangs resumed their assaults and atrocities.

Turkish National War of Resistance

Meanwhile, Turkish national war of resistance against occupation had started in May 1919 under Mustafa Kemal's leadership in defiance of the Mudros Treaty of surrender signed by the Istanbul Ottoman Government, and the Ottoman forces were liberating all eastern provinces from Armenian aggression.

Peace Treaties in the Caucasus: Gyumri, Moscow & Kars

As General Karabekir's forces advanced towards Yerevan and pushed away Dashnak assaults, Armenian aggression in Azerbaijan would come to an end at the Yerevan government's request for cease-fire with the Ottoman Army and the subsequent regularization of diplomatic relations between the Ottoman Government and Armenia, Azerbaijan, and Georgia by the peace Treaties of Gyumri (3 December 1920), Moscow (16 March 1921) and Kars (13 October 1921). The Gyumri and Kars Treaties were negotiated by the victorious general Kazim Karabekir on behalf of Kemal Atatürk's new Turkish Regime.

These were the Treaties which ended the war in Caucasia and also made a critical impact on the victory of the Turkish resistance war in the Western Front against Allied occupation which would not be concluded before September 1922 and the signing of the Lausanne Peace Treaty between the new Turkish regime and the Allied Powers on 24 July 1923.

The significance of the Gyumri, Moscow and Kars Treaties lies not only in ending military hostilities but also in the first mutual recognition of the independence of these countries, although in the case of the Caucasian republics they would soon

be integrated into the Soviet Socialist regime. But the boundaries drawn in those treaties as well as all the guidelines regarding bilateral relations remain in force to this day. In the same framework, the Soviet Union and the Caucasian governments rejected the Treaty of Sèvres (Armenia withdrawing her signature from the Treaty in Gyumri). The Treaty of Gyumri, in addition to drawing today's boundaries between the two countries, recognizes the right of self-determination for an autonomous Azerbaijan republic of Nakhichevan. The Gyumri Treaty also bans Armenia's arms importation, rules the reduction of Armenia's armed forces to reasonable defensive measures and also contains a clause for Turkey's military assistance for defense in case of a request from that government. The Treaty of Gyumri would never be ratified because of the Red Army occupation of that country the day following the signing of the Treaty, but its provisions would be recognized by all signatories of the subsequent Treaties of Moscow and Kars. Moscow pledged in the Moscow Treaty its political and material support for the Turkish resistance war against Allied occupation and declares its recognition of the Tbilisi and Gyumri Treaties signed by the Turkish regime with the Georgian and Armenian Governments, respectively. According to the Treaty, Batumi, Meskhetia and Ahılkelek are left within Georgian borders while Ardahan and Artvin remain in Turkey, all five provinces having been retaken by General Karabekir in February 1921 following their occupation after the Mudros Armistice. The Treaty of Kars which confirms the previous Gyumri and Moscow Treaties was signed between the new Turkish regime on the one hand and the Bolshevik, Georgian, Azerbaijan, and Armenian governments on the other hand. The international legal framework was thus completed.

To give a sense of the death toll of the fighting during the First World War, it should be stated that the Ottoman Army lost some 200,000 men during the war in the Eastern Front, while Russian losses amounted to 147,000.

So, this is the short story of First World War I in our region. It was a war mainly between the Turkish World and the European Powers that also fueled regional hostilities and provoked religious differences. As such, it was not so much against the Muslim Arab World, considering Arabs' alliance during the war with the main European Powers against the Turks.

THE KARABAKH ISSUE IN RELATION WITH ARMENIA AND AZERBAIJAN (1918-1920)

Nigar GOZALOVA

Supreme Attestation Commission Under the
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Introduction

To understand the causes of events related to the Karabakh issue, one should consider the historical background and causes of the Armenian-Azerbaijan contradictions in the region. Like every other conflict, the Armenian-Azerbaijan conflict also has its roots. In order to reach a better understanding of its essence, it is necessary to shed light on the core of the conflict, for which we have to go back to the XVIII. and early XIX. centuries, as the very origins of the conflict lay there. Its basis starts with the first quarter of XVIII. century military and political expansion of Russia in the South Caucasus, where the Armenian element was assigned the role of social support for the Russians in the region as well as the Christian outpost in the fight against Muslim Turkey and Iran. After winning two Russo-Iranian wars (1804-1813; 1826-1828) and Russo-Turkish wars (1828-1829) Russia ultimately augmented its power in the South Caucasus. Thus, the special article of Turkmanchay (Article XV) and Adrianopole (or Edirne) (Article XIII) created a favorable atmosphere for the mass resettlement of Turkish and Iran Armenians to the South Caucasus territories, which started the process lasting for a century.¹

¹ In 1978, the Armenians of Nagorno-Karabakh celebrated the 150th anniversary of their resettlement, and in honor of this, a monument was erected in the village of Leninavan (Maragashen) of the Mardakert (Agdara) region.

Having established its control on the Georgian lands, Russia at the beginning of XIX. century approached to the borders of Azerbaijan. During the course of long negotiations, Russians threatened Azerbaijani khanates and demanded that they consider the sad experience of Ganja² and, taking into consideration the military might of Russia, accept its protection without resistance. In that circumstance, Azerbaijani rulers were forced to accept the demands of the Russian military authorities. On May 14, 1805, between the representatives of the Russian commands in the Caucasus and Ibrahim Khalil Khan of Karabakh, the Kurekchay Treaty was signed, which officially transferred the Karabakh khanate under Russia's dominion.³

The conquest of the strategically important Karabakh khanate in practice meant the beginning of the complete conquest of all the khanates of South Caucasus. The mountainous part of this khanate allowed the effective control over all the western regions of South Caucasus. Appreciating the importance of the annexation of Karabakh to Russia, General P.D. Tsitsianov, after the conclusion of the Kurekchay Treaty of 1805, informed the Russian Emperor that Karabakh, by its geographical location, was the gateway to Iran.⁴

After the first Russo-Iranian war (1804-1813) which resulted in the occupation of all South Caucasus excluding the Nakhchivan and Irevan khanates, the Russian colonial control system was established in the South Caucasus. Thus, the commander-in-chief of the Russian troops in the Caucasus, A. Yermolov (1816-1827), abolished all of the khanates of South Caucasus. Thereby, the Karabakh khanate was liquidated in 1822,⁵ so the Kurekchay Treaty was abolished seventeen years later (despite the fact that according to Article 10 of the treaty, this was due to last indefinitely). At the same time, even during those seventeen years, when this treaty was in force, it was violated, mainly by Russia, including by the brutal murder of Ibrahim Khalil Khan and his family members in 1806.⁶ Despite all this, after the Russian conquest, Karabakh continued to be one of the socio-economic, political, and cultural centers of Azerbaijan, as one of its inseparable part, and progressed in the general direction of development of the country's history.

2 General P.D. Tsitsianov, who commanded Russian forces in the Caucasus, laid siege to Ganja, the largest of the cities of Azerbaijan, in March 1803. Having overcome the serious resistance of the population led by Javad Khan, Russian forces entered the city on January 3, 1804. The capital of khanate was renamed to Elisabethpol by Russian government.

3 AKAK, т. II, с.705; Left in a desperate situation, the treaty was signed a week later, May 21, 1805 with the Sheki Khan, Selim Khan, and December 25, 1805 with the Shemakha Khan, Mustafa Khan. (AKAK, т. II, с.646, 674)

4 AKAK, т. II, с.698.

5 *Записки А.П.Ермолова. 1798-1826*, (Москва: Высшая школа, 1991), 338, 366, 382.

6 For more detail, see - Atkin Muriel, "The strange death of Ibrahim Khalil Khan of Qarabagh", *Iranian Studies*, Published in the USA, Vol. XII, no.1-2 (1979):79-107.

Karabakh as a part of the Russian Empire (*administrative division and resettlement policy*)

After the liquidation of the Karabakh khanate, the region was renamed the Karabakh province or, officially, the *Karabakh region*, and was considered as a Muslim province; together with other territories of Azerbaijan, was administered by the head of the military district of the “Transcaucasian Muslim Countries”. In 1840, the territory of the Karabakh province was transformed into Shusha *uyezd* (district). This administrative unit became part of the *Caspian region*. Since 1868, Shusha *uyezd* was part of Elizavetpol (Ganja) province.⁷ In 1868, the Zangezur *uyezd*, and in 1883 Javanshir and Karyagin (Jabrayil) *uyezds* were established. In 1917, in the period of the Provisional Government in Russian Empire, Shusha *uyezd* as a part of the Elizavetpol province was subordinate to the Special Transcaucasian Committee (‘Особому Закавказскому Комитету’), and later as a part of the Azerbaijan Democratic Republic (1918-1920) was included in the Karabakh general-governorship.⁸

The first official document providing detailed information on the ethnic composition of the population of Karabakh⁹ was the “Description of the Karabakh Province” prepared by the Russian administration in 1823,¹⁰ reflecting statistical information about the population of this region and its ethno-confessional composition. In the Karabakh region, there were 600 registered villages, (450 Muslim, i.e. Turkic, and 150 Christian). Thus from, 20,095 families lived in Karabakh, 15729 of which were Muslims and 4366 (21.7%) were Christians.

With the conquest of the Russian Empire of the South Caucasus in the early XIX. century, there emerged a new political situation. The Russian government began to encourage the resettlement of Armenians to the newly obtained “Russian” lands in the South Caucasus. Following the second Russo-Iranian war of 1826-1828, the question of how to keep the newly annexed regions secure was vital for the Russian imperial strategy in the region. The Russian Empire’s policy was to force out the numerous local Turkish populations with the help of the Christian minority

7 Under the new provision of December 9, 1867, the South Caucasus was divided into five provinces (*guberniya*): Kutaisi, Tiflis, Irevan, Elizavetpol, and Baku. In the Tiflis and Baku provinces, six counties were included, and five counties to the Irevan, Elizavetpol and Kutais provinces. Guberniya (provinces) were formed according to the following principle: the territory of the county should not exceed 6500 sq. verst (Old Russian measurement), and while the population should not exceed 80,000 people. This administrative-territorial division, with minor changes, was preserved until 1917.

8 Источники по Азербайджанской истории, (Баку: Изд-во АГУ, 1989):276.

9 According to Russian sources, for 1810, the population of Karabakh was 12,000 families, including 9500 Turkic-Muslim and 2500 Christian. (АКАК, т. IV, с.38-39) Considering that Muslim families traditionally had more in composition than Armenian families, the ratio of Armenians and Turks in the absolute dimension was in favor of the latter.

10 For more detail see - Описание Карабахской провинции, (составленное на 1823г. по распоряжению главноуправляющего в Грузии Ермолова, действительным статским советником Могилевским и полковником Ермоловым 2-м), (Тифлис: Типография Управления Наместника Кавказа, 1866).

(Armenians), as they considered them unreliable. This process of resettling Armenians was an integral part of the Russian colonial policy; Russian government began resettling the “loyal” population, namely, Armenians to newly obtained lands bordering Qajar Iran and Ottoman Empire to strengthen its positions in the region.

The policy of the Russian Empire aimed at creating a socio-ethnic support of the Armenians, led to the strengthening of the Christian element in Karabakh. So, the essence of the conflict observed today can be traced all the way back to those times.

According to the official Russian sources, of 8249 Armenian families resettled from Qajar Iran,¹¹ 6946¹² were resettled in the “Armenian region”,¹³ 1303 families were resettled in Karabakh and Zangezur. According to the Russian ethnographer and historian S.P. Zelinsky, with the exception of the population of the three Zangezur villages, the residents of all Armenian villages were resettled from the border provinces of Qajar Iran - Karadag, Germeli, Khoy, and Salmas.¹⁴

The fact that Karabakh became the main direction of Armenian immigration is evidenced by the fact that:

“Unexpected resettlement of people in the newly conquered region, caused in them a lack of bread. At this time, Lazarev (who led the process of resettlement of Armenians from Qajar Iran) was instead instructed to try to direct the path of the settlers of the Khanates of Nakhichevan and Irevan, into the Khanate of Karabakh, where it was expected to find abundant and reliable reserves.”¹⁵

According to official Russian sources, a total of 1144 families or about 90,000 persons from the territories of Erzurum, Mush, Beyazit, Kara and Akhaltsy Pashalyks (provinces) of the Ottoman Empire were resettled.¹⁶ Thus, as a result

11 This number is based on the official information of the report on the results of the resettlement activity made by L. Lazarev who led the resettlement organization, which he presented to the Minister of Internal Affairs, A.A. Zakrevsky. (РГИА Ф. 383. Оп. 29. Д.539, л.12 (об))

12 Arzumanlı Vaqif Minad oğlu and Mustafa Nazim *Tarixin qara səhifələri: Deportasiya. Soyqırım. Qaçqınlıq*, (Bakı: Qartal, 1998): 25-32.

13 On March 21, 1828, Nicholas I (1825-1855) issued the special decree on creating the so-called “Armenian oblast” on the territory of Irevan and Nakhichevan khanates with its center in Irevan, which was headed by the Russian superintendent. (АКАК, т. VII, p.253) In 1840, it was liquidated, the area of these two units was transferred to the newly organized Georgia-Imeretia guberniya, then included in the newly established Tiflis guberniya in 1846.

14 Зелинский С. П. *Экономический быт государственных крестьян Зангезурского уезда Елизаветпольской губернии*, (т.4, Тифлис:МИЭБКГКЗК, 1886): 10; *История Азербайджана по документам и публикациям*, (Баку: Элм, 1990): 39.

15 Глинка С. Н. *Описание переселения армян Аддербиджанских в пределы России*, (Москва: Типография Лазаревых Института восточных языков, 1831): 87.

16 АКАК, т. VII, с.847; Ушаков Н.И. *История военных действий в Азиатской Турции в 1828 и 1829 годах*. Часть вторая, (СПб.: Тип. Эдуарда Праца и Ко, 1836): 291.

The Centennial of the Independence of the Three South Caucasus States: Historical Background, Contemporary Developments and Prospects of Peace and Prosperity

of the resettlement of Armenians, the ethnic composition of the South Caucasus began to change.

The further growth of the number of Armenians in the South Caucasus mainly occurred from the territory of the Ottoman Empire. The main stages of this migration, which lasted a whole century, coincided with the results of the Crimean (1853-1856) and Russo-Turkish wars (1877-1878), anti-Ottoman revolts of Armenians (1895-1896), as well as the results of the First World War. According to the 1897 census, Karabakh, which was then part of the Elizavetpol province,¹⁷ consisted of four districts - Javanshir, Jabrail, Shusha, and Zangezur. As a result of mass resettlements in Shusha *uyezd* (in 1897 – 75,410 Turks and 66,501 Armenians), which included the present territory of Nagorno (*Dağlıq*)-Karabakh, the number of Armenians already constituted 58% of the total population.¹⁸ As a whole, the ratio of the population of Karabakh according to the 1897 census was 53% of Azerbaijani Turks and 45% of Armenian-settlers, respectively.¹⁹

According to the information of the Caucasian calendar, of January 1, 1916, the total population of Karabakh was 241,449 Armenians²⁰ and 321,487 Muslims. This means, however, that even after their mass resettlement, the number of Armenians in Karabakh never exceeded Azerbaijani Turks. That is, even after the unceasing emigration of Azerbaijanis²¹ and the immigration of Armenians encouraged by Russia, Azerbaijani still outnumbered Armenians. As the Russian publicist N. Shavrov wrote:

*“Of the 1 million 300 thousand Armenians living in the Trans-Caucasus, over one million is not indigenous population, but was resettled by us.”*²² Shavrov added; *“Armenians were located, mainly, on the fertile lands of Elizavetpol and Erivan province, where they were negligible. The mountainous part of the Elizavetpol province (Nagorno-Karabakh and Zangezur) and the shores of Lake Goycha were inhabited by these Armenians.”*²³

17 Elizavetpol province consisted of 8 uyezd, the Azerbaijani population was a majority of 7.

18 *Кавказский календарь на 1896 г.*, под ред. Е.Кондратенко; (Тифлис: издан по распоряжению главноначальствующаго гражданской частью на Кавказе, 1895): 48-61.

19 *Кавказский календарь Российской империи 1897 г.*, LXIII - Elizavetпольская губерния. (СПб, 1904): 3.

20 As known from the report of the employee of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs ADR A. Shchepot'ev, many Armenian craftsmen and workers were attributed to the number of Karabakh Armenians, who did not really constitute the settled population of Karabakh. (Щепотьев А. *О спорных Кавказских территориях, на которые имеют права самоопределившиеся азербайджанские турки*, (Баку: Gənclik , 2016): 43).

21 АКАК, т. V, ч. II, с. 579.

22 During the Russo-Turkish War of 1877-1879, 85,000 Armenians were resettled to the South Caucasus. (Шавров Н. *Новая угроза русскому делу в Закавказье: предстоящая распродажа Мугани инородцам*. (С.-Петербург: Рус. собрание, 1911): 59) In 1894, 90,000 Armenian resettled from the Ottoman Empire to the South Caucasus, and in 1897 – 10,000 Armenians. Already in 1896, in the South Caucasus, the number of Armenian settlers reached 900,000. In 1908, the number of Armenians in the South Caucasus at the expense of the resettles reached 1,300,000, 1 million of whom were resettled by the tsarist government from other countries. (Шавров Н. Н. *Новая угроза русскому делу в Закавказье*, 60)

23 Шавров Н. *Новая угроза русскому делу в Закавказье*, 59-61.

Demographic changes in the territory of Karabakh (according to the census of the Russian Empire)

Years of the census	Christians (including Armenian-settlers)		Muslims (Azerbaijani Turks)		Others (Kurds, Highlanders, Russians, etc.)		Total
	absolute	%	absolute	%	absolute	%	
1810 ²⁴	12,500 (2500 families ²⁵)	21%	47,500 (9500 families)	79%	—	—	60,000 ²⁶
1823 ²⁷	21,830 (4366 families)	21.7%	78,645 (15,729 families)	79%	—	—	100,475 ²⁸
1832 ²⁹	32,455 (6491 houses)	29.6%	69,825 (13,965 houses)	63.6%	7402	6.8%	109,682 ³⁰
1897 ³¹	201818	45%	23,8500	53%	4380	2%	444,698
1916 ³²	242603	41.4%	321,712	54.9%	21142	3.7%	585,457

Resettling Armenians implied various political and economic purposes but, ultimately, it overlapped with the desire to Christianize the region, which was carried out not only for sake of pure religion but also in order to increase the “loyal” population on the Muslim-dominated frontiers. The geographical consideration, the expansion into Qajar Iran and Ottoman domains was the important factor in this regard.

Thus, demography was gradually turning into a political instrument. The implementation of demographic policies resulted in the mass resettlement of Armenians in the South Caucasian lands within a very short period of time. These events started a lengthy process which led to forming Armenian numerical dominance on the territory of the South Caucasus. So, the national policies of

24 АКАК, т. IV, с.38-39.

25 If we assume an average of 5 people per family.

26 This is an assumed number, based on the fact that there were 5 people in each family.

27 *Описание Карабахской провинции, (составленное на 1823г. по распоряжению главноуправляющего в Грузии Ермолова, действительным статским советником Могилевским и полковником Ермоловым 2-м).*

28 This is an assumed number, based on the fact that there were 5 people in each family.

29 *Обозрение Российских владений за Кавказом, в статистическом, этнографическом, топографическом и финансовом отношениях, произведенное и изданное по высочайшему соизволению, Часть III. (СПб.: В тип. Деп. Внешней торговли, 1836): 267.*

30 According to Russian sources, there were a total of 54,841 men living in the province. Accordingly, if we assume that the number of women was equal to the number of men, we can conclude that the total number of the population was approximately 109,682. (*Обозрение российских владений за Кавказом в историческом, финансовом, этнографическом отношениях, ч. III, 267*)

31 *Первая всеобщая перепись населения Российской империи 1897 г. Елисаветпольская губерния. Том LXIII. (СПб.: Изд-во Центрального статистического комитета МВД, 1904): 60-61.*

32 *Кавказский календарь на 1917 год. Под редакцией Н.П. Стельмашука. (Тифлис, Типография Канцелярии Наместника Е.И.В. на Кавказе. 1916): 190-197.*

Russian Empire intensified the ethnic conflicts and were a reason for the major conflicts between the two nations at the beginning of XX. century.

The Karabakh Conflict of 1918-1920

The Karabakh conflict, as one of the longest in the post-Soviet space, was born in its present form in connection with the large-scale geopolitical and ethnic transformations that took place in the South Caucasus after the collapse of the Russian Empire.

Until the beginning of the XX. century, historical sources did not record the facts ethnic confrontation between Armenians and Azerbaijanis. The first large-scale ethnic armed clash between Armenians and Azerbaijanis, including in Karabakh, refers to the period of the First Russian Revolution (1905-1907), which shocked the foundations of the Russian Empire and seriously weakened the state.³³

The ethnic and territorial demarcation of the South Caucasus in 1918 violated the economic and life structure of its population that had developed over the centuries, thus provoking acute conflicts about future borders between nation states. This is clearly demonstrated by the example of a region such as Karabakh, which in 1918 became one of the main objects of Armenia's territorial claims to Azerbaijan.

From the date of establishment of the first Armenian state -the Ararat Republic³⁴- in the South Caucasus (the end of May 1918), its government got down to implementing plans for the establishment of "Great Armenia" at the expense of neighboring Turkey, Azerbaijan, and Georgia. Thus, the myth about "Great Armenia", propagated by the Dashnak government,³⁵ became the national idea of all Armenian people. The Dashnaks put forward definite territorial claims to

33 For more detail see - Фархад Джаббаров, *Армянский экстремизм на Южном Кавказе: вторая половина XIX — начало XX вв.* (Баку: TEAS PRESS, 2018).

34 The name of Ararat Republic was often used by Ottoman Armenians because the country "was only a dusty province without Ottoman Armenia whose salvation Armenians had been seeking for 40 years". (Christopher, Walker J. *Armenia: The Survival of a Nation*. (New York: St. Martin's Press. 1990), 272–273.) It has also been known as the Dashnak Republic due to the fact that the Armenian Revolutionary Federation, better known as Dashnaksutun or simply Dashnak, was the dominant political force in the country. (Ronald, G. Suny. *Looking toward Ararat Armenia in modern history*. (Bloomington: Indiana university press. 1993), 131) Other names of the country include also Democratic Republic of Armenia.

35 In 1890, leaders of Armenian nationalists in Tiflis made decision of creation of Armenian national party. The publishing organ of the party became newspaper issued in Geneva – "Droshak" ("The Banner"). Then the title "Dashnaksutun" was given to the party. Total title of the party meant "Union (Federation) of Dashnaksutun's Armenian Revolutionaries". It is sometimes deciphered as "Armenian Revolutionary Federative Party". Already at that time, i.e. at the stage of its raising, "Dashnaksutun" was discerned by radical extremism, which the motto elected for the Armenian nationalist movement testifies: "Freedom or death". The "Dashnaksutun" was one of the most prominent political forces around which the history the first Ararat Republic (1918-1920) revolved.

Azerbaijan districts (Nakhchivan, Zangezur, and Karabakh) that had already been part of the Azerbaijan Republic, as well as to Georgia (Borchaly, Akhaltsikh, and Akhalkalaki districts).³⁶

If before 1918 the term Nagorno-Karabakh had only geographical significance, then, with the formation of independent states in the South Caucasus, Armenians began to invest in it politically. Taking advantage of the fact that, in the first months of independence, the government of the Azerbaijan Democratic Republic (ADR) was entirely occupied with the issue of the liberation of Baku, Karabakh Armenians convened at the so-called Congress, on July 22, 1918, and decided to create their own administrative authorities in Nagorno-Karabakh, headed by the National Council. In the summer and autumn of 1918, the territory of Karabakh was attacked by Armenian armed groups led by Andranik Ozanian.³⁷ The bloody results of Andranik's attacks were recorded in the dates of the Extraordinary Investigation Commission formed by the ADR government. According to the information of the member of the Extraordinary Investigation Commission, N. Mikhailov, 115 Azerbaijani villages were destroyed in Zangezur just during summer and autumn of 1918. In these villages, according to incomplete information, 10,068 Azerbaijanis were killed and mutilated and 50,000 Azerbaijanis were forced to leave Zangezur, becoming refugees.³⁸

The Azerbaijani government tried to take control of the situation in Karabakh, appointing commandants to Shusha, Agdam, and Karyagin from Turkish officers. To prevent further escalation of violence in the region, Turkish forces led by Cemil Cevad Bey entered Shusha in early October 1918 and demanded that Armenians should be disarmed in exchange for a guarantee of their life and property. Armenian leaders immediately convened an extraordinary congress, which decided to recognize the power of Azerbaijan. Despite these peaceful steps, the situation in Karabakh, reinforced by various rumors about the imminent new offensive of Andranik's troops, and after departure of the Turkish troops, the control over the region passed into the hands of the British troops who arrived in Azerbaijan in the second half of November 1918.³⁹

36 "Guram Markhulia: 'Dashnaksutun' and its politics in 1918-1920," accessed 17 January, 2018. <https://iberiana.wordpress.com/armenia-georgia/markhulia-6/>

37 Andranik Ozanian, the commander of the Armenian armed detachments, who was later declared an Armenian national hero, and others known for their radical enmity against the Turks such as Njdeh, Dro, Dolukhanyan and others.

38 Маммадов И.М., Мусаев Т.Ф. *Армяно-азербайджанский конфликт: История, Право, Посредничество*, (Баку: б. и., 2008), 32-33.

39 After the defeat of the Turkish-German alliance in World War I, the Turkish troops had to leave Azerbaijan. In accordance with terms and conditions of the Mudros Armistice signed on October 30, 1918, Turkish troops left the South Caucasus. Under the terms of the Mudros armistice treaty between the Ottoman Empire and Great Britain, representing the Allied powers, the South Caucasus was declared a sphere of influence of Great Britain.

W. Thomson commanded the British troops which entered Baku on November 17, 1918, following the withdrawal of the Turkish troops. Upon his arrival in Baku, Thomson declared a state of martial law and proclaimed himself General-Governor of Baku. Shortly after, the British troops occupied the whole South Caucasus. A total of 30,000 British soldiers and officers were stationed in the South Caucasus at the time.

It should be noted that territorial conflicts between three South Caucasian states disturbed the British occupation authorities forcing them to send troops to various regions in the South Caucasus to reconcile the conflicting parties. As an authority to maintain “law and order” in the South Caucasus, Great Britain partook in resolving practically all international and other conflicts in the region.⁴⁰

Because of Armenia’s military aggressions against Karabakh in December 1918, it became necessary to send a British military mission to Shusha with small contingents under the command of Col. Lieutenant Gibbon of Worcester Regiment. The official position of the British commandment appeared to be supporting the Azerbaijani government, condemning the Armenian aggression, and maintaining peace in the region. By Gen. W. Thomson’s initiative, a mixed Britain-Armenian-Azerbaijani delegation was sent to Karabakh and telegrams were sent to Armenian leaders calling them to refrain from aggressive actions towards the Azerbaijani Turkic population.⁴¹

To resolve the Armenian-Azerbaijani conflict over Karabakh and Zangezur, in mid-January 1919, the British command chose a model of territorial isolation of the conflict area through establishing there a special administration of the Governor-General led by Dr. Khosrov Bey Sultanov⁴². The British commanders controlled him through their military representative, who was a member of the administration leadership and retained a strong right of vote, and six Armenians to meet the needs of all nationalities. All employees of the general-governorship were kept at the expense of the Azerbaijani treasury. In addition, any movement of troops within the borders of the governor-general and issuing of orders had to

40 A Tiflis-based headquarters of the British occupation troops and sometimes the Chief Commander of the “Black Sea Army” in Istanbul were responsible for identifying a party to the conflict to be backed. After the troops were pulled out, the British government established a post of Tiflis-headquartered High Commissioner for South Caucasus. Gen. O. Wardrop was the first British High Commissioner since July, 1919. Tadeusz Swietochowski, *Russian Azerbaijan, 1905-1920, the Shaping of a National Identity in a Muslim Community*, (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2004), 157; Andersen, Andrew, and Egge Georg. *The Second Phase of Territorial Formation: Insurgencies, Destabilization and Decrease of Western Support*. Last modified January 17, 2018. <http://www.conflicts.rem33.com/images/Armenia/restoration%20and%20terr%20issue/T4.html>

41 Юсиф-заде, С.З. *Азербайджано-британские отношения в начале XX века*. (Баку: Тахсил, 2008), 48.

42 Khosrov bey Sultanov was appointed the Minister of Defense in the first government of Azerbaijan Democratic Republic (May 28 - June 17, 1918). In January 1919, the British forces commander General William M. Thomson approved Sultanov’s appointment as provisional Governor General of Karabakh and Zangezur.

be coordinated with the British command in advance. Finally, the British command, apparently trying not to provoke an acute reaction from the Armenian leaders of Nagorno-Karabakh and the Armenian government, decided to create a governor-general under the leadership of Azerbaijan and especially stipulated that all disputable issues would be finally resolved in the Paris Peace Conference.⁴³

However, alarming reports from Karabakh continued even despite the measures taken. The Chief Commander of British troops in Thessaloniki, Gen. J.F. Milne, reported on February 6, 1919 to London to the head of the Imperial Headquarters the following communication:

“at the time of our occupation of Baku by two Turkish battalions, and was almost to be attacked by Andranik’s Armenian army. It has now been overrun by Armenians, who are murdering the Tatars, who are naturally retaliating, though their Government is trying its best to keep order. It has been necessary to send a company of British infantry to maintain order, but a battalion would be safer”.⁴⁴

A weekly report of the Intelligence Bureau of April 10, 1919, as well, noted:

“The situation in the Shusha district is stated to remain unsatisfactory owing to attitude adopted by the Armenians, who comprise the majority of the population of the district. They are obstruction the local Tartar administration and hold the view that Sultanov, the Tartar Governor General, is Turkish agent.

The Armenian government has been warned that no good is gained by obstruction, and it has been pointed that both Sultanov and the Azerbaijan Government are responsible to the British for the situation in the Shusha district”.⁴⁵

However, the measures taken by the British command were ineffective and ceased aggression of the Armenian gangs only temporarily. Since the first days of the existence of the Karabakh governor-general, the Armenian government and representatives of the so-called Armenian Council of Nagorno-Karabakh strongly opposed it. As expressed in the statements of its representatives on the status of the governor-general of Karabakh, the first measures of the British command - influenced by the pressure of the Armenian side- were inconsistent. During the meetings with the representatives of the Karabakh Armenians and the Armenian

43 *Нагорный Карабах в 1918-1923 гг. Сборник документов и материалов.* (Ереван: Изд-во АН Армении, 1992), 62-63.

44 *Azerbaijan Democratic Republic. Great Britain’s Archrivals Documents*, ed. N.A.Maxwell. (Baku: Chashiogly, 2008), 236.

45 *Azerbaijan Democratic Republic. Great Britain’s Archrivals Documents*, 390.

government, General V. Thomson and the representative of the British mission in Shusha, Colonel D.I. Shuttleworth, stated that the stay of the Azerbaijani administration and troops in Karabakh did not foretell that in the future this territory should belong to Azerbaijan, since the final fate of Karabakh would be resolved at the Peace Conference.⁴⁶ Such statements by the British command gave the Armenian separatists of Nagorno-Karabakh the opportunity to intensify their efforts. Only after the command of the British troops in Karabakh through the Colonel D.I. Shuttleworth on April 4, 1919 was the Governor-General H. Sultanov reaffirmed as the only supreme authority and the population was called upon to carry out all his orders without exception. Through this, the actions of the British became more consistent.⁴⁷ However, the measures taken by the British command were ineffective, stopping the excesses of Armenian gangs only for a while. The British troops left Shusha by the end of June 1919, and the representative of Great Britain remained there until the end of August.

The governor-general of Karabakh exercised effective control over the whole territory of Karabakh, to which the Armenians were forced to concede. This was evidenced by certain changes in the political mood of the Armenian population of Nagorno-Karabakh and its leaders. An example for this is the decisions of the Congress of the Armenians of Karabakh, held on August 15, 1919 in Shusha; the Congress adopted the “Provisional Agreement of the Armenians of Nagorno-Karabakh with the Azerbaijani government”. This agreement was the only official document until 1921 to settle the relations between the Armenians of Nagorno-Karabakh and the government of Azerbaijan.

Azerbaijan and Armenia signed a peace agreement in Tiflis on November 23, 1919, according to which the parties pledged to end armed clashes and resolve all disputes peacefully.⁴⁸ According to the agreement of November 23, Azerbaijan withdrew its troops from Zangezur. However, after a few days, the Armenian troops again attacked Azerbaijan, thus violating the agreement. In late 1919 - early 1920, regular Armenian army of 10,000 passed through Zangezur to Karabakh, destroying all Azerbaijani villages that lay on its way. In reports of British mission’s representatives to the South Caucasus sent to the region on a special mission by the British government, it was noted that the Armenian armed forces demonstrated no restraint and used the most disturbing methods against

46 *Нагорный Карабах в 1918-1923 гг. Сборник документов и материалов*, 102-103,133.

47 *Нагорный Карабах в 1918-1923 гг. Сборник документов и материалов*, 149.

48 In the middle of November, US and British representatives in the Caucasus Sir Oliver Wardrop and Colonel James Rhea addressed the governments of Azerbaijan and Armenia and demanded that the undeclared war between the two republics should be stopped immediately. Peace talks started on November 20 in Tiflis (Georgia) and came to an end three days later with no breakthrough. On November 23, 1919, the Prime Ministers of the two countries (Alexandre Khatisian and Nasib Bey Yusifbeyli) signed an agreement that was in fact nothing more but a declaration of intent. Richard G. Hovannisian, *The Republic of Armenia*. Vol. II: From Versailles to London. 1919-1920 (London: University of California Press, 1982), 223.

Azerbaijani population of the Karabakh, Zangezur, and Nakhchivan districts of ADR. Reports sent by Britain's High Commissioner in Caucasus, Sir Oliver Wardrope to his government were full of such observations. In his report from December 11, 1919, Sir O. Wardrope noted:

“On December 1st regular Armenian troops with two guns and 6 machine guns attacked 9 Tatar villages in Kigy pass and burnt and looted them.

On November 26th peaceful Mussulmans of Okhchi district were collected and all men military age blown up with dynamite and others including women and children slaughtered in mosque.

*Zangezur Mussulms fleeing in panic”.*⁴⁹

In a report of December 3, 1919, Wardrop wrote that Prime Minister of ADR complained that Armenian Government, despite the agreement of November 23, was continuing military operations and had destroyed nine villages.⁵⁰ In his report sent the next day, he noted that Azerbaijan Government informed him about the situation in Zangezur and Deralagauz and recent actions by regular Armenian troops culminated with the massacre of hundreds and the destruction of fifteen villages.⁵¹

In a report of December 15, 1919 Wardrop mentioned that Prime Minister of Azerbaijan sent him a long telegram accusing Armenian regular troops with massacre by artillery and destruction of villages in Zangezur. He noted that on December 9 the villages of Kedeklu, Askerlu, and Perchevan south-east of Gerus were destroyed, and that besieged Azerbaijani villages in Ohchi and Kigy Glens south-west of Gerus were destroyed by artillery, while the majority of inhabitants were slaughtered.⁵²

In a report of December 30, 1919,⁵³ Wardrop mentioned that according to various reports, Armenian government on December 21 attacked the population of Zangibazar district, destroyed the village of Kargabazar and also attacked Ulukhanlu on December 22. Fighting continued in the villages of Chobanker Karakishlakh. Wardrop concluded that Armenia had undoubtedly been violating the agreement of November 23.

The aggression of the Armenian Republic against Azerbaijan forced the ADR government to send its troops to the region under the command of Major-General

49 IOR/L/P&S/11/161, Decipher № 196 from Mr. O. Wardrop (December 11, 1919).

50 IOR/L/P&S/11/161, Decipher № 173 from Mr. O. Wardrop (December 3, 1919).

51 IOR/L/P&S/11/161, Decipher № 179 from Mr. O. Wardrop (December 4, 1919).

52 IOR/L/P&S/11/161, Decipher № 202 from Mr. O. Wardrop (December 15, 1919).

53 IOR/L/P&S/11/166, Telegram from 'en clair' from Mr. O. Wardrop (December 30, 1919).

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Javad bey Shikhlinsky, who managed to stop the advance of Armenian military formations. In April 1919, the Azerbaijani army ousted Andranik's troops from the country. The Governor-General Sultanov took the necessary measures to restore the relative order in Karabakh.

In connection with the aggression of Armenia, on December 30, 1919, the Azerbaijani government demanded that W. Huskell, High Commissioner of the Union States in the South Caucasus, take urgent measures to end the aggressions and massacres against Azerbaijani population. Nevertheless, Armenia's aggressions increased.

A new round of Armenian aggression in the Karabakh direction began in March 1920. Simultaneously, these actions were closely coordinated with the leadership of Soviet Russia, which soon embarked on the implementation of the plan for the invasion of Azerbaijan. On the night of March 22-23, 1920, on the day of Novruz holiday in Nagorno-Karabakh, Armenian armed detachments suddenly and simultaneously attacked the military units of Azerbaijan stationed in Shusha, Khankendi, Askeran, and other regions. Part of the regular army of Armenia arrived to lend their aid. The Armenian armed forces managed to capture the Askeran fortress. The road between Shusha and Agdam was cut and fell under the control of the Armenian armed forces. As a result of the Armenian capture of the strategically significant Askeran fortress, the only road connecting Nagorno-Karabakh with the rest of Azerbaijan was in the hands of Armenian gangs.

The Azerbaijani government sent a 20,000-strong corps headed by Major-General Habib Bey Salimov to Karabakh. During the fighting, on April 2, Azerbaijani units under the command of General G. Salimov liberated Askeran, and on April 3 without a fight entered Khankendi. Until the end of April, the whole of Karabakh was liberated from Armenian troops. Azerbaijani troops were aiming at the complete suppression of Armenian aggression in the direction of Zangezur as well. On April 27, 1920, Major General Salimov asked the Military Ministry of the order to advance deeper into Zangezur. The Armenian aggressors suffered a crushing defeat. However, neither he nor his soldiers could know that this day would be the last in the history of their independent state. Moving most of the military forces of ADR to the western regions of the country, aimed at suppressing the Armenian aggression, played into the hands of the XI. Red Army, which, facing no resistance, immediately crossed to the northern borders of Azerbaijan and moved to Baku. Thus, on the eve of the invasion of the XI. Army of Soviet Russia, the Azerbaijani government managed to regain control over the situation in Nagorno-Karabakh but ultimately lost its sovereignty.

CONCLUSION

The independent development stage of Azerbaijan and Armenia is the origin of the Armenian-Azerbaijani conflict on Karabakh, the basis of which lays in Armenia's attempts to tear apart this region from Azerbaijan. This conflict developed in the context of an intense geopolitical struggle in the region in the years of 1918-1920 between the world's leading powers – Great Britain, the United States, France, Germany, and Russia, at the epicenter of which was the struggle for control of Azerbaijan and Baku oil. Each of the interested powers tried to use the “Armenian factor”, or more precisely, Armenia's territorial claims to Azerbaijani territories of Karabakh and Zangezur. Armenia's claims was a result of its aim to preserve and strengthen its influence in the strategically important region of Azerbaijan, providing access to the Caucasus, Middle East, and Central Asia, and for counteracting the strengthening of Azerbaijan and its process of independence.

The agreements on the peaceful settlement of territorial problems between Armenia and Azerbaijan, reached at the peace conferences periodically convened in 1919-early 1920, with the participation of representatives of the three independent republics of the South Caucasus, remained only on paper. The hope of resolving the complex of South Caucasian territorial contradictions at the Paris Peace Conference soon also collapsed. Numerous visits by Allied representatives (W. Haskell, J. Harbord, O. Wardrop) to the South Caucasus region in order to get acquainted with the situation on the spot and make certain suggestions to the parties to the conflict also had no effect. Thus, after the withdrawal of British troops from the South Caucasus, the national republics were left alone with its acute problems. In this difficult situation, even the recognition by the Supreme Council of the Entente countries on January 11, 1920 of the de facto independence of Azerbaijan, and on January 19, of Armenia, did not bring to these countries anything but moral satisfaction. The border conflicts had left very fragile hopes for the possibility to preserve the independence before a real threat from the north came. In the meantime, the victories of the Red Army in the North Caucasus by the beginning of 1920 made Russia the main player once again, allowing it to draw the political map of the region.

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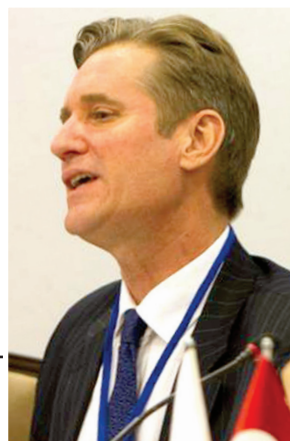
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THE CENTENNIAL OF THE FIRST INDEPENDENCE OF THE THREE SOUTH CAUCASUS STATES: HISTORICAL BACKGROUND, CONTEMPORARY DEVELOPMENTS AND PROSPECTS OF PEACE AND PROSPERITY

Matthew BRYZA

Ambassador (R)



If I reflect on my experience in conflict mediation in this region, I have to acknowledge the fact that there are, besides the parties themselves, two outside actors who play a key role: Russia and the United States. And, I think there is a fundamental difference in the way that the two countries look at the conflicts, which is also a fundamental reason why there hasn't been more progress in resolving the Nagorno-Karabakh, Abkhazia, and South Ossetia conflicts.

I think Russia has had a much deeper historical appreciation of its own interests in the region, and of the complexities of the North and South Caucasus, than has the United States.

Since the end of the Ottoman Empire, Russia has looked at the ethnic divisions and conflicts in this region as opportunities -opportunities to do some of the things that we have discussed in the last panel, like maintaining and expanding its geopolitical influence, and using its geopolitical presence in the Caucasus, to do

other things. In the early 20th Century, these included countering Germany's attempt to expand its geopolitical influence in the region and beyond via the Berlin-Baghdad railway, and London's effort to maintain its links to India across the Caucasus region.

So, I think at any given moment Russia was and is thinking about insurance policies and leverage for future moments when it can use these conflicts to its advantage in ways that the US and its European Allies do not.

Russia has used two tactical approaches in this effort. The first one is hybrid or non-linear war, which Russia has used powerfully, though not necessarily successfully in a strategic sense, in Georgia and Ukraine. The second one is to "keep the pot stirred" in a "divide and rule" approach to make sure there is no consolidation of stability in the region, which the West could otherwise use to its advantage.

And, in my experience, the US and its European allies think about these conflicts in a different way -not as opportunities, but as obstacles. They are obstacles to achieving some other goals considered to be of greater strategic importance. Lacking the historical depth of their Russian counterparts, the US and European governments generally don't want to mess up their pursuit of these supposedly higher strategic goals by having to get involved with the complex details of these regional conflicts, such as: who shot first to start the August 2008 war in Georgia, troops from Georgia, South Ossetia, or Russia; or who lived in Nagorno-Karabakh first, Armenians or Azerbaijanis, when in reality they were living together for centuries, and no mono-ethnic state existed and maybe none can exist in peace. These are messy questions, which are beyond the knowledge base of many US and European diplomats I have known -except, of course, for Philip Remler, who will talk to us later.

So, for the United States, the conflict resolution process is a means to a grand strategic end, namely, to generate stability, peace, prosperity, and political and economic freedom. While these essentially are ends in themselves, they also enable the US to look elsewhere to resolve other major problems deemed (often mistakenly) to be more strategically important, like North Korea or Iran. Indeed, working together with the countries of the South Caucasus to manage the problem of Iran was apparently the main point of National Security Advisor John Bolton's visit last week to the South Caucasus.

So, to put it simply, the US and its allies seek to move these conflicts -these problems- out of the way, instead of integrating their approach to these regional conflicts into the highest level of foreign policy-making, as does happen in Russia. Instead, in Washington you get special envoys to mediate these conflicts. If well connected, if they know the president or the secretary of state personally, or the

national security advisor, these envoys can make something positive happen. But, if the mediators don't really know their senior-most policymakers, then they are just seen as bureaucratic operators who therefore they don't have a lot of influence in helping to bring the parties together; they are unable to do more -to take some big but necessary risks.

Paris, Washington, and London need to keep in mind that history does matter today. They need to remember, for example, how the Sykes-Picot Agreement allowed Russia to become the dominant force in this region. They also need to remember how, beginning in 1801, more or less, Russia began to make its push into the region with the process of settling in Armenians.

If we remember these bits of history, then suddenly, the prevailing narrative in Washington about Azerbaijan supposedly causing the Nagorno-Karabakh conflict can be changed, thereby increasing the chances of reaching a just and lasting settlement of the conflict. In Washington, with regard to Nagorno-Karabakh, I remember while the war was happening, when I was a junior diplomat on the Russia desk at the time, the conventional wisdom was that Azerbaijan had caused the conflict. Nobody talked about 1988, when Karabakh Armenians declared independence from the Azerbaijan Soviet Socialist Republic. All they talked about was the terrible attacks against Armenians in Sumgait. Nobody talked about Armenian attacks against Azerbaijanis. Nobody talked about January 20, 1990. History of the conflict was conveniently chosen to begin when the Azerbaijani forces began to fight, which from their perspective, was to defend their fellow Azerbaijanis and themselves and their land.

Defining the start of history is a great challenge. In the case of Cyprus, for example, the most accepted narrative in the United States is that history began in 1974. There is nothing mentioned about the 1960 Treaties of Independence and Guarantee, which provide certain rights for the Turkish Cypriot and Greek Cypriot communities and for the Turkish and Greek Governments to help uphold those rights. Instead, history is widely seen to begin in 1974, with the Turkish intervention, which is defined as an invasion. How simple: Turkey is at fault, so maximum pressure needs to be put on Turkey, or in the case of Nagorno-Karabakh, on Azerbaijan to behave in a civilized way, supposedly according to international norms. But the fact is that the norms of international law in the case of Karabakh are on the Azerbaijani side with regard to respecting the territorial integrity of states.

To illustrate that point a little bit more, I would like to recall how in 2007, the Azerbaijani side, led by Deputy Foreign Minister Araz Azimov, launched a bold diplomatic initiative to try to win the narrative by arguing that there are four UN Security Council Resolutions in favor of Azerbaijan's position, which is that Armenia has occupied Azerbaijani territory, the Azerbaijani territories of Nagorno-

Karabakh and the seven surrounding regions, and that Armenia's occupying forces must be withdrawn in accordance with the international legal norm of maintaining the territorial integrity of states. So, Deputy Minister Azimov introduced a resolution in the UN Security Council highlighting the principle of maintaining the territorial integrity of states in the discussions on Karabakh. And all three Minsk Group Co-Chairs, meaning Russia, France, and United States, opposed that resolution. We said, "Well, but we also have to uphold the principle of self-determination of peoples, which, like the territorial integrity of states, is another key element of the Helsinki Final Act. Therefore, we can't shift the tone of the discussions to be only in favor of supporting the territorial integrity of states." But, this was not a legal argument; it was a politically convenient one.

That gets back to what I said in the beginning. It is convenient for United States, for France, for UK, for Germany in this day and age to forget about history. It feels more convenient to try wrap up negotiations, say, before the month of August, when Western Europe goes on vacation, rather than making an intense push -often against Moscow- to achieve concrete progress. When did Russia invade Georgia? In August, when everybody in Western Europe was on vacation, having forgotten what has happened in the past, when there was another tragic "guns of August" in 1914.

I would like to recap something Ambassador of Azerbaijan Hazar Ibrahim said in the beginning of this conference, "We have important choices to make now, and if we chose not to change our perceptions about our neighbors, we will remain split apart. Indefinitely. But, we need to move together." As the Ambassador stated, we need to move together, because through this, we will be able resolve these conflicts over Nagorno-Karabakh and its seven surrounding regions, and over Abkhazia and South Ossetia.

Ambassador Ibrahim also mentioned a hope for a new approach in Yerevan if Prime Minister Nikol Pashinyan wins this amazing political gambit he is undertaking right now. The ideas he is trying to push ahead are resisted by the entrenched political forces and the ruling cadres that had been in place for decades in Armenia, strongly supported by Russia. And Pashinyan is taking a big political risk by calling for new elections, which theoretically could be result in his defeat. But if he wins, I think he may bring a fresh approach to the Karabakh question. I hope this will mean an approach that is more historically accurate, more balanced, and which takes into account how the Yerevan Governorate was not ethnically Armenian at all.

But ultimately, whether or not a positive change occurs is up to the population of Armenia.

So, this is my last point. While I was the US Co-Chair of the OSCE's Minsk Group, I spent a lot of time trying to figure out what the people of Armenia and Azerbaijan really thought about the Karabakh conflict. We Co-Chairs negotiated all the time with the presidents and foreign ministers. They got very close to an agreement. Actually, the framework for an agreement exists: it is the so-called "Madrid Document", which we still talk about today. The basic idea of this document is to try to find the balance between the Helsinki Final Act principles of self-determination of peoples and territorial integrity of states. It was agreed in principle by the presidents in January 2009, but I think they lost their readiness to finalize it, because they knew their own citizens were not ready to accept the difficult compromises that are inside the framework of the agreement. I am not saying the presidents were not courageous; I am saying that they knew their populations' attitudes. And they also, until now, have not trusted in their counterpart to be willing to take those risks or to have political strength in the case of President Sarkisyan in Armenia to push these controversial changes and reforms and concessions through the political system.

So, I wanted to figure out the attitudes of the two populations to the ideas we Co-Chairs were negotiating with their political leaders. Two things stand out in my mind.

One was an effort by a friend of mine who runs an NGO in Armenia. He travelled to about fifteen different Armenian towns and organized town hall meetings during which he laid out three different options for a Karabakh settlement. None of them went as far in terms of the concessions that Armenia would need to make in line with what Presidents Sargsyan and Aliyev had agreed the principle. Yet, the townsfolk rejected even these three "mild" options. So, the Armenian side was not ready to accept the basic elements needed for a compromise.

I also remember another time in Baku when I was meeting with a group of university students and one gentleman who was the most outspoken and extremely articulate, stood up and said "I just would like to say that we need to support the Minsk Group. We need to have a settlement. We know you have been working very hard." I replied, "Thank you. But, let me ask you a question. What would you think about an agreement that was based on the following principles," and I then described what had been preliminarily agreed by the Presidents of Azerbaijan and Armenia in the "Madrid Document". He replied, "I could never agree to them. And I do not know anybody in Azerbaijan who could."

So, the populations of Armenia and Azerbaijan are stuck. And the only way to get out of this stagnation is if the leaders of Azerbaijan and Armenia come to feel sufficiently confident in each other to take risks and begin leading their populations while changing the historical narratives that each side has been fed, and instead pursue a narrative like we heard earlier today at this conference, which

is one of the most objective discussions of the history of this region that I have ever heard.

So, finally, I think a peaceful resolution of the Nagorno-Karabakh conflict will require Pashinyan to succeed in his attempt to rejuvenate and reform Armenia, and to change popular attitudes toward the Nagorno-Karabakh conflict. At the same time, it is also crucial to have the US President providing political cover and motivation, while pushing the Russian side, because left to Moscow's own devices, Russia has no interest in resolving these conflicts. It has every interest in keeping them bubbling..., simmering..., but not catching on fire.

CONFLICT RESOLUTION IN THE SOUTH CAUCASUS - THE ROLE OF THE EU

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Introduction

The South Caucasus is a particularly security-challenged region. More than twenty-five years since the break-up of the Soviet Union, Armenia, Azerbaijan, and Georgia remain dogged by conflict, closed borders and instability. The regions' three protracted conflicts, Nagorno-Karabakh (Azerbaijan and Armenia) and South Ossetia and Abkhazia (Georgia), act as a handbrake on sustainable peace, economic development and prosperity, and efforts to create effective regional cooperation. External factors, particularly the confrontation between Russia and the West, have also negatively impacted the conflicts and the broader regional security environment. This includes the 2008 Russia-Georgia war, Moscow's 2014 annexation of Crimea and the war in Eastern Ukraine, developments in Syria, Russia's military build-up in the Black Sea and, most recently, Russian aggression in the Sea of Azov.

The EU was a latecomer to the South Caucasus, joining the already large group of actors and organizations engaged in the region in the early 1990's. Over the years, the Union has intensified its political and economic ties with all three countries in what could be termed as a creeping engagement. Today, Armenia, Azerbaijan and Georgia are part of the EU's European Neighborhood Policy

(ENP) and Eastern Partnership (EaP). Each country has a unique tailor-made relationship with the EU. Over the years, the EU has also increased its involvement in conflict resolution and peacebuilding initiatives, particularly in the aftermath of the 2008 Russia-Georgia war. In keeping with the EU's traditional soft power and bottom-up approach, supporting confidence-building, and people-to-people initiatives have been at the heart of the EU's policy. While the EU has become the main security actor in Georgia, its role in the Nagorno-Karabakh conflict has been very limited and lacks a clear policy. While EU initiatives are primarily about conflict prevention rather than conflict resolution, the Union is playing a useful role and it should be further strengthened.

The EU's creeping engagement

Unlike the countries of Central and Eastern Europe, the EU did not see the South Caucasus as a priority back in the early 1990's, when Armenia, Azerbaijan, and Georgia regained their independence. Rather, the region was put on the back-burner, and frequently viewed through the lens of Russia. During this period the EU was preoccupied with events in its immediate neighborhood; namely, the war in the Western Balkans and developments unfolding in Central and Eastern Europe following the end of the Cold War.

The EU's main involvement was related to humanitarian and financial assistance. The Union was the biggest financer of development projects in the region between 1991 and 2000, investing well over one billion euros in the three states, including in Abkhazia and South Ossetia. Until August 2008, the European Commission was the largest donor supporting rehabilitation and civil society projects in the two territories.¹ While the EU negotiated Partnership and Cooperation Agreements (PCA) with all three countries, political and economic cooperation remained limited. Other actors, notably Russia, Turkey and the United States (US), played a bigger role. Much has changed since then. The EU has become an increasingly important actor, deepening ties with all three countries.

This increased engagement came about for several reasons. First, all three states wanted to develop deeper political and economic relations with the EU to help counter Russian influence. Second, eastward enlargements in 2004 and 2007 brought the South Caucasus geographically closer to the EU across the Black Sea. Third, Georgia's 2003 Rose Revolution led to the country's new President, Mikheil

1 European Commission (EC), "Report on European Commission Assistance to Georgia," December 2009; European Union Delegation to Georgia, "Overview of EC Assistance to People Affected by Conflict in Georgia," December 2010; EC, Annex III, Country Case Study— Georgia, "Thematic Evaluation of the European Commission Support to Conflict Prevention and Peace Building—Concept Study," *ADE-PARTICIP*, October 2011; "EU-Georgia Relations", *EU Delegation to Georgia website*, http://www.eeas.europa.eu/georgia/eu_georgia_summary/index_en.htm

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Saakashvili making Euro-Atlantic integration a priority. The 2008 Russia-Georgia war was a further important milestone. In the aftermath of the conflict, the EU gained a new visibility in the region, becoming the main security actor in Georgia with the deployment of the EU Monitoring Mission (EUMM). Fourth, the EU was keen to develop energy relations with Azerbaijan as a way to strengthen efforts to diversify routes and sources of natural gas to reduce dependence on Russia.

In 2005 the South Caucasus became part of the ENP, although the region was originally excluded, only being mentioned in a footnote to the policy as a possible neighbor. Its eventual inclusion was primarily result of developments in Georgia following the Rose Revolution. The inclusion of the South Caucasus states in the ENP was a qualitatively new stage in bilateral relations and indicated the EU's willingness to engage in deeper relations moving beyond the PCA frameworks. Since the launch of the ENP, the EU has been increasingly present in region, inter-alia through the signature of three bilateral Action Plans in November 2006 and through the opening of a regional delegation in Tbilisi (2005), then of two delegations in Baku and Yerevan (2008). The three countries also became part of the EaP in 2009 which opened the way for greater political and economic cooperation. Today, cooperation covers everything from trade, cyber-security, and security sector reform to education, counter-terrorism and human rights dialogues. There is barely a week that goes by without an EU delegation travelling to Baku, Tbilisi, or Yerevan or a delegation from the region visiting Brussels.

In parallel to these developments, the EU also progressively recognised the importance of improving security and stability in its Eastern neighborhood as a way to strengthen its own security and resilience. This came to the fore in the aftermath of the 2008 Russia-Georgia war, and more recently following Russia's annexation of Crimea and war in the Donbas in 2014. The Black Sea region has become a stage of geopolitical competition between the West and Russia, as the Kremlin has pushed back against the efforts of some countries in the region to deepen ties with the EU and NATO. Russia's leadership is determined to prevent the further fragmentation of Russian influence. They see no way to do this without maintaining buffer states and imposing their will on neighbors to secure their borders.²

The EU's December 2003 Security Strategy underlines the need for the EU to "take a stronger and more active interest in the problems of the South Caucasus," stating:

"we need to extend the benefits of economic and political cooperation to our neighbours in the East while tackling political problems there. We

2 Jonathan Marcus, "Russia v the West: Is this a new Cold War?," *BBC News*, 1 April 2018, <https://www.bbc.com/news/world-europe-43581449>

should now take a stronger and more active interest in the problems of the Southern Caucasus, which will in due course also be neighbouring region.”³

The EU also established the post of Special Representative for the South Caucasus. Finnish diplomat Heikki Talvitie was the first to take the position. He had a regional mandate, in an attempt to foster EU political involvement in the region, including developing a strategy to enhance stability and prosperity, and to advance conflict settlement across a strife-ridden region.⁴

Furthermore, a report published by the European Commission on the implementation of the ENP in 2006 explicitly indicates the need for the Union to “be more active in addressing frozen conflicts.”⁵ The ENP review of November 2015 also reiterates the EU’s commitment to fostering stability, security, and prosperity in the countries closest to its borders and recognizes that protracted conflicts continue to hamper the development of the region, committing to use all means available to support the management of crises and the settlement of protracted conflicts in the neighbourhood.⁶ The EU’s Global Strategy of 2016 also sets some ambitious goals regarding conflict prevention⁷ including promoting an integrated approach towards conflicts and crises and building state and societal resilience.

Assessing the role of the EU as a security actor

Back in the 1990’s and for the majority of the 2000’s, the EU was not directly involved in security and conflict resolution issues in the South Caucasus. This in part can be put down to the fact that a number of international actors (not least Russia) and organizations had been present in the region since the collapse of the USSR, including the United Nation’s (UN) and the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE), which strongly constrained the EU’s engagement.⁸ However, it was also due to a lack of appetite from the EU itself to

3 Council of the European Union: General Secretariat, “A Secure Europe in a Better World: European Union Security Strategy 2003,” 12 December 2003, <http://www.consilium.europa.eu/uedocs/cmsUpload/78367.pdf>.

4 Dov Lynch, No: 65, “The South Caucasus: a challenge for the EU”, *European Union Institute of Security Studies (EUISS)*, December 2003, http://eeas.europa.eu/archives/docs/enp/documents/2015/151118_joint-communication_review-of-the-enp_en.pdf<https://www.iss.europa.eu/content/south-caucasus-challenge-eu>

5 Communication from the Commission to the Council and Parliament, “Strengthening the European Neighbourhood Policy,” December 2006 <https://eurex.europa.eu/LexUriServ/LexUriServ.do?uri=COM:2006:0726:FIN:EN:PDF>

6 External Action Service, “Review of the European Neighborhood Policy,” 2015, http://eeas.europa.eu/archives/docs/enp/documents/2015/151118_joint-communication_review-of-the-enp_en.pdf

7 “EU Global Strategy”, *European External Action Service Website*, <http://europa.eu/globalstrategy/en/global-strategy-foreign-and-security-policy-european-union>

8 Dov Lynch, “The Security Dimension of the European Neighborhood Policy”, *The International Spectator* (XL) 1, January-March 2005: 33-43.

get involved in the security of a region that was seen very much as a far-away place.

As with the Western Balkans, the EU hoped that soft power tools and conditionality within the framework of a “more for more” approach could be used to bring about change, leading to greater democracy which could in turn impact the peace processes and increase stability. The ENP/EaP, which has both a bilateral and multilateral dimension, was viewed as a good structure for this approach. However, the South Caucasus is not the Western Balkans and this did not happen. With the exception of Georgia, real reform has been rather thin on the ground. Furthermore, each state has chosen a different geographical trajectory and a different type of relationship with the EU which has led to a greater fragmentation rather than a more cohesive region. Georgia’s goal is to become a member of the EU and Tbilisi is currently implementing an Association Agreement and Deep and Comprehensive Free Trade Agreement (DCFTA) with the EU. Armenia joined the Russian-led Eurasian Economic Union in January 2015 after Moscow more or less forced Yerevan to abandon talks with the EU for an Association Agreement. Still, Yerevan has since finalized a new Comprehensive and Enhanced Partnership Agreement (CEPA) with the EU. Azerbaijan, while preferring not to openly choose between Russia and the EU, is nevertheless in the closing stages of negotiating a new strategic partnership agreement with the EU as well as being a key energy partner. Despite the different agreements, the fact that all three countries are looking for ways to deepen ties with the EU is positive and offers the EU more space to engage on issues related to the conflicts. Indeed the EU is already working with all three states on security sector reform, as well as having established Security Dialogues.⁹

In fact, the EU’s role in conflict resolution and peacebuilding varies from case to case. While in Georgia the EU plays an important role, this is not the case vis-à-vis the Nagorno-Karabakh conflict where the EU prefers to take a back seat.

Georgia – Keeping the Peace

The security landscape in Georgia and the South Caucasus more broadly was transformed by the 2008 Russia-Georgia war and Moscow’s subsequent recognition of Abkhazia and South Ossetia.¹⁰ Beyond offering strong political backing to Georgia’s territorial integrity, the EU found itself having to step up and take on a bigger role than hitherto. The then French Presidency of the EU, under

9 “Baku hosts Azerbaijan-EU Security Dialogue”, *AzerTAC*, 12 November 2018, https://azertag.az/en/xeber/Baku_hosts_Azerbaijan_EU_security_dialogue-1211341.

10 Amanda Paul and Dennis Sammut, “Nagorno-Karabakh and the arc of crises on Europe’s borders,” (Policy Paper, European Policy Centre, February 2016).

the then President Nicolas Sarkozy, negotiated the six-point ceasefire agreement containing the following stipulations:

1. Abstain from the use of force.
2. Cease hostilities definitively.
3. Assure free access for humanitarian assistance.
4. Georgian military forces should withdraw to their usual places of deployment.
5. Russian military forces should withdraw to the lines preceding the outbreak of hostilities. While waiting for an international mechanism, Russian peacekeeping forces will put into effect additional security measures.
6. Opening of international discussions on the modalities of security and stability in Abkhazia and South Ossetia.

However, as of today, the ceasefire agreement remains only partially implemented by Russia. Moscow has not given free access to humanitarian aid, nor has it properly withdrawn troops. Unfortunately, on some points, the agreement was rather vaguely worded. For example, on point five, Russia insists that it is fulfilling its obligations despite the fact that troops have not been withdrawn to the positions they held before the war. This was a failure of Sarkozy, allowing Moscow to insert the second phrase under point five. As underlined by Michael Emerson,

“its real meaning became evident when the then Russian President, Dimitri Medvedev, said that Russia would comply in withdrawing its forces by 22 August, except for 500 troops who would stay to implement the second phrase in point five. The six-point agreement may have stopped the fighting but it left the door open for the ‘additional measures’ which look like meaning continued occupation without end.”¹¹

The EU Monitoring Mission

Plans to extend the then 16-year-old security arrangements led by the UN and the OSCE were dashed by a Russian veto. Thereafter, the EU became the main security actor, deploying the EU’s civilian Monitoring Mission (EUMM). The mission deploys some 200 monitors. They patrol the buffer zones around the conflict zones, particularly the areas adjacent to the Administrative Border Lines (ABLs) of the occupied territories. However, the mission has so far been denied

11 Michael Emerson, “Post-Mortem on Europe’s First War of the 21st Century,” (Policy Paper, Centre for European Policy Studies (CEPS), 27 August 2008,) <https://www.ceps.eu/publications/post-mortem-europes-first-war-21st-century>.

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access by Russia and the *de facto* authorities in Abkhazia and South Ossetia. This means that EUMM is unable to have an independent picture of the situation on the ground. At the same time, Russia has continued to consolidate its grip on Abkhazia and South Ossetia both politically and economically. It has also strengthened its military presence in the two territories. Moscow uses its military bases in the two territories to project power and instability, when required, across the region. Provocative steps, such as ‘borderisation’ (erecting fences between the areas of Abkhazia, South Ossetia and territory that is still controlled by Tbilisi) are also a regular occurrence.¹² Human rights violations, illegal detentions and kidnappings are also widespread and in some cases, including the case of Archil Tatumashvili, have ended in death.¹³

Still, broadly speaking, the EUMM is viewed as playing an important role. It has ensured effective information sharing, moderated and reduced tensions between the parties, including via calls on its hotline. It also holds Incident Prevention and Response Mechanism (IPRM) meetings. These allow participants from both sides of the ABL’s to talk with one another on security issues and other matters affecting their lives. In this sense, the EUMM has played a crucial role in preventing any further escalation of hostilities by facilitating the separation of the conflict parties and monitoring the implementation of the ceasefire.¹⁴

The Geneva International Discussions

The EU, represented by the EUSR, is also a co-chair in the Geneva International Discussions (GID), which were launched in October 2008. The EU along with the OSCE and UN bring together representatives of the participants of the conflict - Georgia, Russia, as well as representatives of the occupied territories and the US. The GID mandate covers the whole territory of Georgia. The talks have a strong focus on security and stability issues in the region, Internally Displaced Persons (IDPs) and refugees, along with other issues brought up by mutual agreement between the parties. GID aims to operationalize the key elements of the agreement and move forward from the ceasefire to a lasting peace deal.

However, the objectives of the GID became more complex when Russia recognised both Abkhazia and South Ossetia as independent states. The signing of treaties of alliance and integration between Russia and the occupied territories in 2015 further damaged the process. As stressed by the EU High Representative

12 Lucy Pasha-Robinson, “Russia quietly moves border hundreds of yards into Georgia,” *The Independent*, 11 July 2017, <https://www.independent.co.uk/news/world/politics/russia-georgia-border-south-ossetia-move-hundreds-yards-occupied-nato-putin-west-ukraine-a7835756.html>.

13 Harry R. Kamian, “On the Death of Archil Tatumashvili in Georgia’s South Ossetia Region,” *US Mission to the OSCE*, <https://osce.usmission.gov/on-the-death-of-georgian-citizen-archil-tatumashvili-in-georgias-south-ossetia-region/>.

14 Nicu Popescu, *EU Foreign Policy and Post-Soviet Conflicts* (New York: Routledge, 2011)

for Foreign Affairs and Security Policy Federica Mogherini, it was “yet another step that goes against ongoing efforts to strengthen security and stability in the region and creates circumstances that do not foster a constructive climate for efforts to improve the security and humanitarian situation on the ground.”¹⁵ Furthermore, not only are the positions of the parties very entrenched, meaning there is little leeway for the EU or any other external actor to bring the positions closer together, the different parties involved view the process and its objectives rather differently. Russia for example, insists that it is not even a party in the conflict.

Nevertheless, while the GID has not achieved much concrete progress in terms of agreements between the conflict parties, the EUSR has played an important by keeping the talks going. Yet without the political will of the participants to find compromises and mutually acceptable solutions, it is impossible for the EU to achieve any progress towards finding a settlement. For Russia in particular, the *status quo* is perfectly acceptable as the non-solution of the conflicts represents an obstacle in Georgia’s Euro-Atlantic integration aspirations. In this sense, the stalled peace process has become an end in itself.

Engaging with Abkhazia and South Ossetia

In its relations with Abkhazia and South Ossetia, the EU has had a three-pronged approach. First, the EU calculated that its relationship with Georgia could have an indirect influence on Abkhazia. Namely, the implementation of the Association Agreement and DCFTA, along with the recently delivered visa free travel to the EU, would theoretically raise the quality of life in Georgia and should make an Abkhazian re-integration into Georgia more desirable.¹⁶

Second, in the aftermath of the 2008 war the EU has supported a number of humanitarian projects. These projects have included supporting local NGOs, improving healthcare and education, repairing water facilities, rebuilding houses in Abkhazia’s southern Gali district, and working to find missing persons. Finding ways to engage with has been particularly focused on. In contrast, the EU has been able to do next to nothing in South Ossetia due to restrictions imposed by the *de facto* authorities.

15 Statement by High Representative/Vice-President Federica Mogherini on the announced signature of a “Treaty on Alliance and Integration” between the Russian Federation and Georgia’s breakaway region of South Ossetia, 17 March 2005, https://eeas.europa.eu/headquarters/headquarters-homepage/3300/statement-high-representativevice-president-federica-mogherini-announced-signature-treaty_en

16 Thomas Frear, “The foreign policy options of a small unrecognised state: the case of Abkhazia,” *Caucasus Survey*, Vol.1, No.2, (April 2014): 83-107. www.tandfonline.com/doi/pdf/10.1080/23761199.2014.11417293?needAccess=true.

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Third, the EU has further elaborated its soft power approach by elaborating, in 2009 a policy of “non-recognition and engagement” (NREX). This policy endorses engagement in these territories at different levels while explicitly ruling out recognition of their sovereignty. It was described by former EUSR, Peter Semneby, the policy’s brainchild, as “what the EU does best, namely to use its soft power to nudge societies in the direction of Europe while fostering a stronger European identity.”¹⁷ Although designed for both South Ossetia and Abkhazia, the policy has only been implemented only in Abkhazia. South Ossetia, which has a much stronger Russian military has strongly resisted almost all forms of interaction with the outside world¹⁸.

Furthermore, the EU has had to deal with Tbilisi’s sensitivities on this issue. Coming close to anything resembling state building or the strengthening of the *de facto* authorities, is interpreted by Georgia as an implicit recognition of the entities.¹⁹ Some Georgian officials were extremely upset when former EUSR, Herbert Salber, congratulated South Ossetian leader Anatoly Bibilov on being elected to his post. Salber resigned a short time later.²⁰

EU efforts have also been exasperated by the heavy Russian influence. For example, the EU’s assistance programme to Abkhazia has been dwarfed by much greater Russian support.²¹ The amount of money Moscow has spent on pensions is more than ten times the EU’s aid programme.²²

Furthermore, Georgia’s policies towards the two territories has also been challenging. Tbilisi has taken some positive steps to reach out to societies in South Ossetia and Abkhazia. However, at the same time, there have also been some controversial measures. For example, the 2009 law on occupied territories forbids any economic activity with the breakaway territories without the agreement of the Georgian government and requires international organizations working there to

17 Peter Semneby at “Hearing on the Consequences of the War between Georgia and Russia,” National Assembly, Paris, 17 January 2011.

18 Thomas de Waal, “Enhancing the EU’s Engagement With Separatist Territories,” *Carnegie Europe*, January 2017, <https://carnegieeurope.eu/2017/01/17/enhancing-eu-s-engagement-with-separatist-territories-pub-67694>.

19 “Healing relationships between people is key to conflict resolution in the South Caucasus,” (Policy Dialogue Report, Crisis Management Initiative (CMI), 16 March 2018,) <http://cmi.fi/2018/03/16/healing-relationships-people-key-conflict-resolution-south-caucasus/>.

20 “EU South Caucasus Envoy to Leave His Post,” *Civil Georgia*, 11 July 2017 <https://old.civil.ge/eng/article.php?id=30253>

21 Thomas de Waal, Uncertain Ground: Dealing with Europe’s de facto States and Breakaway Territories,(Washington: Carnegie Endowment, 2018,) https://carnegieendowment.org/files/deWaal_UncertainGround_final.pdf.

22 Information supplied by the EU delegation in Tbilisi. There is no single public source on EU funding in Abkhazia. See “Projects in Georgia,” Delegation of the European Union to Georgia, accessed 14 November 2018, https://ceas.europa.eu/delegations/georgia/area/projects_en ; and “COBERM: A Joint EU-UNDP Initiative,” accessed 14 November 2018, <http://www.coberm.net/index.php?m=53#>.

coordinate all their activities closely with the Georgian authorities.²³ Consequently, many in South Ossetia and Abkhazia do not view the EU as an independent actor. The EU's support for Georgia's territorial integrity and the non-recognition of the breakaway entities has led to a perception of the EU as being biased.²⁴ Hence, the engagement without recognition approach has had a limited impact so far.

Ultimately, while the EU is playing an increasingly important role in Georgia, the results have been more about managing the conflict and preventing a renewed escalation rather than moving towards a solution. Yet, moving towards a solution is more dependent on the political will of the conflict parties rather than the EU. However, the failure of the EU, and the West more broadly, to adequately respond to Russian aggression, reveals the weakness and reluctance of the West to confront Russia.

Nagorno-Karabakh – Watching from the side lines

Nagorno-Karabakh is the most volatile and dangerous conflict in the EU's Eastern neighbourhood. Negotiations on a set of 'Basic Principles' have been going on since 2007, when they were first presented in Madrid. The Principles provide a roadmap to a settlement. However, there has been little serious progress towards solving the conflict, nor any fundamental changes in the parties positions since the early 1990's. Generations have grown up in isolation, which has reinforced the 'us versus them' mentality and led to the lack of a shared vision for the future of the region.²⁵

Moreover, the conflict is far from frozen. Frequent skirmishes continue to take place around the "Line of Contact" as well as at the Armenia-Azerbaijan international border. Armenia and Azerbaijan have also been engaged in an alarming arms race.²⁶ Russia being the main supplier to both states.

One of the most serious incidents was the April 2016 "4-day war". It ended with a Russia negotiated truce. The incident challenged the sense of complacency within the international community, that the *status quo* and the situation on no war-no peace could be sustained.

23 European Commission For Democracy Through Law (Venice Commission), "Law on Occupied Territories of Georgia," Opinion No 516/ 2009, 19 January 2009, [https://www.venice.coe.int/webforms/documents/default.aspx?pdffile=CDL\(2009\)004-e](https://www.venice.coe.int/webforms/documents/default.aspx?pdffile=CDL(2009)004-e) .

24 Emilia Jeppsson, "A Differentiated, Balanced and Patient Approach? The EU's Involvement with Georgia's Secessionist Conflicts beyond the August 2008 War," (Policy Paper, College of Europe, June 2015.)

25 "Healing relationships between people is key to conflict resolution in the South Caucasus," CMI.

26 Sebastien Roblin, "The Arms Race from Hell," *National Interest*, 21 November 2016, <https://nationalinterest.org/blog/the-buzz/the-arms-race-hell-russia-adding-fuel-the-fire-18475> .

A passive observer

As violent clashes in the conflict zone unfolded in April 2016, the EU was a passive observer, with few visible signs of engagement other than phone calls urging Armenia and Azerbaijan to show restraint. This approach contradicts the EU's narrative on the conflict. For example, when Federica Mogherini visited the South Caucasus in March 2016, she was quoted as saying that the Nagorno-Karabakh conflict was a top priority for the EU.²⁷ In reality, the EU has an almost non-existent role in the peace process. Indeed it is the only conflict in its Eastern neighbourhood where the EU still has no seat at the table. The EU has rather adopted a policy of supporting the efforts of the OSCE Minsk Group where France, along with Russia and the US, is a co-chair. Without doubt, Russia is the most proactive actor, with Moscow frequently initiating ideas on how to take the negotiations forward. However, the resolution of the conflict is not an end in itself for Russia but one of the many tools it holds as a means of reasserting its hegemony over the region.²⁸

Unlike with Georgia, where the EUSR is very active, the mandate of the EUSR vis-à-vis Karabakh is limited to supporting the official mediation efforts of the Minsk Group and its co-chairs. This includes having direct dialogue with the leaders of Azerbaijan and Armenia and supporting confidence building measures (CBMs). There is not direct involvement in the peace process.

A peaceful solution to the Nagorno-Karabakh has been identified as a priority under the ENP Action Plans signed by both Armenia and Azerbaijan. However, the EU does not have a policy on the conflict. Unlike in other conflicts in the Black Sea region, the EU has tried to maintain a balanced position between Armenia and Azerbaijan. This was evident from differences between the two ENP Action Plan texts related to the conflict. While the conflict's settlement is the first priority under the EU-Azerbaijan ENP Action Plan, it is ranked seventh in the text concluded with Armenia. The latter also mentions the principle of the right to self-determination of people, which is not included in the Azerbaijani Action Plan. This approach created confusion in Baku, which interpreted this approach as the EU failing to recognize Azerbaijan's territorial integrity and inconsistent with the EU's position on other regional conflicts. This damaged the EU's reputation in Azerbaijan. As was underlined by Svante Cornell, "with the Action plans, the EU played a worse than a passive role. It was actively sowing confusion and contradicting international principles into the conflict" (namely the territorial integrity of states and self-determination of peoples).²⁹

27 Remarks by the High Representative Federica Mogherini at the Joint Press Conference with the Foreign Minister of Azerbaijan, February 2016, https://eeas.europa.eu/delegations/azerbaijan/5335/remarks-high-representativevice-president-federica-mogherini-joint-press-conference-foreign_en.

28 Paul and Sammut, "Nagorno-Karabakh and the arc of crises on Europe's borders"

29 Svante Cornell, *The International Politics of the Armenian-Azerbaijani Conflict: The original 'Frozen Conflict' & European Security*, (Washington: Palgrave Macmillan, 2017.)

However, in the aftermath of Russia's annexation of Crimea and war in the Donbas, the EU took clearer position towards Azerbaijan's territorial integrity than hitherto. During visits to Baku, more EU officials made statements supporting the country's territorial integrity.³⁰ However, it seems very unlikely that the language used in relation to the conflict in Armenia's new agreement with the EU, will be replicated in the agreement currently being negotiated with Baku.

There also seems to be a lack of appetite from the majority of EU Member States to further engage in a conflict where progress towards a solution has been almost impossible to achieve principally because of the positions of the two sides. The EU is not ready to take on a bigger role in the conflict that goes beyond support for confidence building measures and peace building. Only in the event that a political agreement is reached would the EU be ready to do more. Indeed, the EU has pledged to take on a key role in an eventual post-conflict settlement process, including reconstruction and rehabilitation efforts.

European Partnership for the Peaceful Settlement of Nagorno-Karabakh

Presently, the EU's main contribution to the conflict has been via the European Partnership for the Peaceful Settlement of the Conflict over Nagorno-Karabakh (EPNK). EPNK is a European civil society initiative that works with local partners in the South Caucasus on a wide range of peace-building activities. It has produced some positive results, including bringing together Azerbaijani's and Armenians. Its main shortcoming is that its outcomes are very poorly interconnected with the formal negotiations. The period between the phases, characterized by funding gaps, prevents complex and effective work. For example, with the end of EPNK 3 at the end of 2018, it remains unclear when stage 4 will begin. There is likely to be several months of delay as was previously the case.

Conclusion

Russia's 2014 annexation of Crimea and war in Ukraine, and more recently the Kremlin's aggression in the Sea of Azov in November 2018, have all undermined regional security and consequently negatively impacted the already volatile security environment in the South Caucasus. It is in the EU's interest to have a stable and secure region. Hence, there is a need to be more engaged in initiatives aimed at strengthening regional security and reenergizing moribund peace processes.

30 Gulshan Pashayeva, *The European Union and ethno-territorial conflicts in the South Caucasus*, (New York: Routledge, 2018.)

The Centennial of the Independence of the Three South Caucasus States: Historical Background, Contemporary Developments and Prospects of Peace and Prosperity

So far, peace-processes in the South Caucasus have failed to lead to meaningful political talks. Rather, over the past two decades the positions of the different parties have become more entrenched. Part of the reason is that they are shaped by ceasefire agreements which are not functioning correctly. There is a need to join the dots between the different stages: namely ceasefire to peace talks and to implementation should be linked. Furthermore, the long-lasting negotiation processes in the region are entwined with developments on the ground and at the regional level. These processes are not taking place in a vacuum.

Given how entrenched the parties positions are, there is not much leeway for the EU or any other external actor to bring the positions of the parties closer together. Despite the efforts of international actors, there is little to demonstrate that the key actors involved in the peace processes are ready to show greater flexibility or make greater concessions.

What more can the EU do?

Given that the protracted conflicts continue to hamper developments in the region and represent a potential security threat to the EU, the Union should be leading with innovative initiatives, using its soft power skills and experience and not simply endorsing peace processes that often seem to be on their last legs. While the EU is certainly not in a position to guarantee or even shore-up a partner's security or challenge Russia as a hard security actor, its increased engagement with all three states is an opportunity for the EU to do more using its soft power toolbox.

While the EU's non-recognition and engagement policy towards South Ossetia and Abkhazia has only had a limited impact, it is nevertheless valuable for providing a framework that allows for engagement, while clearly reassuring the Georgian authorities that the EU will not recognize the sovereignty of a breakaway territory.

The EU should also continue to nudge the Georgian government to be increasingly creative in its efforts to reach out to societies in Abkhazia and South Ossetia. The 2018 initiative from Tbilisi, known as "Step to a Better Future," offered the Abkhaz and South Ossetians a chance to trade with Georgia and some creative ways of receiving Georgian healthcare, education, and other services.³¹ Despite being rejected by the two *de facto* leaderships, it was welcomed by the EU and this should be built on. To this end, the EU should continue to use the provisions of Georgia's Association Agreement and DCFTA to push Tbilisi in this direction.

31 "A Step to a Better Future: Peace Initiative, Facilitation of Trade Across Dividing Lines," *Office of the State Minister of Georgia for Reconciliation and Civic Equality*, 2018, http://smr.gov.ge/Uploads/Concept_EN_0eaaac2e.pdf.

The EU should also double down on the Nagorno-Karabakh conflict. In addition to continuing to support the OSCE Minsk Group co-Chairs, it should use bilateral channels with Azerbaijan and Armenia, and political processes linked to new agreements with both countries, to emphasize the need to avoid escalation and pursue a settlement by peaceful means.

With the election of a new government and parliament in Yerevan, there is cautious optimism of a new and more positive chapter in the Nagorno-Karabakh peace process. According to Joshua Kuchera, “former president Serzh Sargsyan, who was a Karabakh native and war veteran was seen in Baku as the personification of hard line Armenian positions on Karabakh.”³² In contrast, new Prime Minister, Nikol Pashinyan, has no links to Karabakh and many in Azerbaijani hope it may bring about a more genuine, result-oriented dialogue and negotiations³³ which would include the return of some of Azerbaijan’s territories. The EU should be ready to support new efforts, and move from the rather peripheral role it currently has.

The EU should further strengthen its soft power approach and give more attention and support to efforts aimed at repairing relationships between people who are affected by these conflicts. According to Roxana Cristescu, this healing should lead from the point of conflict trauma to a shared vision of the future.³⁴

Steps should also be taken to strengthen the work of EPNK, including looking for ways to link it to the peace process. In this respect, the mandate of the EUSR should be expanded to unify and coordinate EU policies towards the conflict which is currently not the case. The EUSR should be to bring the outcomes of the EPNK in the formal negotiations. To this end the EUSR’s office should be expanded including with additional staff.

32 Joshua Kuchera, “Azerbaijan see new possibilities for dialogue with Armenia,” January 2019 <https://eurasianet.org/azerbaijan-sees-new-possibilities-for-dialogue-with-armenia> .

33 “Joshua Kuchera, Azerbaijan sees new possibilities for dialogue with Armenia”

34 Roxana Cristescu, “Healing relationships between people is key to conflict resolution in the South Caucasus,” *Crisis Management Initiative*, March 2018, <http://cmi.fi/2018/03/16/healing-relationships-people-key-conflict-resolution-south-caucasus/>.

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AN ASSESSMENT OF TURKEY'S ROLE IN THE PREVENTION AND RESOLUTION OF THE CONFLICTS IN THE SOUTH CAUCASUS IN THE POST-POST-COLD WAR ERA

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Introduction: The South Caucasus - A Volatile Non-Region at the Crossroads

The South Caucasus is a junction of grand geopolitical spaces. On the North-South nexus, it constitutes a bottleneck corridor between Eurasia, and the Persian Gulf, and the Indian Ocean. On the East-West nexus, the South Caucasus lies on the eastern edge of the Wider Black Sea region connecting the latter with Central Asia via the Caspian Sea. The Wider Black Sea region is a space that connects Europe with Central Asia in the East-West direction and Eurasia with Eastern Mediterranean and the Middle East in the North-South direction. As such, the South Caucasus constitutes a critical intersection between five grand geopolitical spaces, namely, Europe; Eurasia; Central Asia; Eastern Mediterranean and Middle East; and the Persian Gulf and the Indian Ocean.

This geographical location bestows the South Caucasus a global economic and strategic significance. The prospect of increasing interconnectivity between the Pacific and the Atlantic that is gaining currency with the onset of the China-led

Belt and Road Initiative intensifies this significance. The hydrocarbon resources in the Caspian Basin are also another critical factor in this regard. The global economic and strategic significance of the South Caucasus might have delivered significant advantages to the South Caucasus countries. However, so far, this expectation has hardly been realized. Both regional and extra-regional factors have their share in this deficiency.

The South Caucasus hardly constitutes a region in the cultural, economic, and political senses. In the South Caucasus, history is a dividing factor, rather than a uniting one. Despite some common cultural elements, we cannot speak of a South Caucasus identity that could have been a factor of unity, which, in return, could have facilitated a common vision and coordinated action. On the contrary, history and antagonistic identities have been significant factors for the emergence and continuity of the conflicts that predominate the South Caucasus.

The South Caucasus is the venue of the three (Abkhazia, Nagorno-Karabakh, South Ossetia) of the four protracted conflicts (the former three plus Transnistria) in the Organization for Security and Co-operation in Europe (OSCE) area. On the other hand, the Wider Black Sea region that encompasses the South Caucasus is the host of all these protracted conflicts. The occupation and illegal annexation of Crimea and the Donbas Crisis, which has been turning into another protracted conflict, are the recently erupted conflicts in the Wider Black Sea region that have certain reflections in the South Caucasus.¹ In addition to the threats that these conflicts pose against peace and stability, the *de facto* states in the South Caucasus have also turned into black holes of illicit economic and other activities.²

Azerbaijan and Armenia are *de jure* at war with each other since 1991 over Nagorno-Karabakh.³ There are no diplomatic relations between these two countries. Georgia is the only country in the South Caucasus that has diplomatic relations with the two other regional countries. Whereas Armenia has no diplomatic relations with the Azerbaijan-friendly Turkey and the border between the two is closed, Azerbaijan has thorny relations with Iran that has good relations with Armenia. Russia is the patron of Abkhazia and South Ossetia. For this reason,

1 For a collection of four short articles on the impact of Ukraine crisis on the South Caucasus see, Jeronim Perović (ed.), "The South Caucasus and the Ukraine Crisis," *Caucasus Analytical Digest*, no. 67-68 (2014), accessed 20 April 2019, <http://www.css.ethz.ch/content/dam/ethz/special-interest/gess/cis/center-for-securities-studies/pdfs/CAD-67-68.pdf>.

2 For a detailed report on the illegal economic and other activities in Nagorno-Karabakh see, Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Republic of Azerbaijan, *Illegal Economic and Other Activities in the Occupied Territories of Azerbaijan* (Baku, 2016), accessed April 20, 2019, http://www.mfa.gov.az/files/file/MFA_Report_on_the_occupied_territories_March_2016_1.pdf.

3 The most well-known account of the Nagorno Karabakh conflict is Thomas De Waal's Black Garden: Black Garden: Armenia and Azerbaijan through Peace and War, which was first published in 2003 and republished in 2013. For one of the best accounts of the same conflict see, Svante Cornell, "The Nagorno-Karabakh Conflict," *Uppsala University Department of East European Studies Report no. 46* (1999), accessed 20 April 2019, https://is.muni.cz/el/1423/podzim2012/MVZ208/um/35586974/Cornell_The_Nagorno-Karabakh_Conflict.pdf.

Georgia is at odds with Russia that controls most of the strategic assets of Armenia. There is a certain level of competition among Iran, Russia, and Turkey for influence in the South Caucasus.

Consequently, instead of developing trilateral relations and regional alliance and alignment, Armenia, Azerbaijan, and Georgia all aspire to develop their relations with extra-regional powers and organizations. However, in this respect, too, there are no or insufficient shared perspectives that direct these three countries to act in unison. Despite its continuing relations with the European Union (EU) and the North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO), Armenia is a member state of the Russia-led Eurasian Economic Union (EEU) and the Collective Security Treaty Organization (CSTO). Georgia seeks EU and NATO memberships as opposed to EEU and CSTO. Azerbaijan pursues a difficult balancing non-aligned policy. Obviously, the ongoing conflicts in the region hinder the advent of regional perspectives.

These circumstances render the South Caucasus countries vulnerable to the manipulations of the extra-regional powers. Given that its global economic and strategic significance turns the South Caucasus into an arena of competition and a prize for the global powers for hegemony and dominance, these powers do not hesitate to manipulate the regional countries to pursue their own interests. As a result of the interaction of these dynamics, today, the South Caucasus remains a highly fragile area.

What role can Turkey play in the prevention and resolution of the conflicts in the South Caucasus? Examining the rudiments of the Turkish foreign policy towards the post-Soviet space including the South Caucasus should provide some answers to this question. Therefore, in this paper, I will first review the Turkish foreign policy towards the post-Soviet space. Within this review, I will also summarize the ways in which Turkey has reacted to the risk and conflict situations in the South Caucasus in order to draw a general picture of Turkey's *modus operandi* in such situations. Finally, upon this review, I will present my projections regarding the role that Turkey may play in the South Caucasus in the post-post-Cold War era.

The Outline of the Turkish Foreign Policy towards the Post-Soviet Space

Although the Turkish Ministry of Foreign Affairs sent envoys to the prospective independent Soviet republics as early as 1990,⁴ the collapse of the Soviet Union and the emergence of the fifteen independent post-Soviet states caught Turkish

4 For a detailed descriptive account of Turkey's policy towards Azerbaijan, Georgia, and Ukraine starting from the collapse of the USSR until 2011 see, Mitat Çelikpala, "Son Yirmi Yılda Türkiye'nin Azerbaycan, Gürcistan ve Ukrayna'ya Yönelik Dış Politikası ve Bu Ülkelerdeki Faaliyetleri," in *Bağımsızlıklarının Yirminci Yılında Azerbaycan, Gürcistan ve Ukrayna, Türk Dilli Halklar-Türkiye ile İlişkiler*, eds. İsmail Aydıngün and Çiğdem Balım (Ankara: Atatürk Kültür Merkezi, 2012), 311-401.

foreign policy establishment off-guard. The possibility of losing its strategic significance for the West was one of the main concerns of the Turkish foreign policy establishment. The possibility of a comeback by Russia was also a concern. The latter inclined Turkey to embark on a Moscow-centered policy in the first years of the post-Soviet era. This, however, did not stop Turkey from being one of the first countries to recognize the post-Soviet states. Turkey's promptness was largely motivated by the desire to prevent uncertainty and to reestablish stability and a new *status quo* as soon as possible. A feeling of affinity towards the newly independent Turkic states in Central Asia as a derivative of Turkish nationalist ideology also had been a factor in this process.

Yet, the absence of accurate knowledge and expertise on the newly formed post-Soviet space among the Turkish foreign policy establishment resulted in a failure to grasp the emerging realities in this domain. Accordingly, particularly between 1990 and 1993, uncertainty and obscurity prevailed in Turkish foreign policy towards the post-Soviet space. At the same time, the "discovery" of the "Turkish world" and the consequent belief in prospective opportunities that were largely a derivative of the ideological tenets resulted in a kind of euphoria and exaggerated optimism. This ideologically driven exaggerated optimism, however, died out soon after it met the reality.⁵

Starting from 1995-1996, Turkey began comprehending the post-Soviet reality more realistically. Understanding its limits and the challenges that predominated the post-Soviet space, Turkey commenced adopting rather down to earth expectations and drafted its policies accordingly. Consequently, Turkey centered its policy on developing trade, economic, and security relations with the post-Soviet countries. Turkey perceived the consolidation of stable, sovereign, and independent post-Soviet states as a security stipulation that would help to prevent volatility in its neighborhood, preclude Russia's comeback as a revisionist power, and function as buffers between itself and Russia. Turkey's fear of the spillover effects of the ethno-territorial conflicts also inclined Turkey to defend the principles of sovereignty and territorial integrity in the post-Soviet space. In this period, gaining access to hydrocarbon resources in the Caspian region for energy supply security, and becoming an energy hub between the Caspian region and the European market were set as two central strategic objectives of Turkey. Another vital objective of Turkey was to get hold of new markets in the post-Soviet space and diversifying trade partners. These objectives have shaped the gradually maturing Turkish foreign policy since 1995-1996. Consequently, Turkey endorsed the establishment of a new *status quo* based on independence, sovereignty, and territorial integrity of the existing post-Soviet states, and peaceful relations and cooperation among and with these states. As a part of this outlook, Turkey strived

5 Mitat Çelikpala, "Son Yirmi Yılda Türkiye'nin...", 311-315.

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for the incorporation of the post-Soviet countries into the global order as soon as possible.⁶

In those formative years, one important characteristic of the Turkish foreign policy was to define Turkish interests in the post-Soviet space in congruence with Western interests. In other words, Turkey perceived no contradiction between its own interests and the interests of the West and tried to synchronize its policies with Western policies. Within this framework, Turkey opted to become a model Western country for the post-Soviet states and tried to help the integration of the post-Soviet states into the Western world. In this line, Turkey spared no effort to assist the newly independent states in the Caucasus and Central Asian, with the exception of Armenia, in their endeavors to establish relations with the Council of Europe, Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD), International Monetary Fund (IMF), EU, and NATO. Turkey also supported the newly independent Central Asian countries' membership into the Economic Cooperation Organization (ECO),⁷ the Conference on Interaction and Confidence Building Measures in Asia (CICA), and Organisation of Islamic Cooperation (OIC). Moreover, Turkey envisioned becoming a bridge between the post-Soviet space and the West, thereby reasserting the geopolitical importance in the Western world. However, in line with its wish for stability, Turkey tried not to alienate or provoke Iran and Russia while trying to balance their influence in the region.⁸

Although nationalist ideology and sentiments initially had certain effects on Turkey's policies, later on, as a consequence of adopting a more realistic outlook, Turkey established itself as a non-ideologically driven actor. It neither tried imposing ideological postures nor interfering in domestic policies of the countries. Even Turkey's public diplomacy that targeted the Turkic and Muslim communities in non-Turkish and non-Muslim post-Soviet countries had certain limits drawn by the concerns over the stability of its neighbors.

Cumulatively, by 2000s, in the post-Soviet space, Turkey established itself, in Jon Boonstra's words, as a cautious "merchant-diplomat type" foreign policy actor⁹ that valued the *status quo* and stability in the post-Soviet space. Since then, as a

6 Mitat Çelikpala, "Son Yirmi Yılda Türkiye'nin...", 311-315.

7 M. Efe Çaman and M. Ali Akyurt, "Caucasus and Central Asia in Turkish Foreign Policy: The Time Has Come for a New Regional Policy," *Alternatives* 10, no. 2-3 (2011): 47.

8 Mitat Çelikpala, "Son Yirmi Yılda Türkiye'nin...", 311-315.

9 Jos Boonstra, "The South Caucasus Concert: Each Playing Its Own Tune," *FRIDE Working Paper*, no. 128 (2015): 10-11, accessed 20 April 2019. http://www.cascade-caucasus-network.com/wp-content/uploads/2015/10/WP128_The_South_Caucasus_concert3.pdf;

For studies that attribute a similar characteristic to Turkish foreign policy see, Mikhael Hikari Cecire, "The Merchant Hegemon: Georgia's Role in Turkey's Caucasus System," in *Georgian Foreign Policy: The Quest for Sustainable Security*, eds. Kornely Kakachia and Michael Cecire (Tbilisi: Konrad Adenauer Foundation, 2013), 111-124; Kemal Kirişçi, "The Transformation of Turkish Foreign Policy: The Rise of the Trading State," *New Perspectives on Turkey* 40 (2009): 29–57.

rule, Turkey has refrained from intervening into domestic affairs of the post-Soviet countries, not to mention intending regime change. Having no ideological agenda or guidelines, Turkey has pragmatically sought to work with all the governments in power. Turkey has also taken into account the Euro-Atlantic' and Russia's concerns. It intended not to provoke Russia while defining the framework of its policy in accordance with the Euro-Atlantic. As Kemal Kirişçi and Andrew Moffatt state, Turkey's South Caucasus policy has been an example of soft-regionalism, which Kirişçi and Moffatt define as "an informal and pragmatic policy that encourages greater trade, business opportunities, and people to people interactions,"¹⁰ without seeking an exclusive sphere of influence.

Turkey's Responses to Crisis Situations

In the post-Soviet space, Turkey's characteristic as a cautious merchant-diplomat type of foreign policy actor that pursues soft-regionalism has determined its responses to crises and conflict resolution. In this regard, it can be seen that Turkey's responses to Nagorno-Karabakh conflict, the Second Chechen War, the 2003 Rose Revolution, the 2008 Georgia-Russia War, and the Abkhazia and South Ossetia conflicts have all been determined by shared concerns that result in a certain pattern in those responses.¹¹

The Nagorno-Karabakh Conflict

For Turkey, the Nagorno-Karabakh conflict is the most relevant conflict in the region due to Turkey's troubled relations with Armenia and its close affiliation with Azerbaijan. Although Turkey has manifested its support to Azerbaijan since the beginning of the Nagorno-Karabakh conflict, it has never attempted any military involvement in the conflict on the side of Azerbaijan.¹² Furthermore, for about 1.5 years after the collapse of the Soviet Union as a result of which the

10 Kemal Kirişçi and Andrew Moffatt, "Turkey and the South Caucasus: An Opportunity for Soft Regionalism?" *The Brookings Institution* (2016): 69-70, accessed 20 April 2019, <https://www.brookings.edu/research/turkey-and-the-south-caucasus-an-opportunity-for-soft-regionalism/>.

11 For a useful website of the Crisis Analysis in Turkish Foreign Policy Group established in 2013 to study the Turkish responses to foreign policy crises visit, <http://www.tfpcrises.org/index.php>

12 As to that, Armenian scholars often refer to the then Turkish President Turgut Özal's statement that is usually cited as "What harm would it do if a few bombs were dropped on the Armenian side by Turkish troops holding maneuvers on the border?" (see, Alan Cowell, "Turgut Ozal, 66, Dies in Ankara; Pugnacious President of Turkey," *The New York Times*, 18 April 1993, <https://www.nytimes.com/1993/04/18/obituaries/turgut-ozal-66-dies-in-ankara-pugnacious-president-of-turkey.html>) as Turkey's open threat to Armenia. In Turkish sources, this statement is cited differently in different publications, although all give more or less the same idea. Although the minacious content of these words is obvious, it should be kept in mind that Özal made this statement in the first week of April 1993 during the final days of the Armenian offensive on Kelbecer which resulted in the occupation of this region by the Armenian forces. It should be remembered that Kelbecer region is not a part of Nagorno-Karabakh; it lies between Armenia and Karabakh. In 1989, 83.14% of the Kelbecer population was Azerbaijani. These facts reveal that Armenia's occupation of

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clashes over Nagorno-Karabakh evolved into a state-to-state war, Turkey preserved its willingness and hope for the establishment of neighborly relations with Armenia despite deep-rooted controversies between the two countries.¹³ Although there were no diplomatic relations, informal contacts were maintained between the two countries.¹⁴ During the high days of active clashes between Armenia and Azerbaijan, Turkey allowed the shipment of wheat from the EU to Armenia as humanitarian aid through its territory. This lasted until the occupation of Kelbecer in April 1993.¹⁵ Even though Armenia is not a Black Sea littoral state, in 1992 Turkey gave green light to Armenia's membership in the Black Sea Economic Cooperation Organization (BSEC).¹⁶ In addition, instead of engaging in the conflict directly, Turkey tried to engage the international community in the conflict and its resolution by bringing this issue to the agenda of the UN Security Council and the OSCE. In brief, until the Armenian occupation of Kelbecer in April 1993, which occurred when the hopes of the international community about the success of the ongoing peace talks and the prospective finalization of the clashes were high, Turkey adopted a fairly constructive approach. Only after April 1993 did Turkey come to the conclusion that there was no real prospect for the peaceful resolution of the conflict in the short run and the resolution of the controversies between itself and Armenia were not at sight. Accordingly, Turkey adopted a new regional outlook that sought to establish good relations with

Kelbecer was not a defensive, but an openly offensive act carrying the potential of spreading the war beyond Nagorno-Karabakh. If that had happened, the war could have evolved into regional war with the involvement of Turkey, Russia, and Iran. From that angle, Özal's threatening message to Armenia could be assessed as a rightful warning that had prevented Armenia's further offensive and hence such a scenario. As to the threat that the occupation of Kelbecer endangered, it should also be remembered that as a reaction of Armenia's occupation of Kelbecer, on 30 April 1993, UN Security Council adopted the Resolution 822 that "demand[ed] the immediate cessation of all hostilities and hostile acts with a view to establishing a durable cease—fire, as well as *immediate withdrawal of all occupying forces from the Kelbadjar district and other recently occupied areas of Azerbaijan*" (United Nations Security Council Resolution 822 (1993), accessed 20 April 2019, <http://unscr.com/en/resolutions/doc/822>, emphasis added).

- 13 At the heart of this controversy lie different characterizations of the 1915 events. Whereas the Armenian side insists that 1915 events constitutes a genocide, Turkey asserts that genocide is strictly a legal term and only a valid court as defined by the Article 6 of the 1948 Convention on the Prevention and Punishment of the Crime of Genocide can judge whether an act constitutes as the crime of genocide. Since there is no such judgement, Turkey rejects the Armenian claims on the nature of the 1915 events.
- 14 Fiona Hill, Kemal Kirişci and Andrew Moffatt, "Armenia and Turkey: From Normalization to Reconciliation," *Turkish Policy Quarterly* (2015), 132, accessed 20 April 2019, <http://turkishpolicy.com/pdf/Armenia-and-Turkey-From-Normalization-to-Reconciliation-Winter-2015-82b3.pdf>.
- 15 Fiona Hill, Kemal Kirişci and Andrew Moffatt, "Armenia and Turkey: From Normalization to Reconciliation," 132; Thomas De Waal. *Black Garden: Armenia and Azerbaijan through Peace and War* (New York and London: New York University Press, 2003), 213. For the occupation of Kelbecer see footnote 12.
- 16 The BSEC was established as a multilateral political and economic initiative by the Istanbul Summit Declaration and the Bosphorus Statement 25 June 1992. Its charter entered into force on 1 May 1999. Albania, Armenia, Azerbaijan, Bulgaria, Georgia, Greece, Moldova, Romania, Russia, Serbia, Turkey, and Ukraine are the members of the BSEC. As can be seen from this list, the BSEC includes non-littoral countries other than Armenia, as well.

Georgia and Azerbaijan to consolidate stability and a new *status quo* in the region through trade and economic ties.¹⁷

Some observers, particularly Armenian scholars, tend to imply that Turkey's policies have negative effects on the prospects of the resolution of this conflict. These observers habitually underline the closure of the Turkish-Armenian border by Turkey in 1993 and the absence of diplomatic relations between the two countries. As to these claims, it should be noted that the closure of the land border and the absence of diplomatic relations between Armenia and Turkey have different reasons. Turkey closed its land border and airspace in 1993 as a protest to Armenia's occupation of Kelbecer. As stated in footnote 12, this act of Turkey probably prevented the escalation of the war and its transformation into a regional war. In 1995, Turkey reopened its airspace to Armenia and the following year Istanbul-Yerevan and Antalya-Yerevan charter flights began.¹⁸ Accordingly, it is misleading to argue that the closure of the land border has prevented people-to-people and other social interactions between the two peoples. As to that, it should be noted that roughly since 2007, there have been many civil society initiatives between the two countries and despite serious fallacies in their approach and methodology,¹⁹ these initiatives had some success in creating channels of communication and cooperation, particularly until 2012.²⁰ The absence of diplomatic relations, on the other hand, is determined by Armenia's implicit non-recognition of the existing border between the two countries and the territorial integrity of Turkey. As to the background of this controversy, the Preamble of the Armenian Constitution adopted in 1995 (amended in 2005 and 2015) begins with the following statement: "The Armenian people - taking as a basis the fundamental principles of the Armenian Statehood and the nation-wide objectives enshrined in the Declaration on the Independence of Armenia..."²¹ The 11th Article of the

17 For two assessments of Azerbaijan-Georgia-Turkey trilateral relations see, Mitat Çelikpala and Cavid Veliyev, "Azerbaijan-Georgia-Turkey: An Example of a Successful Regional Cooperation," *Center for International and European Studies (CIES) Policy Brief* (November 2015), accessed 20 April 2019, <http://webcache.googleusercontent.com/search?q=cache:enpLOXXKt-UJ:www.khas.edu.tr/cms/cies/dosyalar/files/CIES%2520Policy%2520Brief%252004.pdf+&cd=1&hl=en&ct=clnk&gl=tr>; The Center for Strategic Studies (SAM), *Azerbaijan-Georgia-Turkey: Trilateral Alliance and the Future of Regional Politics: Post-Conference Evaluation Report* (Baku: SAM, 2014).

18 David Shahnazaryan, "Nervous Neighbors: Five Years after the Armenia-Turkey Protocols," *Turkish Policy Quarterly* (2014), 46, accessed April 20, 2019, <http://turkishpolicy.com/Files/ArticlePDF/nervous-neighbors-five-years-after-the-armenia-turkey-protocols-fall-2014-en.pdf>.

19 Aslan Yavuz Şir, "Türk-Ermeni Anlaşmazlığı, İkincil Diplomasi ve 'Ermenistan-Türkiye Normalleşme Programı'," in *Türk-Ermeni Uyuşmazlığı Üzerine Ömer Engin Lütem Konferansları 2018*, ed. Alev Kılıç (Ankara: Terazi, 2019), 49-66, <https://avim.org.tr/images/uploads/Kitap/ermeni-konferanslari-2018-arsiv.pdf>.

20 Aybars Görgülü and Gamze Turgaylı Zengin, "Normalleşme ve Toplumsal Uzlaşma Çabaları Işığında Türkiye-Ermenistan İlişkilerinde Sivil Toplum Kuruluşlarının Rolü," in *Türk-Ermeni Uyuşmazlığı Üzerine Ömer Engin Lütem Konferansları 2018*, ed. Alev Kılıç (Ankara: Terazi, 2019), 29-47, <https://avim.org.tr/images/uploads/Kitap/ermeni-konferanslari-2018-arsiv.pdf>.

21 "The Constitution of the Republic of Armenia," *The President of the Republic of Armenia*, accessed 20 April 2019, <https://guides.library.uwa.edu.au/c.php?g=325280#Internet>.

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Declaration on the Independence of Armenia issued in 1990, which according to the Armenian Constitution sets the “fundamental principles” of the Armenian state and Armenian nation’s “objectives,” states “the Republic of Armenia stands in support of the task of achieving international recognition of the 1915 Genocide in Ottoman Turkey and Western Armenia.”²² In Armenian political terminology, “Western Armenia” refers to Eastern Turkey as one half “historical (greater) Armenia” that according to Armenian narrative expands roughly from the Caspian Sea in the East to Cilicia in the West and from Eastern Black Sea Coast in the North to Mesopotamia in the South. Notably, much of the “historical (greater) Armenia” overlaps with Western Armenia. In order to better grasp the matter here, one should recall that the Armenian nationalist terror organization ASALA’s²³ main objective was to compel Turkey to recognize “the Armenian Genocide” and liberate the “Turkish-occupied Western Armenia.” Upon this background, Turkish foreign policy establishment and a significant portion of the Turkish experts interpret the reference to “Western Armenia” in the Declaration on the Independence of Armenia as an implicit declaration of the territorial claims of Armenia over Turkey. Accordingly, Turkey demands Armenia’s official recognition of the Armenia-Turkey border that was established by the Treaty of Kars in 1921. However, Armenia refuses such recognition by claiming that there is no need for this sort of official declaration and this legitimizes the concerns of the Turkish foreign policy establishment and experts.

The Second Chechen War

When the Second Chechnya War broke out in August 1999,²⁴ Turkey was once again concerned about the stability in the South Caucasus. At the face of the danger of the spread of instability in the Caucasus, in order to eliminate this possibility, Turkey brought forward the idea of the “Caucasus Stability Pact” that would involve Armenia, Azerbaijan, Georgia, Iran, Russia, and Turkey under the OSCE umbrella modeled on the Balkan Stability Pack. However, although the then Armenian President Robert Kocharyan had proposed a Caucasus security system

22 “Armenian Declaration of Independence,” *The Government of the Republic of Armenia*, accessed April 20, 2019, <http://www.gov.am/en/independence/>. In the official website of the Government of the Republic of Armenia, this declaration is titled “Armenian Declaration of Independence”. Yet, Gerard J. Libaridian points out that this declaration was the declaration of the intention of declaration of independence, not the declaration of independence itself. Hence, it is more appropriate to call this text “Armenian Declaration on Independence.” (see, Gerard J. Libaridian, *Armenia at the Crossroads: Democracy and Nationhood in the Post-Soviet Era* (Massachusetts: Blue Crane Books, 1991), 107.

23 Armenian Secret Army for the Liberation of Armenia; founded in Lebanon; active between 1975-1986 in Turkey, USA, Western Europe and the Middle East.

24 The First Chechen War between Russia and Chechnya was fought between 1994 and 1996. This war was finalized by the Khasavyurt ceasefire in August 1996 as a result of which Russian troops withdrew from Chechnya in November 1996. In May 1997, a formal peace treaty was signed between the parties. However, the issue of independence was not ironed out.

complementing the European security system that would encompass the abovementioned states not so long before, Armenia remained halfhearted to Ankara's proposal by arguing that first Armenia-Turkey relations had to be improved.²⁵ Eventually, the idea of the "Caucasus Stability Pact" failed to materialize.

During the ten years of war, Ankara remained distant to the Chechen cause despite the existence of a significant North Caucasian diaspora in Turkey and the public sympathy towards the Chechen cause.²⁶ Russia's then well-documented support to the Kurdish militant separatist group PKK also did not change Turkey's stance. Some observers comment that the eruption of the Second Chechen War resulted in an implicit reciprocity between Turkey and Russia according to which Turkey refrained from supporting the Chechen cause and Russia from supporting the PKK.²⁷

The 2003 Rose Revolution

Turkey feared that the 2003 Rose Revolution might have resulted in a power vacuum, chaos and instability in Georgia. Accordingly, Turkey passively but attentively followed the developments in this country. When it became clear that Mikheil Saakashvili would hold to power as President, Turkey stepped into action to establish relations with the Saakashvili administration. It should also be noted that when tensions arose in Adjara after the Rose Revolution, Turkey, to avoid damaging relations with Georgia, remained disengaged despite the calls of the Ajarian leader Aslan Abashidze, who highlighted the Article 6 of the 1921 Kars Treaty that guarantees cultural and religious rights of the Muslim Ajarian population.²⁸

25 See, "Caucasus Report: January 21, 2000 Volume 3, Number 3" *Radio Free Europe/ Radio Liberty*, January 21, 2010, <https://www.rferl.org/a/1341926.html>; "Chechnya making regional waves," *BBC News*, 17 January 2010, <http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/europe/607084.stm>.

26 For the influence of the North Caucasian diaspora in Turkey on Turkish foreign policy see, Mitat Çelikpala, "From Immigrants to Diaspora: Influence of the North Caucasian Diaspora in Turkey," *Middle Eastern Studies* 42, no.3 (2006): 423-446; Mitat Çelikpala, "Türkiye'de Kafkas Diyasporası ve Türk Dış Politikasına Etkileri," *Uluslararası İlişkiler* 2, no. 5 (2005): 71-108.

27 International Crisis Group, "Russia and Turkey in the Black Sea and the South Caucasus," *Europe Report*, no. 250, accessed April 20, 2019, <https://d2071andvip0wj.cloudfront.net/250-russia-and-turkey.pdf>.

28 The Article 6 of the 1921 Kars Treaty partially states:

Turkey agrees to cede to Georgia suzerainty over the town and port of Batum, with the territory to the north of the frontier, indicated in Article IV of the present Treaty, which formed part of the district of Batum, on condition:

- That the population of the localities specified in the present Article shall enjoy a greater measure of local administrative autonomy, that each community is guaranteed its cultural and religious rights, and that this population may introduce in the above-mentioned places an agrarian system in conformity with its own wishes.

2008 Georgia-Russia War

The real test for Turkey's South Caucasus policy was the Georgian-Russian War in 2008. This war endangered Turkey's trade and economic ties that it had built with the South Caucasus and Central Asian states in previous fifteen years; the existing and prospective energy pipelines in the region, as well as the Montreux regime instituted by the Montreux Convention of 1936, which Turkey perceives as an essential warrant for the Black Sea security and maintains its impartial implementation.

The response of Turkey to the crisis was again to remain distant. Turkey adopted a calculated neutrality during and after the Georgia-Russia War despite its advanced relations with Georgia and Georgia's importance for its strategic objectives. In addition, Turkey suggested creating a regional organization with the name "Caucasus Stability and Cooperation Pact" encompassing Turkey, Armenia, Azerbaijan, Russia, and Georgia. In this context, sidelining the US and the NATO even at the expense of unsettling them, Turkey approached Russia and advocated the inclusion of Armenia in this pact, as well. By holding onto the Montreux Convention, Turkey rejected the proposals for allowing the passage of NATO or US war vessels to the Black Sea.²⁹

Abkhazia and South Ossetia Conflicts

As regards to the *de facto* states in Abkhazia and South Ossetia, Turkey continued its principled position on the primacy of territorial integrity and state sovereignty, despite the well organized and influential Circassian diaspora in Turkey.

29 Whereas the Montreux Convention allows the free passage of the merchant vessels through the Turkish Straits, it subjects the passage of the war vessels to certain restrictions. These restrictions vary depending on whether war vessels belong to Black Sea littoral states or not. Turkish Ministry of Foreign Affairs lists the "principal provisions of the Convention ruling the passages of vessels of war" as follows:

- Aircraft carriers whether belonging to riparian states or not, can in no way pass through the Turkish Straits.
- Only submarines belonging to riparian states can pass through the Turkish Straits, for the purpose of rejoining their base in the Black Sea for the first time after their construction or purchase, or for the purpose of repair in dockyards outside the Black Sea.
- The total number and the maximum aggregate tonnage of all foreign naval forces which may be in course of passage through the Turkish Straits are limited to 9 and 15.000 tons respectively.
- The maximum aggregate tonnage which non-riparian States may have in the Black Sea is 45.000 tons.
- In this regard, the maximum aggregate tonnage of the vessels of war that one non-riparian State may have in the Black Sea is 30.000 tons.
- Vessels of war belonging to non-riparian states cannot stay more than 21 days in the Black Sea.
- Passages through the Turkish Straits are notified to Turkey through diplomatic channels prior to intended passages. The notification time is 8 days for vessels of war belonging to riparian States, and 15 days for those of non-riparian States ("Implementation of the Montreux Convention," *Republic of Turkey Ministry of Foreign Affairs*, accessed 20 April 2019, <http://www.mfa.gov.tr/implementation-of-the-montreux-convention.en.mfa>).

Nonetheless, after 2008 Georgia-Russia War, commercial Turkish vessels continued to sail to Abkhazian ports, which, later on began to drop anchor at Sochi after facing strict measures by the Georgian authorities.³⁰ Overall, Turkey adopted a “balancing” policy between Georgia and Russia.

As this encapsulated overview reveals, whenever a risk or conflict situation emerges, Turkey carefully refrains from taking sides or becoming a party to the conflict. It also refrains from acting on its own and favors the engagement of international organizations and regional states in conflict resolution processes. This attitude can be interpreted as a precaution against inadvertently getting involved in conflicts. Likewise, it can be viewed as a strategy to attain a regional leadership position. Turkey opposes the active engagement of non-regional actors to avoid further escalation of the conflicts and their transformation into conflicts between big powers out of the fear of the possibility of being caught in the middle of conflicts among them. Turkey does not view conflicts as opportunities to materialize its strategic objectives. On the contrary, it views such conflicts as being detrimental to its long-term policy goals.

What to Expect from Turkey with Respect to Prevention and Resolution of the Conflicts in the South Caucasus in Post-Post-Cold War Era

The fundamental requirements for the achievement of Turkey’s strategic objectives in the post-Soviet space, including the South Caucasus, have been stability, peace, and the integration of the post-Soviet countries in the global economic order. Whereas stability and peace are needed for the uninterrupted flow of commercial goods, integration of the post-Soviet countries in the global economic order is a precondition for building and strengthening trade and other economic ties with those countries. The South Caucasus countries are already well integrated in the global economic order. However, stability and peace in the region are still yet to be achieved due to endurance of the protracted conflicts in the South Caucasus. To cap it all, the occupation and the illegal annexation of Crimea by the Russian Federation and the onset of the armed conflict between Kyiv and the Russia-backed separatists in Eastern Ukraine in 2014 has further complicated the sustainability of stability and peace in the Wider Black Sea region. The “Ukraine Crisis” has laid the groundwork for the Wider Black Sea region to turn into a major stage of the rivalry between Russia and the Euro-Atlantic.

As to Turkey’s role in preservation and resolution of the conflicts in the South Caucasus in the contemporary risky and conflict-ridden political atmosphere, we can assess that Turkey, as a pragmatic merchant-diplomat type foreign policy actor

30 For a report on Georgia’s measures see, Jale Nur Ece and Aslıhan Erbaş Açıknel, “Uluslararası Deniz Hukuku’nda Kıyı Devletinin Gemilere El Koyma Yetkisinin Sınırları-Gürcistan’ın Karadeniz’de Seyreden Gemilere El Koyması,” *Ortaoğu Stratejik Araştırmalar Merkezi (ORSAM)*, Rapor No: 28 (February 2011).

that first and foremost seeks stability to promote its economic and trade interests, would carefully refrain from provoking tensions. In addition, we may expect Turkey to strive to smooth down tensions and or at least refrain from acts that would heighten them. A contrary act would mean a dramatic change in Turkish foreign policy. Given that Turkish foreign policy, in general, is status quo-driven, cautious, and steady, such a dramatic revision is quite unlikely.

Certainly, Turkey has gone beyond its traditional line of conduct in its responses to the Syria crisis and departing from this fact, one may argue that there is no guarantee that Turkey would not do the same in the Wider Black Sea region. Although such an argument is justifiable to a certain extent, it misses several points. First, it should be remembered that the main architect of Turkey's Syria policy had been Ahmet Davutoğlu, a professor of international relations who served as the foreign policy advisor to Turkish Prime Ministers (2003-2009), Minister of Foreign Affairs (2009-2014), and Prime Minister (2014-2016). As it is obvious in Davutoğlu's "Stratejik Derinlik: Türkiye'nin Uluslararası Konumu" (2001), a lengthy study that outlines Davutoğlu's foreign policy perspective, he attributes a particular and ideology-driven importance to the Middle East over other regions around Turkey. In contrast, neither the Wider Black Sea region nor the South Caucasus has a similar ideological significance for Davutoğlu and the current AKP government of Turkey.³¹ Secondly, the activities of PKK's Syrian branch PYD/YPG (Partiya Yekîtiya Demokrat/Yekineyen Parastina Gel - The Democratic Union Party / The People's Protection Units) in Syria have been an important factor in Turkey's bold steps in these countries. In the South Caucasus, there are no similar elements threatening the security of Turkey. Thirdly, it should be remembered that Turkey's Syria policy at the beginning of the crisis had proved to be unsuccessful, to say the least, for resulting in the multiplication and deepening of the security threats coming from the southern border of Turkey.³² Having faced with the negative consequences of the Syrian policy, it could be expected that Turkish foreign policy establishment would now be too cautious to get involved in similar adventurous actions in other regions. Likewise, such a policy towards the post-Soviet space including the South Caucasus is very likely to cause criticism and resistance among the Turkish foreign policy experts. One reason of such resistance would be related to the risk of undoing Turkey's achievements in the post-Soviet space since 1991 as a consequence of a revisionist approach. Fourthly, at the time being, the conflict in the Middle East, as well as

31 As mentioned above, in the first years after the collapse of the Soviet Union, some sections of the Turkish foreign policy establishment attributed an ideological significance to the South Caucasus. Yet, the influence of this section did not last long. Although, in the present, too, there are people who view the South Caucasus from similar ideological lenses, their number and influence remains quite limited.

32 As to multiplication and deepening of the security threats coming from the southern border of Turkey, one should mention the PYD/YPG's gaining influence in Northern Syria, and acceptance and support of some Western countries; the jihadist terrorist groups' taking root in this region; the almost uncontrolled flow of immigrants that has turned into a delicate social issue in Turkey; and the deep divisions between regional countries including Turkey, some Western countries and Russia which carries a potential of the eruption of collisions.

Turkey's thorny relations with Washington and Brussels are the major foreign policy issues that the Turkish establishment remains focused on. Under these circumstances, it is very unlikely that Turkey would provoke another complication for its foreign policy.

However, whether we may expect an effective constructive role from Turkey in terms of prevention of the existing conflicts or prevention of the eruption of further conflicts is another question. Although Turkey is a permanent member of the Minsk Group, which is the main international instrument that functions under the auspices of the OSCE to mediate negotiations between Azerbaijan and Armenia for the resolution of the Nagorno-Karabakh conflict, it cannot take any meaningful role within this framework due to Armenia's objections.³³ As to Abkhazia and South Ossetia conflicts, Turkey has taken no part in international initiatives targeting the resolution of these conflicts. Turkey does not run an independent intermediation policy in any of these three conflicts. Overall, formally and practically, Turkey is not an active part of the conflict resolution initiatives in the South Caucasus.³⁴

In the last twenty-eight years, as mentioned above, Turkey has had several attempts to lead formation of regional organizations such as BSEC, Caucasus Stability Pact, and Caucasus Stability and Cooperation Pact in order to procure stability and cooperation, hence to help to calm down and resolve the existing conflicts and avoid new ones. However, it has fallen short of substantiating and operationalizing these multilateral formats. This reveals that Turkey has not been

33 OSCE Minsk Group's other permanent members are Armenia, Azerbaijan, Belarus, France, Germany, Italy, Sweden, Finland, Russia and the US.

Given that Turkey has openly taken the side of Azerbaijan, Armenia's objections to Turkey's active involvement in the peace negotiations could be understood. Yet, France has also proved not to be an impartial mediator; nevertheless, it remains one of the co-chairs of the OSCE Minsk Group together with Russia and the USA. This is a crucial contradiction with respect to the composition the OSCE Minsk Group co-chairs.

The OSCE Minsk Group's ineffectiveness in finding a solution to the Nagorno-Karabakh should also be underlined. The last significant attempt of the OSCE Minsk Group for the resolution of the Nagorno-Karabakh conflict was the articulation of the "Basic Principles for settlement of the Nagorno-Karabakh conflict" in 2007, known as Madrid Principles (for these principles see, "Statement by the OSCE Minsk Group Co-Chair countries," *OSCE*, 10 July 2009, accessed 20 April 2019, <https://www.osce.org/mg/51152>). Since then, OSCE Minsk Group has not been able to make further steps possible. Today, the main concern of the OSCE Minsk Group remains decreased to the prevention of escalation rather than finding a solution to the conflict. Under such circumstances, Russia, although a co-chair of the OSCE Minsk Group has become the main third actor that acts independently within the framework of the resolution of the conflict. It appears that France and the US are incapable of positively contributing to the Nagorno-Karabakh conflict resolution and have already accepted the role of Russia. Overall, the OSCE Minsk Group has already turned into an obsolete framework that does not promise to bring any progress in Nagorno-Karabakh peace process.

34 In the official website of the Turkish Ministry of Foreign Affairs, twenty-three "main issues" are listed under the section "Main Issues" of the Turkish foreign policy. One of the listed issues is "Resolution of Conflicts and Mediation." In this sub-section, Turkey's active involvement in the resolution of the problems in, between or related to Iraq, Lebanon, Kyrgyzstan, Serbia and Croatia, Bosnia-Herzegovina, Afghanistan, Pakistan, Iran, Somalia and Somaliland, and South Philippines are mentioned. However, there is no reference to the conflicts in the South Caucasus (see, "Resolution of Conflicts and Mediation," *Republic of Turkey Ministry of Foreign Affairs*, accessed 20 April 2019, <http://www.mfa.gov.tr/resolution-of-conflicts-and-mediation.en.mfa>).

able to develop a proper understanding³⁵ and effective instruments to lead regional multilateral formats. This ineffectiveness may be interpreted as another deficiency for Turkey with respect to contributing to the prevention and resolution of conflicts in the South Caucasus.³⁶

In order to assess the role that Turkey can play for the resolution and prevention of the conflicts in the South Caucasus, one should also address Turkey's hegemony and soft power capacity, meaning the capacity of producing consent and possessing intellectual, moral, and ideological leadership as opposed to resorting to coercion. As to that, one should remember that in 1990s and 2000s, one of the key factors that enabled Turkey to gain influence in the post-Soviet space was its identification as a model Western country that would help the integration of the post-Soviet states into the Western world. The weakening of Western elements in Turkey's identity and the identification of Turkey with the Western world since the early 2010s or so has diminished Turkey's hegemonic power, which also has eroded Turkey's ability to contribute to the resolution of the conflicts or prevention of the eruption of new ones. It is improbable for Turkey to regain this lost hegemonic power by further developing relations with Russia, since post-Soviet countries do not need Turkey either as a model or as a bridge to link themselves with the "Russian world."

Yet above all, we must recognize that the post-Cold War unipolar liberal order has already come to its end. The occupation and illegal annexation of Crimea in 2014 by the Russian Federation has ended this episode in contemporary history. The newly emerging post-2014 order could be defined as "post-post-Cold War era." The post-post-Cold War era is characterized by an escalating struggle between Russia and the Euro-Atlantic for global dominance. China has also become another major actor in this respect. It can be seen that the first episodes of the post-post-Cold War era struggles have taken place in the post-Soviet space by the utilization of instruments and methods that are coined by the term "hybrid," which has become the latest buzzword in the literature. The Baltics, Eastern Europe, and the Wider Black Sea region encompassing the South Caucasus in the post-Soviet space are the main venues of this struggle. In this context, the stakes are too high and Turkey's capacity as a regional middle power to contribute to the prevention and resolution of conflicts is limited irrespective of the degree of its willingness to do so.

35 One of the reasons of the failure of developing purposeful outlook might be related to Turkey's approach to bring back the existing *status quo* instead of creating another one because of the above mentioned traditionalistic character of the Turkish foreign policy.

36 As to that point, one should be aware of the imperfection of relying solely on an actor-centered approach in explaining states' capabilities in the international domain. In order to escape from this imperfection, following the premises of the neo-realist school of the international relations discipline, one should also take into account the systemic factors that condition states' actions. Accordingly, in evaluating Turkey's capabilities and deficiencies, systemic factors should also be bore in mind, the examination of which is beyond the scope of this article.

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THE HUMANITARIAN CONSEQUENCES OF THE KARABAKH, ABKHAZIA AND SOUTH OSSETIA CONFLICTS: THE CASE OF AZERBAIJANI AND GEORGIAN IDPS

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Introduction

In the late 1980s and early 1990s, the South Caucasus became a region of ethnic tension. The armed conflict between Azerbaijan and Armenia over Nagorno-Karabakh and the armed conflicts of Abkhazia and South Ossetia with Georgia resulted in more than 1.5 million people's displacement, either as refugees or as internal displaced persons (IDPs). The vast majority of these displaced populations were composed of Georgian and Azerbaijani IDPs whose situation differed from refugees. While the rights and the status of the refugees are protected and guaranteed under the multilateral treaty of the United Nations (UN), the Convention Relating to the Status of Refugees (CRSR) in 1951 and the Refugee Protocol in 1967,¹ IDPs lack such a legally binding status at the international level and they do not benefit from a specific international legal framework. According to the United Nations Guiding Principles on Internal Displacement (1998), IDPs are defined as:

Persons or groups of persons who have been forced or obliged to flee or to leave their homes or places of habitual residence, in particular as a result of or in order to avoid the effects of armed conflict, situations of generalized violence, violations of human rights or natural or human-made disasters, and who have not crossed an internationally recognized state border.²

Although this definition frames the meaning of the IDP concept, neither it nor the following guiding principles are legally binding. For this reason, many Azerbaijani and Georgian IDPs still undergo low living standards and integration problems. In other words, one of the main reasons of their ongoing struggle is related to their status which confine their rehabilitation and integration mostly under to the responsibility of their respective states, Azerbaijan and Georgia. However, due to the political and economic instability followed by the dissolution of the Soviet Union, both Georgia and Azerbaijan experienced difficulties regarding the implementation of necessary policies to sustain better conditions for their IDPs; hence the initiatives that are taken by the international actors did not comprehensively meet the needs of the internally displaced communities. All these factors also posed a challenge to the integration processes of IDPs. Thus, the aim of this paper is to focus on the consequences of the frozen conflicts in the South Caucasus within the context of internal displacement.

A Short History of the Migration Waves of the South Caucasus

Starting from the last years of the Soviet Union, the South Caucasus witnessed a series of migration waves caused by the ethnic conflicts between different parties. One of the main reasons of these conflicts was the power vacuum which was followed by the *glasnost* and *perestroika* policies of the leader of the Soviet Union Mikhail Gorbachev. These policies caused a rise in nationalism among the satellite states of the Union.³ The demands of independence and national sovereignty, however, were not sought after solely by the titular nations. Many minority nations claiming their antiquity and right to the regions they were inhabiting demanded separation from their parent states.⁴ Consequently, in the late 1980s and early 1990s, the South Caucasus faced three major ethnic conflicts, and during the

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- 1 Frances Nicholson and Judith Kumin, "A Guide to International Refugee Protection and Building State Asylum Systems," *Refworld* 27 (2017), accessed 04 December 2018, <https://www.refworld.org/docid/5a9d57554.html>.
 - 2 Francis M Deng, "Guiding principles on internal displacement," *International Migration Review* 33, no.2 (June 1999): 484, doi:10.1177/019791839903300209.
 - 3 Peter Zwick, "New Thinking and New Foreign Policy under Gorbachev," *PS: Political Science & Politics* 22, no. 2 (1989): 216; Svante E. Cornell, "The Nagorno-Karabakh Conflict," *Report no. 46*, Department of East European Studies Uppsala Universitet, (1999): 12.
 - 4 Ayşegül Aydıngün, and Ali Asker, "Gürcistan: De Jure Üniter, De Facto Parçalı," In *Bağımsızlıklarının Yirminci Yılında Azerbaycan, Gürcistan ve Ukrayna*, edited by İsmail Aydıngün and Çiğdem Balım, (Ankara: Atatürk Kültür Merkezi, 2012): 124-125.

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ongoing process, in 2008, a war broke out between Russia and Georgia over South Ossetia.

The first ethnic tension occurred between Armenia and Azerbaijan between the years of 1988 and 1994 over the Nagorno-Karabakh region of Azerbaijan resulting in 25 to 30 thousand deaths and 1.2 to 1.5 million people's displacement on both sides.⁵ According to the related literature, the numbers of the displaced Armenians and Azerbaijanis were estimated around 350 to 360 thousand and 1 to 1.2 million people respectively at the end of the war in 1994.⁶ Artak Ayunts states that the displaced Armenians came to Armenia in several migration waves from February 1988 to 1994 and the majority of them were refugees from Azerbaijan (around 280,000 refugees) and from Nagorno-Karabakh (20,000) and the rest were IDPs from the bordering villages with Azerbaijan (70,000). He further argues that there are still several thousand of IDPs who exist in Armenia; however, his argument contradicts with the data provided by UNHCR which indicates that currently there no IDPs exist in Armenia.⁷

The first forced migration flow of the displaced Azerbaijanis, on the other hand, started in the late 1987 and early 1988 from Kafan and Megri in Armenia.⁸ When the Armenians demanded Nagorno-Karabakh by the early 1991, the tension escalated causing another 200,000 Azerbaijani refugees' displacement from Armenia. During the mid-1992, the whole of the Azerbaijanis (some 40,000 people) were driven out from Nagorno-Karabakh by the Armenian forces. In the ongoing period, another 47,000 Azerbaijanis were forced to leave the Lachin district which is situated between Nagorno-Karabakh and Armenia. The biggest population flow occurred by the end of 1993, when Armenian armed forces further advanced in the Azerbaijani territory causing some 780,000 Azerbaijani IDPs to leave their homelands.⁹ Azerbaijan authorities then officially stated that the 20 percent of its territory was occupied and a total of 1 million refugees and IDPs fled to Azerbaijan proper.¹⁰ Although in the following years some of the displaced

5 Thomas De Waal, "Remaking the Nagorno-Karabakh peace process," *Survival* 52, no.4 (2010): 159.

6 MacFarlane, S. Neil, and Larry Minear. *Humanitarian Action and Politics: The Case of Nagorno-Karabakh*. Thomas J. Watson Jr. Institute for International Studies, (1997): 20.

7 For further information see: Zuzanna Brunarska, and Agnieszka Weinar, *Asylum seekers, refugees and IDPs in the EaP countries: recognition, social protection and integration: an overview*, (Research Report 2013/45, San Domenico di Fiesole: EUI CARIM-East, 2013): 6; Artak Ayunts, (2011): 23.

8 Thomas De Waal, *Black Garden: Armenia and Azerbaijan Through Peace and War*, 10th Year Anniversary Edition, NYU press, (2013), 18-19; Azer Allahveranov, and Emin Huseynov, "Costs and Benefits of Labour Mobility between the EU and the Eastern Partnership Partner Countries - Country Report: Azerbaijan," *CASE Network Studies and Analyses No. 460* (2013): 27.

9 Tabib Huseynov, "Return and Its Alternatives: A Case Study on the Armenian Azerbaijani Conflict." *Forced Displacement in the Nagorno Karabakh Conflict: Return and Its Alternatives* (2011): 33.

10 In addition to the refugees and IDPs of the conflict, Azerbaijan hosted 29 thousand Meskhetian Turks who fled from the pogrom occurred in Uzbekistan in 1989. Svante E. Cornell, *The Nagorno-Karabakh Conflict, Report no. 46, Department of East European Studies Uppsala University* (1999): 14.

returned to the frontline areas that were retaken by the Azerbaijani forces; Azerbaijani government announces that there are still 1.2 million of displaced people, of whom around 789,000 were IDPs from the Nagorno-Karabakh and the surrounding 7 districts.¹¹ According to Furio de Angelis, the UNHCR representative to Azerbaijan, there are approximately 630,000 IDPs and more than 300,000 refugees residing in Azerbaijan currently.¹²

In the post-Soviet Georgia, there have been two major periods of ethnic conflicts which led two large-scale displacements. The first and biggest forced migration flow occurred between the years of 1991 and 1993. The Georgian IDPs who were forced to flee their place of origin during this period are frequently referred to as “old IDPs”. The second group, who are referred to as the “new IDPs” were displaced during the August War in 2008.¹³ In the aftermath of Georgia’s declaration of independence in 1991, secessionist conflicts broke out first in South Ossetia (1991-1992) and then in Abkhazia (1992-1993). Until the signing of a ceasefire agreement in 1994, both conflicts caused more than 300,000 people’s displacement. Some 240,000 displaced were from Abkhazia and were predominantly ethnic Georgians. Although it is assumed that during the conflict there were also Abkhaz IDPs, their displacement was transient and they returned to their place of origin soon after the conflict.¹⁴ The other 60,000 displaced people were from South Ossetia, of whom 40,000 were ethnic Osset refugees who fled to North Ossetia and the remaining 20,000 were IDPs belonging to both ethnic Ossets (10,000 people) and ethnic Georgians (10,000 people). Some IDPs have returned to their homelands in the following years.¹⁵ It is estimated that around 45,000-50,000 IDPs from Abkhazia have returned to the Gali district of Abkhazia; nevertheless, since most of their houses were either destroyed or squatted by other people, they had to resettle elsewhere. These people are defined as IDP-like by United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR).¹⁶ According to the UNHCR, the IDPs, who were registered in Georgia, were around 212,000 in April 2008.¹⁷

11 “The Occupied Territory,” The State Committee for Affairs of Refugees and Internally Displaced Persons of the Republic of Azerbaijan, accessed 19 December 2018, <http://www.qmkdk.gov.az/en/pages/16.html>.

12 Killion Munyama, “Humanitarian needs and rights of internally displaced persons in Europe,” Council of Europe Doc. 13973, 22 April 2016, <http://websitepace.net/documents/19863/4249864/20180321-Rapport-Munyam-EN.pdf/a2e414cb-61d4-4c6b-be09-b622a18db5e0>.

13 Erin Mooney, “From Solidarity to Solutions: The Government Response to Internal Displacement in Georgia,” *From Responsibility to Response: Assessing National Approaches to Internal Displacement* (2011): 179-230.

14 The numbers of the Abkhaz IDPs are unknown. See: “Protection of Internally Displaced Persons in Georgia: A Gap Analysis,” *UNCHR*, (July, 2009): 6, <http://www.unhcr.org/4ad827f59.pdf>.

15 Some 5 thousand IDPs from South Ossetia also have returned to their place of origin with the assistance of UNHCR. Mooney, (2011): 179.

16 “Status of Internally Displaced Persons and Refugees from Abkhazia, Georgia and the Tskhinvali Region/South Ossetia, Georgia,” *UN* (2013). http://www.un.org/ga/search/view_doc.asp?symbol=A/67/869.

17 “Protection of Internally Displaced Persons in Georgia: A Gap Analysis,” *UNCHR* (2009):6 <http://www.unhcr.org/4ad827f59.pdf>.

The second major forced migration was occurred right after the August War in 2008. The war caused more than 158,000 people's displacement in and out of South Ossetia. While some 30,000 people displaced within South Ossetia (mostly consisting of ethnic Ossets), the other 128,000 displaced were predominantly ethnic Georgians who fled to Georgia proper. Some of these forced migrants became IDP for a second time.¹⁸ Although most of the "new IDPs" had returned to their homeland, some 22,000 IDPs settled in the inner parts of Georgia.¹⁹ As officially stated by Georgia's Ministry of Internally Displaced Persons from the Occupied Territories, Accommodation and Refugees of Georgia (MRA) in 2014, the number of the registered IDPs was 259,247 in total.²⁰

Today, the internally displaced populations in both countries constitute a significant portion of their societies, which are about 7 percent of both Azerbaijan's and Georgia's general populations and which make them some of the highest per capita concentrations of IDPs in the world. In this context, it is of importance to look at the international support and the initiatives that are taken by the Azerbaijani and Georgian governments regarding their effects on the current situation of the IDPs in both Azerbaijan and Georgia.

International Assistance and the State Policies towards to the IDPs of Azerbaijan and Georgia

Since the beginning of the first migration wave in the South Caucasus, the international assistance concentrated on three dimensions. In the early years, providing accommodation, necessary protection, and assistance to IDPs was an immediate challenge. Thus, the first dimension was to provide war-related relief aids such as food, water, clothing, medical support and so on. However, the distribution of these aids drew criticism either for being disproportionately small in terms of the needs of the conflicting parties or being perceived as a 'simultaneous explosion' of 'standardized aid kits' which, in time did not meet the real needs of the IDPs.²¹

18 "Protection of Internally Displaced Persons in Georgia: A Gap Analysis," 2009: 5.

19 Amnesty International "Civilians in the Aftermath of the War: The Georgia- Russia Conflict One Year on", (London: Amnesty International Publications, July 2009), https://amnesty.dk/media/2025/civilians_in_the_aftermath_of_war.pdf.

20 Ministry of Internally Displaced Persons from the Occupied Territories, "Number of Registered IDPs- Statistics by Region," Accommodation and Refugees of Georgia (MRA), accessed 30 March 2018. <http://mra.gov.ge/eng/static/55>.

21 S. Neil MacFarlane, "Humanitarian Action and Conflict in the Southern Caucasus: the Cases of Abkhazia (Georgia) and Nagorno-Karabakh (Azerbaijan)," *Cahiers d'Études sur la Méditerranée Orientale et le monde Turco-Iranien (CEMOTI)* 29, (2000): 57; Elizabeth Cullen Dunn, "The chaos of humanitarian aid: adhocrcy in the Republic of Georgia," *Humanity: An International Journal of Human Rights, Humanitarianism, and Development* 3, no. 1 (2012): 10-12.

The second dimension of the international assistance was about the resolution of the conflicts and facilitating the return of the IDPs safely to their places of origin. Although Azerbaijan and Georgia turned to the international community in an effort to have their mediation with respect to the recognition of their territorial integrities, international efforts stayed at ‘modest’ levels.²² As the *de facto* states seemed to have no intention to break the status quo of the frozen conflicts²³ and the EU has showed reluctance in participating to resolution processes²⁴, there has been quite limited improvement on meeting the conditions of IDPs’ return.

The third dimension was to constitute social reintegration of the IDPs to their host communities. This approach was adopted in the first decade of 2000s, especially after the war in 2008. In this sense, with the help of donor governments and international organizations and through the intermediation of nongovernmental organizations (NGOs), IDPs started to be provided with microcredits, vocational trainings, and psychological assistance.²⁵ In recent years, due to the engagement of international donors to other humanitarian crises in the other parts of the world, there has been a decline in funding towards the region. Since especially Georgia is highly dependent on the donor assistance, a visible reduction occurred in the implementation of the policies that aim to improve the conditions and the integration processes of these communities.²⁶

Regarding the policies carried out by Azerbaijan and Georgia, both countries had gone through two similar periods. Contemporary initiatives taken by the both states for IDPs differ by the policies promulgated in the early years of independence. The dissolution of the Soviet Union brought massive economic and political challenges. Thus, in the course of 1990s, in addition to the political instability, the decline of industrial and agricultural production affected not only the fleeing communities but also the Azerbaijani and Georgian nations as a whole. During this period, both countries lacked the essential state capacity in providing necessary social services. They especially had major struggles about accommodating IDPs adequately, as a result of which most of the IDPs had to settle in a variety of compounds such as deserted or unfinished buildings, hotels, dormitories, hospitals, and other state facilities. Furthermore, the vast majority of

22 Ondrej Ditrych, “Identities, Interests and the Resolution of the Abkhaz Conflict,” *Caucasian Review of International Affairs* 2, no. 3 (2008): 8.

23 Helge Blakkisrud, and Pål Kolstø, “Dynamics of de facto statehood: the South Caucasian de facto states between secession and sovereignty,” *Southeast European and Black Sea Studies* 12, no. 2 (2012): 293.

24 Licinia Simão, “The problematic role of EU democracy promotion in Armenia, Azerbaijan and Nagorno-Karabakh,” *Communist and Post-Communist Studies* 45, no.1-2 (2012): 193.

25 Dunn, (2012): 1.

26 Killion Munyama. “Humanitarian needs and rights of internally displaced persons in Europe,” 22 April 2016, Council of Europe Doc. 13973, accessed 30 December 2018, <https://reliefweb.int/sites/reliefweb.int/files/resources/20180321-Rapport-Munyam-EN.pdf>

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1993 IDPs of Azerbaijan had to settle in even worse conditions such as “tent camps and abandoned railway cars”.²⁷

In addition to the absence of capacity, both states were expecting that the IDPs would return to their homelands eventually. This expectation was also a matter of national sovereignty. For instance, the first response of Azerbaijani government towards IDPs and refugees differed due to this reason. Since there was no expectation of their return, Azerbaijani refugees were provided immediate response and their integration process occurred more easily compared to IDPs. They promptly took full citizenship and full property rights to the houses they settled, while IDPs were provided with temporary shelters.²⁸

However, things started to change for Azerbaijan by the late 1990s due to the fact that the state economy began to stabilize thanks to its energy revenues. In 2001, a considerable portion from the State Oil Fund started to be allocated for the IDPs.²⁹ Although the prior remedy for Azerbaijan continued to be the withdrawal of Armenian forces from the occupied territories of Azerbaijan and thus allow the IDPs return to their homes,³⁰ there has been a shift in the state policy towards more durable solutions. In 1999, Azerbaijan government passed a law on IDPs which not only defined their status but also regulated their rights. When Ilham Aliyev came to power, he extensively dealt with the IDP issue. As an example, in 2004, a presidential decree was passed inhibiting the eviction of IDPs from their dwellings.³¹ Furthermore, in 2007, the last tent camps (12 in total) were closed and the residents of these camps were relocated to newly established compact settlements.³² Currently, the government of Azerbaijan provides approximately 250,000 IDPs with new housings and social facilities.³³

In terms of durable solutions, due to its economic insufficiency and donor dependency as well as the war with Russia, Georgia followed Azerbaijan with a delay. In 2007, Georgia implemented a governmental strategy which mainly

27 Tabib Huseynov. “Return and Its Alternatives: A Case Study on the Armenian Azerbaijani Conflict.” *Forced Displacement in the Nagorno Karabakh Conflict: Return and Its Alternatives* (2011): 35.

28 Yulia Gureyeva-Aliyeva, and Tabib Huseynov. “Can You be an IDP for Twenty Years?: A Comparative Field Study on the Protection Needs and Attitudes Towards Displacement Among IDPs and Host Communities in Azerbaijan.” *Brookings Institution-London School of Economics Project on Internal Displacement*, (2011): 6.

29 Tabib Huseynov, “Return and Its Alternatives: A Case Study on the Armenian Azerbaijani Conflict.” *Forced Displacement in the Nagorno Karabakh Conflict: Return and Its Alternatives* (2011): 35.

30 “Refugees and IDPs,” Republic of Azerbaijan, Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Accessed 29 December 2018. <http://www.mfa.gov.az/en/content/117>.

31 Arif Yunusov, “Asylum Seekers, Refugees, and IDPs in Azerbaijan: Issues and Perspectives.[on-line],” *East Project–Consortium for Applied Research on International Migration (CARIM)*, (2013): 3.

32 “Azerbaijani refugees and IDPs - World Refugee Day” 20 June 2017, *Azvision.az*. accessed 28 October 2018, <https://en.azvision.az/news/67625/azerbaijani-refugees-and-idps-world-refugee-day.html>.

33 Munyama, Humanitarian needs and rights of internally displaced persons in Europe, (2016), <https://reliefweb.int/sites/reliefweb.int/files/resources/20180321-Rapport-Munyam-EN.pdf>.

focused on ensuring the return of the IDPs to their homeland safely and on improving their living conditions. The first attempt at implementing this policy, however, failed to yield the intended results.³⁴ Therefore, in 2012, the Georgian government had a new action plan which aimed to solve the accommodation problem and reduce the governmental dependency of IDPs.³⁵ In addition, Georgia also passed a law in 2014 that defines and regulates the status and the rights of the IDP community.³⁶ According to the information provided by the Georgian authorities to UNHCR, around 1,200 IDP families were settled in new compact settlements, and via privatization, another 1,500 took the full ownership of their living spaces in Georgia. The updated figures indicate that as of 2017, around 36,000 families have been provided with accommodation and another 53,000 families are in the waiting list to be housed under the durable Housing Program of the Georgian government.³⁷

Conclusion

The new policies of Azerbaijan and Georgia indicate that they are taking considerable steps to improve the conditions of IDPs. Although the socio-economic gap between IDPs and the host communities started to decrease, this gap has still not adequately decreased despite the years since the conflicts that created IDPs. Unfortunately, a great amount of the IDPs still live in collective centers which are overcrowded and in poor conditions. For instance, while the dwellings the Georgian IDPs are 2 to 3 times smaller than the houses of their general populations,³⁸ 42,5% of the IDP families in Azerbaijan live in a single room houses, which is almost 5 times more than the host community.³⁹

Another accommodation problem is about the location of the new settlements. The IDP communities in Azerbaijan and in Georgia are spread to the all regions of both countries. However, due to the economic concerns and possible job opportunities, most of the IDPs came to big cities, especially to the capitals during

34 “Protection of Internally Displaced Persons in Georgia: A Gap Analysis”, *UNHCR* (2009): 7.

35 “Action Plan for the Implementation of the State Strategy on IDPs during 2012-2014,” Ministry of Internally Displaced Persons from the Occupied Territories, Accommodation and Refugees of Georgia, accessed 28 October 2018, <http://mra.gov.ge/res/docs/201311211211332665.pdf>.

36 “Law of Georgia on Internally Displaced Persons – Persecuted from the Occupied Territories of Georgia,” Ministry of Internally Displaced Persons from the Occupied Territories, Accommodation and Refugees of Georgia, accessed 28 October 2018, <http://mra.gov.ge/res/docs/201406171444442634.pdf>.

37 Munyama, Humanitarian needs and rights of internally displaced persons in Europe, (2016), <https://reliefweb.int/sites/reliefweb.int/files/resources/20180321-Rapport-Munyam-EN.pdf>

38 Akaki Zoidze and Mamuka Djibuti, “IDP Health Profile Review in Georgia,” *UNDP Tbilisi* (2004): 27.

39 Gureyeva-Aliyeva, and Huseynov. “Can You be an IDP for Twenty Years?”: A Comparative Field Study on the Protection Needs and Attitudes Towards Displacement Among IDPs and Host Communities in Azerbaijan. Brookings Institution-London School of Economics Project on Internal Displacement, (2011): 13.

their migration flows. In order to prevent further population growth in the capitals, both states preferred establishing new settlements at the remote areas or outskirts of the cities. Furthermore, in Azerbaijan, since IDPs are expected to eventually return their place of origin, they have temporary use right of their dwellings rather than full ownership. This restricts IDPs from inheriting or selling these properties and impedes their settlement to places other than their current place of residence. Although IDPs have freedom of movement and choice for their place of residence, leaving the places that are provided by the government may cause them to lose their access to aid and social benefits regarding their IDP status.⁴⁰ That is why some family members leave for job opportunities in the city centers while the rest of the families stay behind, which results in fragmented families. Fragmented families are also prevalent for Georgian IDPs; many family members work abroad and leave their elders and children behind.

Moreover, since the wars “ruptured” IDPs from their normal routine and forced them to leave all sorts of social and economic acquisitions behind, financial hardships became an IDP reality in both countries. Coming into already established social networks further inhibited them to find occupations related to their proficiencies. Thus, most of the IDPs do not have regular jobs and are dependent on governmental allowances. In time, these allowances may create frustration between host communities and IDPs that some segments of the host communities consider IDPs as economic burden and even the slightest state support becomes a source of resentment for them. Such facts undermine the relations of IDPs with the locals, hence IDPs mostly think that they are not accepted and welcomed. This has led them to further isolation and pushed them to rely on their own IDP communities.

To conclude, difficulties were experienced by both Azerbaijan and Georgia regarding the implementation of necessary policies for the integration of IDPs. Although both countries took important steps to provide better conditions to them, especially starting from the early 2000s, many IDPs still face economic and social struggles on a daily basis and a significant part of them are still situated at lower echelons of their societies. What’s more, IDPs, who can neither return to their homelands nor move on, still remain in limbo. All these facts overall still pose a threat to their integration processes even though 30 years have passed from the first migration wave and even though they share the same ethnicity with their host societies.

40 Huseynov, “Return and Its Alternatives: A Case Study on the Armenian Azerbaijani Conflict,” (2011): 35.

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PROTRACTED CONFLICTS IN THE FORMER SOVIET UNION: MYTHS AND LESSONS FROM 30 YEARS OF PEACE PROCESSES

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As the Soviet Union collapsed, five secessionist armed conflicts broke out on its former territory: Karabakh, Abkhazia, South Ossetia, Chechnya, and Transdnistria.¹

None have been resolved peacefully. The international community has been involved over decades in peace processes to resolve all five, without lasting success. The Chechnya conflict was managed by means other than negotiation.

This paper will discuss similarities and differences among the conflicts and correlate them to the experience of their peace processes. All of these conflicts were nationalist in nature, and all were about control of land. But analysis of the conflicts is often beset by myths based on unexamined assumptions. Let us look at those assumptions, which can be found in approaches to some of the overarching differences and similarities.

¹ This paper will not deal with non-secessionist conflicts such as the Tajik and Georgian civil wars.

I. Differences in Origins and Early Development

As the Soviet Union collapsed, ethnic groups asserted territorial rights as the most important expression of their nationalism. The titular nationalities in Union Republics saw ethnic sovereignty as the expression of their nationhood: Gamsakhurdia's slogan in Georgia, for example, was "Georgia for the Georgians." The smaller nationalities saw having their own territory as a defense against those titular nationalities. This process took place not only in non-Russian republics, where the rule of Moscow was replaced by, say, Uzbeks in Tashkent or Azerbaijanis in Baku; but also inside the Russian Federation, where forces in Tatarstan militated for secession and Chechnya declared its independence. Many of the nationalist movements were an existential threat to the Soviet Union: they led the titular nationalities of Union Republics such as Georgia, Moldova, Ukraine, and the Baltics to call for disunion. In response, pro-Soviet nationalisms arose among peoples who feared their republics would secede. These were encouraged by Soviet authorities to weaken the anti-Soviet nationalists: among the pro-Soviet movements were Transdnistrians, South Ossetians, Abkhaz, and pro-Russian elements in Crimea.

And here we see a lasting difference among the protracted conflicts: the Karabakh movement and Chechnya's declaration of independence were *anti-Soviet*: they opposed the Soviet status quo. In contrast, nationalist movements in Abkhazia and South Ossetia, along with the Transdnistrians, were *pro-Soviet*: they wanted to *preserve* the Soviet Union and *prevent secession* by Georgia and Moldova. This divide has shaped relationships to this day. There have been close ties among the Abkhaz, South Ossetians, and Transdnistrians, especially before Russia recognized the former two, but Karabakh has been an outlier.

Another lasting difference: the course of armed hostilities left the protracted conflicts with varied dynamics of contact between the populations. At one end of the spectrum is Karabakh, where there is virtually no contact – other than military hostilities – between the sides in conflict. At the other end of the spectrum is the Transdnistria conflict, in which the populations are in constant contact for trade, family visits, transit, tourism, etc. The atmosphere is so relaxed that when Transdnistrian "President" Evgeniy Shevchuk was voted out of office in 2016 and faced legal troubles at home, he simply and very comfortably moved to Chişinău, the Moldovan capital. Most of the 2335 persons moving to Transdnistria last year were Moldovans taking advantage of the lower pension age.² The conflicts in Georgia are between these two poles: Abkhazia more resembles Karabakh, except that the ethnic Georgian population in Gali provides a link between the two sides; there is traffic between the Georgians living on both banks of the Enguri river. The South Ossetia conflict was closer to the

2 *Morning News Digest of the OSCE Mission in Moldova*, November 2018.

Transdnestrian model, at least until the 2008 war: Georgian and Ossetian villages were interspersed, and Ossetian traders were able to buy and sell inside Georgia proper. There was also close collaboration on various criminal enterprises.

II. Similarities in Origins and Early Development

A prevailing theoretical approach masks one similarity among the protracted conflicts that remain today and the new ones that have appeared in Ukraine: the analysis of these conflicts as a problem of “unrecognized states.” An extensive literature along these lines has emerged in recent years, based on the underlying assumption that, worldwide, these polities – including conflicts in the former Soviet space such as Nagorny Karabakh, Abkhazia, South Ossetia, and Transdnestria – desire independence and that their self-determination struggle aimed to further their independence.³ For example, one academic who has written extensively on unrecognized states maintains that that “these entities are at least attempting to look like, and function as, states. The leadership is making a claim to independent *statehood*, and they have achieved the first level of state-building: territorial control.”⁴ Again, the same writer talks of “...unrecognized states... realizing the separatist dreams of (de facto) independent statehood...”⁵ A highly theoretical article from U.S. writers maintains, “The secessionists seek recognized statehood, the home state seeks reunification, and these demands do not vary over time.”⁶

These assumptions, however, are flatly contradicted by the historical record. With the exception of the now extinct secession of Chechnya, *none of the protracted conflicts on the territory of the former Soviet Union originated as a struggle for independence*. Rather, all of them, including the Karabakh, Transdnestrian, Abkhazian and South Ossetian conflicts, began as attempts to become part of a polity other than the one to which Soviet and later international law assigned them: to change which state they belonged to, not to have a state of their own. The earliest, the Karabakh conflict, began with a 20 February 1988 resolution by the

3 For compendia sampling the literature, see Nina Caspersen and Gareth Stansfield, eds., *Unrecognized States in the International System*, London, Routledge, 2010; and Eiki Berg and James Ker-Lindsay, eds., *The Politics of International Interaction with de facto States: Conceptualising Engagement without Recognition*, London, Routledge, 2018. Berg and Ker-Lindsay also provide a listing of the literature in their “Introduction: A Conceptual Framework for Engagement with de facto States,” in *Ethnopolitics*, 2018 Vol. 17, No. 4, 335–342, <https://doi.org/10.1080/17449057.2018.1495362>.

4 Nina Caspersen, *Unrecognized States: The Struggle for Sovereignty in the Modern International System*, Polity Press, Cambridge (UK), 2012, p. 6.

5 *Ibid.*, p. 51.

6 That is the model on which the study’s game theory explicitly rests; it presumably attempts to reflect reality. Kristy Buzard, Benjamin A T Graham, and Ben Horne: “Unrecognized States: A Theory of Self-Determination and Foreign Influence,” in *The Journal of Law, Economics, and Organization*, Volume 33, Issue 3, 1 August 2017, Pages 578–611, <https://doi.org/10.1093/jleo/eww017>.

Nagorny Karabakh Autonomous Oblast' Soviet demanding the transfer of the region from the Azerbaijan SSR to the Armenian SSR.⁷ This demand for “*miatsum*,” or unification, echoed in Armenia by the Karabakh Committee, was retained until the collapse of the Soviet Union and the emergence of Azerbaijan and Armenia as independent states. This formally occurred via the Alma-Ata Declaration of 21 December 1991,⁸ in which Union Republics of the Soviet Union, including Azerbaijan and Armenia, recognized one another as independent and sovereign within their Soviet-era borders – i.e., by implication with Nagorny Karabakh inside Azerbaijan. The Alma-Ata Declaration was followed over the next months by international recognition and accession to international organizations on the same basis. Armenia would have been in a vulnerable position both with respect to international law and in its relations with the international community had it continued to insist on possession of Nagorny Karabakh. The demand for *miatsum* was dropped and replaced by a demand for Karabakh independence.

Overtly secessionist activities in Abkhazia, South Ossetia, and Moldova arose later; these were pro-Soviet in nature, and the separatist movements aimed at keeping the territories they controlled within the Soviet Union, whatever might happen to Georgia and Moldova. Once the Soviet Union collapsed, both Abkhazia and South Ossetia wished to join their ethnic kin in the Russian Federation.⁹ Abkhaz separatist leader Vladislav Ardzinba recounted to American diplomats (and others) that for a small people such as the Abkhaz, the best choice for survival and cultural autonomy lay in being one among many small minorities in a large country such as Russia – as they had been in the Soviet Union – as opposed to being a large minority in a small country such as Georgia. Ossetians had for two centuries derived benefits from serving as Moscow's principal outpost in the Caucasus, affording protection from the larger neighbors who had dominated Ossetia for centuries. North Ossetia's strategic value for Russia guaranteed South Ossetians influence they could not hope to achieve inside Georgia. Transdnistrians viewed themselves as the furthest outpost of the Russian Empire of the days of *Generalissimus* Suvorov (whose image is everywhere in Tiraspol) and, though Transdnistria is multi-ethnic, the vast majority – including Moldovans, the largest ethnic group – favored their Soviet heritage over a union with Romania, which they saw as a real threat when the USSR collapsed.

With the Soviet collapse, the Russia-centered aspirations of secessionists in all three conflicts were dashed, as Karabakh's for Armenia had been, by the realities

7 The official newspaper *Sovetskiy Karabakh* of 21 February 1988, cited by Thomas de Waal, *Black Garden: Armenia and Azerbaijan through Peace and War*, NYU Press, New York and London, 2003, p. 10.

8 Text available at <http://www.cis.minsk.by/page.php?id=178>.

9 Abkhaz is related the languages of many North Caucasian peoples such as the Adyghe, Cherkes, etc. Ossetian, an eastern Iranian language, is also spoken in the Russian Federation's North Ossetian autonomy.

of international politics. Moscow may have encouraged the secessionist movements, and likewise those in Ukraine, but Russia was simply not in a position in 1992 to flout international law and jeopardize its relations with the West by laying formal claim to these territories (in any case, those wanting to make such claims in the earliest post-Soviet days of Russia were generally ultra-nationalists and those nostalgic for the Soviet Union). *Both* for the separatists *and* the states they wanted to join, the recognized independence of the separatists was not seen as a desirable, permanent end. Rather, it was at best a “Plan B” necessitated by the inability of what some have termed the “patron” state to annex the separatist entities. Despite two decades of de facto independence, the original dreams of unification were never abandoned in entirety, as events since 2014 have shown.

III. The Role of the Patron State

The Buzard, Graham, and Horne paper cited above details the role of what it calls the “patron” state: the recognized state supporting the separatists. The study assumes that the patron state prefers independence for the separatists, and although the paper admits that one motivation for this preference is the hope of eventual annexation (which it ascribes to Armenia), the study does not give the desire for annexation any room in its game theoretic model because “[i]nternational norms against irredentism are strong, and the costs of annexing an unrecognized state appear to be prohibitively large in most cases.”¹⁰

There are, however, options other than the simple dichotomies presented in game theoretical models, and international actors are constantly re-evaluating their options in light of the effects the real world’s dynamic and fluid situation on the entire spectrum of their international relations, as opposed to the enclosed and static environment of a game. In the case of Armenia, for example, while formal annexation was out of reach, integration at all levels began immediately; aided by Karabakhi occupancy of Armenia’s presidency from 1998 to 2018 and a diaspora for which the Karabakh struggle was a core part of Armenian national identity. Integration between Armenia and Karabakh has proceeded to such an extent that Armenians from Armenia can be drafted by the Karabakh “Defense Ministry” for deployment in Karabakh; conscription is usually considered a sovereign right reserved to the state of which a draftee is a citizen.¹¹ Likewise, for many years Russian Deputy Prime Ministers made regular appearances at cabinet meetings of the South Ossetian government, according to contemporary news reports.

¹⁰ op. cit. p. 586.

¹¹ The Karabakh “Defense Ministry” announced the 25 May 2016 death on the Karabakhi front line with Azerbaijani forces of a soldier from Armenia who had been drafted into the Karabakh defense forces. “Армянский солдат убит на границе,” Kavkazskiy Uzel, 26 May 2016, available at <https://www.kavkaz-uzel.eu/articles/283139/>.

Russia's presence in the protracted conflicts is a constant, but its approaches and aims have varied from conflict to conflict and over time. Russia is not officially one of the sides, but is not an outside power, either. From time immemorial these lands were provinces in great empires, and the provincials always appealed to the imperial capital to go over the heads of their immediate rulers and complain of their injustice. Indeed, ancient statecraft demanded that this be the case.¹² When Russia became the imperial center, the provincials appealed to Moscow, and that habit outlasted the Soviet empire.

Russia, as a realpolitik actor, has used this position to further its own interests, including in its role as mediator. But Russia's interests have never been unitary. Rather, they are a compendium of power and institutional interests inside Russia. For example, Russian President Medvedev agreed with German Chancellor Merkel's suggestion in 2010

that Russia try to resolve the Transdnistria conflict. He didn't succeed, and later had to admit to her that he had had no idea how complex were the interests of Russia's elites in the enclave. In the Russian system, each of those elites needed to be compensated for losses that resolution might bring, and that was beyond Medvedev's presidential power.¹³

For this reason, Russia's presence in the Karabakh conflict has never been straightforward. Russia has always had to balance important interests – personal, institutional, and strategic, political, military, and economic, in both Armenia and Azerbaijan, and over the years has run the gamut between supporting one side, supporting the other side, and trying to be a neutral mediator. One recurrent theme of Russian mediation has been the aim of inserting a Russian-dominated peacekeeping force into Karabakh, as Russia did in Abkhazia, South Ossetia and Transdnistria. This theme emerged during negotiations over the Bishkek protocol that established the current ceasefire in 1994, and it resurfaced as recently as 2016 in the so-called “Lavrov Plan” that was mooted in the wake of the fighting in April, 2016.¹⁴ In between, however, that aim was subordinated to the Minsk Group

12 For example, the *Siyāsatnāme*, the great book of Islamic statecraft by the Saljūq vizīr Nizām al-Mulk, draws this lesson from an incident ascribed to Sassanian times: a governor of Azerbaijan expropriated the property of a poor old lady, depriving her of her last crust of bread. The lady made her way to the capital at Ctesiphon and found a way to complain to the king of kings, Anushirvan (r. 531-579 AD). The wise king sent a spy to Azerbaijan, and he confirmed the lady's allegations. Anushirvan had the governor's flesh fed to the dogs and his skin stuffed with straw as a warning to other provincial governors. Nizām al-Mulk, *The Book of Government or Rules for Kings: The Siyar al-Muluk or Siyasat-nama of Nizam al-Mulk*, Hubert Darke, translator. London: Routledge, 2002, pp. 34-40.

13 See Philip Remler, “Negotiation Gone Bad: Russia, Germany and Crossed Communication.” Carnegie Endowment for International Peace, 2013, available at <http://carnegieeurope.eu/publications/?fa=52712>.

14 For a discussion of the Russian efforts to insert a PKF during negotiations on the Bishkek protocol, see Philip Remler, *Chained to the Caucasus: Peacemaking in Karabakh 1987-2012*, New York: International Peace Institute, 2016, pp. 54-60.

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Co-Chair consensus that no Co-Chair country could participate in an eventual PKF.

In contrast, Russia's concerns in South Ossetia and Abkhazia have been relatively straightforward. Before 2008, there is no evidence that Russia sought international recognition for their independence; rather, Russia's efforts were devoted to preventing any settlement that damaged Russia's interests, which included inter alia the desire to maintain a buffer between Russia and a potential NATO member.¹⁵ Abkhazia, especially, has always engaged important interests inside Russia, including both strategic politico-military interests and the personal interests of the powerful. Russian diplomats hinted up until the 2008 war that while Russia might trade for the return of South Ossetia, it would never relinquish Abkhazia.¹⁶ In other words, the powerful interests that would have to be compensated were simply too great.

After Western recognition of Kosovo, South Ossetia and Abkhazia were caught up in Russia's revisionist policies towards the West, and here we see, in slow motion, the revival of original motivations, the aspiration not to independence but to union with Russia. Russia recognized the two entities as independent shortly after the Georgia war in August 2008. A further hardening of Russia's policies dates to 2011-12, as Putin was reclaiming the presidency: Russia intervened to replace local leaders who had their own power bases with new figures who were dependent on Russia alone. After the Crimea and Ukraine crises, Russia annexed, in all but name, both Abkhazia and South Ossetia. This crypto-annexation was formalized by treaties in 2014 and 2015.¹⁷ Under those treaties, most major state institutions, especially those disposing of force such as the military, secret services, etc., were subsumed into Russian institutions. When thinking about potential conflict resolutions, that crypto-annexation is now the most important single fact on the ground, though for purposes of interaction with the international community both the separatists and Russia continue to maintain that Abkhazia and South Ossetia are independent. It is not clear, however, that they fulfill any more of the criteria for statehood and sovereignty than do autonomous republics within the Russian Federation.

15 As one Russian diplomat put it, Russia's interest was to ensure that NATO could not place a signals intelligence facility only 50km from Putin's dacha in Sochi. Personal conversation.

16 Personal conversations.

17 "Договор между Российской Федерацией и Республикой Абхазия о союзничестве и стратегическом партнерстве," 24 November 2014, text available at <http://kremlin.ru/supplement/4783>; "Договор между Российской Федерацией и Республикой Южная Осетия о союзничестве и интеграции," 18 March 2015, available at http://www.mid.ru/foreign_policy/international_contracts/2_contract/-/storage-viewer/bilateral/page-44/43967. Discussion of both the regime change and the treaties in Philip Remler, "Ukraine, Protracted Conflicts and the OSCE," in *Security and Human Rights* 26 (2015) pp. 88-106.

IV. The Myth of International Mediation

The salient fact emerging from the international community's experience with mediation in all the conflicts has been that the sides may be willing to *talk*, but will not *negotiate* seriously on a political solution. The UN took the lead in Abkhazia negotiations; the OSCE in South Ossetia, Transdniestria, Karabakh, and for a while, Chechnya. Karabakh has received the lion's share of attention: OSCE mediation is conducted through the Minsk Group, and specifically since 1997 through its troika of co-chairs, senior Russian, French, and American diplomats; Karabakh received a special representative of the OSCE Chair-in-Office who has been there since 1996.

However, it is clear that except for two discrete cases, none of the sides have been serious about *international* negotiations to resolve the underlying political conflicts. The two exceptions both concerned the Karabakh conflict. In 1997 both Heydar Aliyev and Levon Ter-Petrosyan agreed to a text presented by the newly-formed Minsk Group Co-Chairs. But the Karabakhis persuaded Ter-Petrosyan's strongman, Vazgen Sargsyan, to desert him, and in early 1998 Ter-Petrosyan was ousted under threat of force by his Prime Minister, the Karabakhi leader Robert Kocharyan. In 1999 Kocharyan and Aliyev, in secret one-on-one meetings, agreed *bilaterally* on a land swap; only then did they turn to the international community, and asked the Minsk Group Co-Chairs to turn their agreement into a written document. Soon after that, a terrorist attack on the Armenian parliament killed Vazgen Sargsyan – by now Kocharyan's strongman – and the chair of parliament, scuttling the plan. The official verdict is that Hovnanyan acted alone.

Since then, the leaders of Armenia and Azerbaijan have been willing to *talk*, especially when invited – or pressed – by the leaders of the U.S., France and Russia. But they have not been willing to *negotiate* on an actual peace agreement. The so-called “Madrid Principles” are just that: principles, not an agreement; the sides refused even to receive them together; they have never been willing to agree on enough to begin drafting an actual agreement. This was despite the good-faith attempt by Dmitriy Medvedev, throughout his term as Russia's president, to marry international negotiation (the OSCE Minsk Group umbrella) with Russian bilateral influence with the sides. Because of Russia's prestige the sides were willing to *talk*; but they were unwilling to do more than *pretend* to negotiate.

To all appearances, the leaders of Georgia, Abkhazia, and South Ossetia have *never* negotiated on an actual peace plan. The UN's so-called Boden Plan for Abkhazia was a series of principles not unlike the Madrid principles for Karabakh. Even those were gutted by Russia – Deputy Foreign Minister Boris Pastukhov paid a call on Dieter Boden and simply handed him a new text¹⁸ – and even then,

18 Personal conversations with Dieter Boden, 2001.

the Abkhaz refused to negotiate. In the wake of the 2008 war, negotiations for Abkhazia and South Ossetia do not focus on resolving the conflicts but rather on steps to mitigate humanitarian problems they caused.

There has not been negotiation on a peace plan for Transnistria since 2003; and the closest that conflict came to settlement was with the 2003 “Kozak Memorandum,” when Moldovan President Voronin tried to make a secret bilateral deal with Russia while simultaneously *pretending* to negotiate on a completely different draft presented in the international forum mediated by Russia, Ukraine, and the OSCE. The Kozak Memorandum, originally a Moldovan draft, would essentially have reintegrated Transnistria into Moldova (with some cosmetic guarantees for the Transnistrians) in return for Russian military basing rights in Moldova – a constant Russian aspiration – and recognition of Transnistrian privatizations that benefited Russian companies. Voronin pulled out when he saw a popular uprising overthrow Eduard Shevardnadze in Georgia. Like most post-Soviet apparatchiks, he saw the “Rose Revolution” there as an American-made coup and feared that the Americans would do the same to him. Since then, there have been no negotiations on a political solution; negotiations have focused on confidence-building measures.

V. Protracted Conflict Syndrome

This unwillingness to negotiate owes its prevalence to what we have elsewhere labeled “protracted conflict syndrome.” The sides have concluded that there will be no solution in the foreseeable future, *and they have adapted to that expectation*. That adaptation has two significant manifestations. First, the parties draw the logical conclusion that, if there is no chance of a negotiated peace, then negotiations are not a path to peace, and they must serve other purposes. Negotiations become a platform for posturing to build one’s political career or impress foreign sponsors; or, less blatantly, for participating in dead-end talks just to keep an international spotlight focused on your problems. Negotiations tend to be tactical, hoping to trap your opponent into an unforced concession.

The lack of purposeful negotiations can be seen in the type of peace plans they have discussed. We have *never* seen any peace plan for one of these conflicts that comes close in comprehensiveness and detail to serious peace plans such the Annan Plan for Cyprus. In contrast to the Annan Plan’s 182 pages, such peace plans as existed were brief and highly general. The Madrid principles – just principles, not a full-blown peace plan – could fit on one or two pages. The OSCE peace plan that Ter-Petrosyan and Aliyev agreed to in 1997 took up ten pages.

The second significant effect of protracted conflict syndrome is to ensure that political hard lines and harsh rhetoric pay off; public openness to compromise

does not. When no solution appears likely, the leaders feel free to engage in maximalist rhetoric that assures their populaces that absolute victory is both possible and necessary for national survival. The populaces, far from being prepared for peace, come to believe that acceptance of compromise is treason. This impression escalates the less contact there is between sides (in accordance with a difference among the conflicts highlighted above). The Karabakh conflict is the one with the least contact, and we have seen this factor play out there several times: when Ter-Petrosyan's acceptance of an OSCE plan led to his forced removal; when Kocharyan's acceptance of a territorial swap was scuttled by a terrorist attack; when the publication of the "Madrid Principles" led to popular bewilderment and discontent; and most indicative of all, in the fate of Armenian President Serzh Sargsyan, who rejected an EU Association Agreement in 2013 in favor of a customs union with Russia, saying it was necessary to guarantee Armenia's security. But the fighting of April 2016 showed Armenians that Armenia's security did not include Nagornyy Karabakh's security as far as Russia was concerned – not surprisingly, since no state, not even Armenia, recognizes Karabakh as part of Armenia. After years of reassurances from their leadership, however, this came as news to the Armenian populace, and it set off the wave of popular uprisings and mutinies that, joined with other discontents, ousted Sargsyan in 2018.

As to Azerbaijan, in the years following the outbreak of the Karabakh conflict in 1988, five consecutive leaders lost their jobs because of that conflict. Only Heydar Aliyev, the sixth, had enough control to hang on even in the face of battlefield defeats. Since his death, however, there has been much saber-rattling to demonstrate the hard line. In Georgia, Eduard Shevardnadze found an alternative to hard-line rhetoric: he created a powerful state within a state, the Government of Abkhazia in Exile, to channel popular dissatisfaction away from himself. That act of diversion worked until 2003.

The history of internal violence and upheaval combines with "protracted conflict syndrome" to put the leaders of the conflicting sides in an impossible position. Mediators have tended to talk at length about "political will," or "legacy," and are bewildered when this does not resonate with the leaders. But political will is not much of an argument if you know that signing an agreement is the same as signing your own death warrant. For example, assassination and the threat of assassination against those suspected of insufficient resolve have occurred at intervals in Karabakh and Armenia over the past 30 years, from the assassination of the Karabakh leader Artur Mkrtychyan in 1992 to the forcible overthrow of Levon Ter-Petrosyan in 1998 and the act of terror in 1999 that followed Robert Kocharyan's agreement with Heydar Aliyev.

Assassination is the extreme case, but leaders in Abkhazia and South Ossetia, not to mention Azerbaijan and Georgia, know they would face a severe backlash.

Assassinations of figures in the Donetsk and Luhansk regimes show that violence is an effective tool for imposing political discipline; the lesson is not lost on politicians in Abkhazia and South Ossetia. Only in Moldova and Transdnistria is the situation relaxed enough to allow for some degree of compromise. However, there was enough hard-line posturing to intimidate Voronin in 2003 and prevent any progress since then on a political resolution; talks since 2003 (officially broken off in 2006 and resumed only in 2011) have focused on confidence-building measures in the economic and human dimensions, in line with the generally high level of human and economic contact between the sides.

This is, therefore, a lesson that the history of these conflicts should teach us: that the international community must show that negotiated agreements are *survivable* for those who sign them before mediators can expect anyone to show “political will.” Unless that survivability gap is overcome, there is little or no chance that any of the conflicts can achieve a peaceful comprehensive resolution. The barriers to resolution now also include crypto-annexation: in the Karabakh, Abkhazia, and South Ossetia conflicts; and in Ukraine as well. Together with the flagrant challenge that the *overt* annexation of Crimea presents to international law, the prospects for internationally mediated negotiated settlements are bleak.

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LESSONS FROM PAST CONFLICT RESOLUTION EFFORTS IN THE ARMENIAN-AZERBAIJAN NAGORNO-KARABAKH CONFLICT

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The Nagorno-Karabakh conflict caused by occupation of territories of Azerbaijan have been the main obstacle of regional development and stability in the South Caucasus. The conflict has drained the economic and human resources of both sides and has negatively affected the lives of millions of people in the whole region. Billions of the US dollars, thousands of lives, human resources and energy have been wasted for unrealistic, nationalist dreams, meaning the attempts of Armenia for the realization of revisionism in the internationally recognized borders of the region.

The economic and political map and balance of power of the South Caucasus would have been completely different without this devastating conflict.

More than twenty years of stagnation in conflict resolution have produced very important lessons for all parties involved in the conflict. There are lessons for the conflicting parties - Azerbaijan and Armenia, and lessons for the mediators and the international community. And more importantly, there are two kinds of lessons: learned and unlearned.

The first and most important lesson for Azerbaijan is that Azerbaijan can and should rely only on its own power and ability to force the occupier to give up its policy of occupation. This ability includes both the economic, military, and diplomatic capacity of its own and its friends and allies. This lesson has taught Azerbaijan that the world operates not by power of the law and order but by the law of power. This is quite unfortunate fact of the international system. This lesson implies that Azerbaijan cannot rely on the goodwill of the international community and guarantors of the international order. Azerbaijan has studied and learned this lesson very well.

Unfortunately, in the past twenty-seven years, when Azerbaijan has faced the double-standards of international community, it has learned that there is little or no justice in international affairs. The international community and specifically the countries and international institutions that are supposed to protect international law and order did almost nothing regarding the violation of the principles of international law. On the one hand, there are four UN Security Council resolutions on the table that clearly call the end of occupation that have been waiting for implementation for more than twenty years. At the same, in the past years, we witnessed that some UN security resolutions were implemented within hours after their adoption.

We also see how some countries and international institutions treat other actors that break international law and territorial integrity of some countries. The countries that are obliged to be the guarantors of international order and law have not expressed the same clear and unequivocal position regarding to the violation of territorial integrity of Azerbaijan as they did in other cases. For example, in most cases, we see that Azerbaijan's partners, especially its European partners, avoid putting in their public statements the occupation of the territories of Azerbaijan in the same line with other territorial integrity problems in the region. And when you ask them about this avoidance, they use the mandate of OSCE as an excuse; they insist it is mandate of the OSCE and say they are trying to be balanced. The problem is that "balanced" is not necessarily a just and principled position. From the beginning, the international community must be unambiguous; if it is occupation, they must call it by its proper name. If you maintain that territorial integrity is the most important principle, you must voice it clearly.

This approach of the international community and neglect of the international law, and the lesson derived from this, has made Azerbaijan act in its own way. From one side, Azerbaijan has invested and continues to invest huge resources for military build-up for a possible scenario of returning the lands by military means. On the other hand, Azerbaijan has been able to isolate Armenia from all regional economic and infrastructure projects.

When international law does not work, each country pursues their own policies to defend their interests with the means that they have at their disposal. It should and must have been a very important lesson for some countries that claim to be guarantors of international order and law. So, this is an unlearned lesson for international community. Unfortunately, later on, this neglect of violation of the principles of international law has become a very negative precedent in other parts of the world.

Since the international community did not learn this lesson, Azerbaijan has made its own conclusion about it. In other words, the international community has left Azerbaijan with no other choice. Azerbaijan will continue to isolate Armenia and increase its military expenses to drain Armenia's economic potential until the de-occupation of the territories. We already see the results; the vulnerability of the Armenian economy, transportation and infrastructure problems, energy dependence, migration of Armenian population, and problems in the Armenian army. The Azerbaijani government thinks that Nikol Pashinyan's rise to power in Armenia through mass protests and the deterioration of the country's economic situation is a direct result of Azerbaijan's strategy of isolating Armenia from regional projects.

There are also lessons for other side of the conflict, meaning Armenia. However, these are unlearned lessons. The first lesson that Armenia should have studied and understood is that a country cannot have a sustainable statehood in its region with unrealistic, nationalist dreams, territorial claims, and revisionism of internationally recognized borders in the region. Unrealistic dreams and territorial claims have resulted in 83 percent of the borders of landlocked Armenia remaining closed for more than twenty years. This has had a devastating effect on the economic and demographic potential of Armenia.

In April 2018, mounting socio-economic problems triggered mass protests in Armenia. The former president Serzh Sarkisyan was not able to remain in the power as a Prime Minister after the Constitutional reforms. Now, all eyes and expectations are on Pashinyan. People wonder whether he will be able to be a savior of his nation and rescue the country from the edge of an imminent precipice or, whether, after some time, all hopes about reforms and economic prosperity will be replaced with disappointments and continued depopulation and slow death of the country.

Obviously, time does not work in Yerevan's favor. In a state of regional isolation, Armenia does not have the economic and demographic potential to stand prolonged confrontation, a war of attrition with a neighbor that surpasses it both economically and demographically.

Like others, Azerbaijan also has some hopes from the new government in Armenia. President Ilham Aliyev's recent speeches have been inviting. He stated his hopes that "the new government will be wiser than the previous one and will not repeat the mistakes of previous government".

After the election, we will still see whether the new government in Armenia will understand the lessons that the previous governments neglected to learn for years.

There have also been politicians in Armenia who understood and voiced their concerns about the country's circumstances and tried to explain the important lessons. Unfortunately, decision-makers did not want to listen to them, and both the people of Armenia and Azerbaijan have lost almost twenty years. In 2016, the first President of Armenia L. Ter-Petrosyan warned Armenians for a second time in his political career about the possible tragic consequences of delay of the resolution of the conflict on the destiny of Armenia's statehood. He first issued the warning in 1997, by calling for compromises and peace, but he was eventually forced to resign by hardliners. Ter-Petrosyan understood there would not be any economic progress and democratic development of Armenia without a resolution of the conflict with Azerbaijan.

One thing must be clear for everyone, especially for supporters of Armenia, that Armenia has to finally learn one important lesson; without resolution of the Nagorno-Karabakh conflict, there is no for Armenia to be democratized or achieve any economic progress. Armenia may bring the best economists, experts, and anti-corruption and reform practices to Armenia, nevertheless, without the resolution of the conflict, it will not be able to achieve anything.

Another lesson for Armenians is the need to change the approach toward history by stopping to instrumentalize trauma. In the first panel, the moderator said Armenians were both the victims and the perpetrators. I think it is debatable whether they were actually victims, or at least, we can say that they were first the perpetrator, then as a result, they became the victims of their actions. This lesson assumes that the exploitation of artificially constructed historical narratives and traumas have produced more sufferings and damages. You cannot go forward by living in the past. Just before this event, one of my European friends shared with me an interesting observation. She said that Armenians live in the past, as in, all of their important historical events already happened, while Azerbaijanis live in the future; as in, they think about the future and have expectation from the future.

Finally, there are lessons for the international community, mediators, and especially for those who advocate different confidence building measures and track two initiatives. This lesson is that it is impossible to have any successful

confidence building measure and track two initiatives without the resolution of the conflict.

Regarding the confidence building measures, you cannot put ‘the cart before the horse’. Azerbaijan will be against activities that are aimed to cement the current status quo and the legitimacy of the occupation regime. The still-born initiative of EU’s EPNK has not produced any results, and the same can be said about initiatives to place surveillance systems on the contact line or investigation mechanism or any kind of initiatives such as the extension of the office of Anji Kaspershik. The position of Azerbaijan is clear and logical – the occupation forces will not be secure, up until they leave the occupied territories of the Republic of Azerbaijan.

Confidence building measures must serve the interests of both parties: Armenia and Azerbaijan. These measures can only take place after the first steps of resolution process are taken – de-occupation of the territories around Karabakh and the opening of the borders. We can and should only talk about confidence building measures in an environment where there will not be death tolls on the frontline, when there will be security guarantee for Azerbaijani and Armenian population, and when the first economic contacts have started.

Azerbaijan carefully and patiently observes the wave of corruption scandals and arrests of former officials and warlords in Armenia. Azerbaijan observes with sense of satisfaction as more and more crimes of previous leaders are revealed, especially the facts related to mass shootings in Armenian parliament in 1999 which then ruined the progress in the negotiations process. Azerbaijan is interested in the logical conclusion of the deconstruction of the former Karabakh clan that drew its legitimacy from the victory in the war and the occupation and maintenance control over Nagorno-Karabakh.

After the revolution in Armenia, the power has become even more diffused. From a democratic perspective, it might look like a positive element, but from a regional peace, security, and stability perspective, it will have a negative effect. In past twenty-five years, one of the main obstacles for the resolution of the Nagorno-Karabakh conflict and substantial negotiations has been weak Armenian governments that have been vulnerable to foreign and domestic pressures and the lack of strong leadership that could overcome all pressures, pursue substantive negotiations, and accept the responsibility for unpopular compromises for a peace agreement and impose its will on the society. Diffusion and distribution of power among many rival stakeholders in Armenia have always been a major reason why the representatives of this country have not been able to take courageous and intrepid decisions and steps for the resolution of the conflict. Hopefully, after the election in Armenia, Pashinyan will soon be able to consolidate his power, and be ready for substantive negotiations.

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Hopefully, everyone learns their lessons and studies the mistakes of the past, especially the new government of Armenia and thus we will finally achieve peace in our region.



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